Thank you
to the many community and faculty mentors, members of the BTG-Pittsburgh Advisory Board and the oral health consultants, Caitlin Brokenshire, David Gorski and Kayla Klingensmith from the School of Dental Medicine, for providing their time and guidance;

2015 BTG programming is provided through generous grant support from:
Jefferson Foundation
Medical and Health Sciences Foundation, UPMC
and
The Deans of each health professional school that support student stipends for this program:
School of Medicine, Graduate School of Public Health, School of Social Work, School of Pharmacy, School of Nursing

Additional support and in-kind contributions have been provided by:
Drs. Ruben and Maria Abunto
Craig Elias
Anonymous

Bridging the Gaps Pittsburgh is part of the Bridging the Gaps Consortium, administered in Philadelphia and comprised of representatives from five academic health centers in the Philadelphia region, plus programs in Erie, Lehigh Valley, New Jersey, and Pittsburgh.
“CHS has taught me the importance of humility and not placing a label on those who have been affected by negative circumstances – there is no face of the poor or diabetic – just people. This entire internship has truly given me a new perspective on life and how grateful I should be for the opportunities and resources I have been given; additionally, it has reinforced by beliefs in using my gifts to aid those in need”
– N. Diehl, School of Pharmacy

**Bridging the Gaps - Pittsburgh:**
- provides health professional students opportunities to work directly with underserved populations, to better understand their health concerns and needs, and
- provides outreach and support to organizations that are on the “front lines” of health care.

**Learning from vulnerable populations, mentors and peers**
Interns work in interdisciplinary pairs with any one of a range of different underserved populations in Pittsburgh, including people in recovery, children, homeless women or many other “at risk” populations. In this internship, interns spend the majority of their time learning directly from people served about their perspectives, needs and priorities.

**Building reciprocal and responsive partnerships**
Interns must complete a project by the end of their internship, chosen by the students in coordination with their community mentor and this office, one that leaves the host organization with a tangible product. Interns’ faculty mentors are available to provide feedback on project design and resources. Past and current projects include
- Developing and delivering health education curricula
- Developing resource guides and informational brochures to better meet a population’s needs
- Internal surveys and needs assessments to improve program quality

**Learning through reflection and discussion**
Once a week interns attend a full day reflective session on campus, instead of visiting their sites. These reflective sessions include guest presentations and discussions related to working in vulnerable communities – issues of poverty, health inequities, health literacy, community violence, advocacy, and social determinants of health. These weekly sessions allow students the opportunity to share their thoughts and questions about their work with peers from other health professional schools – comparing approaches and gaining insight into creative interventions.
“Let’s Get Employed” – at Bethlehem Haven
Kelsey Cakanac, School of Nursing
Anita Simonian, School of Public Health
Community Mentor: Sharon Higginbothan, PhD, COO, Bethlehem Haven
Academic Mentor: Thuy Bui, MD, UPMC Montefiore, School of Medicine

Bethlehem Haven Women’s Shelter, Downtown Pittsburgh
Bethlehem Haven is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing a number of services including emergency shelter; transitional housing; permanent supportive housing; medical, dental, obstetric and mental health services; and employment services to women in the Pittsburgh area. The Haven also provides some medical, mental health and employment services to nonresidents, including homeless men.

The Project:
When the student interns noted the distribution of housing applications in the intake packet to all women entering emergency homeless shelter, they questioned whether it was necessary for women without a sufficient source of income who could not pay the necessary housing fees. Identifying this gap led the interns to investigate the barriers of unemployment within the emergency shelter population. Based on the results of a barriers to unemployment assessment, the student interns implemented a series of employment workshops. The workshops focused on topics including, but not limited to, self-esteem enhancement, resume building, job searching and interview skills. The student interns held walk-in sessions once a week to provide one-on-one help for the women who needed additional assistance. At the end of the workshop series, Pitt Human Resources conducted on-site mock interviews, which focused on all topics covered in workshops. Workshop participants were awarded with certificates of completion and a makeover session with a volunteer cosmetologist. Incorporating feedback from workshop evaluations, the student interns assembled a master binder of all workshop material for Bethlehem Haven staff to use as needed. In addition, employment packets were assembled based on successful workshop information and included with Bethlehem Haven’s intake packet.

CHS Help Center – at Community Human Services
Nicolette Diehl, School of Pharmacy
Jeffrey Jenkins, School of Social Work
Community Mentor: Trevor Smith, MSW, Community Human Services
Academic Mentor: Tracy Soska, Assistant Professor, COSA Chair, and Continuing Education Director, School of Social Work

Community Human Services, Oakland
CHS’s mission is to empower individuals and families to live in stable housing, connect to community resources, build relationships, and access quality food. Last year alone CHS prevented more than 1,500 adults and children from becoming homeless, supported more than 145 adults and seniors with disabilities to remain living independently in their own homes, connected 1,400 people with fresh produce in our food pantry (each month), & empowered more than 80 families with young children to be ready for pre-school.

The Project:
The student interns developed a consumer satisfaction survey to find out what additional resources would best meet the needs of constituents served by the food pantry. The interns then worked on creating a program that would highlight these findings. Informational videos were created to run continuously during food pantry hours of operation. In addition, the interns developed a children’s workshop of coloring activities and plate simulations to educate and promote healthier eating in low-income households. At the completion of the workshop children were given healthy snacks and recipes that they, along with parents, could make at relatively low in cost.
“... I have seen the dynamics and influence the family framework has on an individual, how a family is completely interwoven with larger societal structures and, more importantly, the utmost tenderness needed to work with infants and toddlers. ... Having acquired some insight on how to engage with families, I can return back to my profession and practice to capitalize on the potential of families with an aim of strengthening the larger community.”

- E. Sanchez, School of Social Work

“Home Visitor and Family Education Manual - at COTRAIC Early Head Start
Edwin Sanchez, School of Social Work
Lauren Teague, School of Nursing
Community Mentors: Deborah Gallagher, M.Ed, COTRAIC
Early Head Start, Pam Dickinson, B.S., and Katelyn Kaczorowski, RN
Academic Mentor: Ann M. Mitchell, PhD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN University of Pittsburgh, School of Nursing

COTRAIC Early Head Start:
COTRAIC EHS families are at or below the poverty line with children ages 0 to 3. The mission is “to promote the socio-economic development of the Native American Community and others who experience the same type of socio-economic difficulties in the Great Pittsburgh Metropolitan area.” Services include Child Development, Health Services, Mental Health, Nutrition Services, Family Support, Disabilities, Community Partnerships, and Pregnant Women. Early Head Start provides services through home visitors who work with the families for an hour and a half each week or through child care centers that partner with Early Head Start and Head Start.

The Project:
On site, interns were immersed in the communities served by Early Head Start through multiple home visits for a diverse range of families. After experiencing home visits and gathering input from staff and home visitors, the interns recognized a need to have an organized point of reference for everyone to utilize. This handbook covers topics frequently experienced during a home visit, and contains a condensed version of educational material on each topic, intended to help facilitate discussion between parent-home visitors, promote self-sufficiency and strengthen the education of the community.
“This internship has given me a priceless opportunity to become more in-touch with families living in poverty and some of the stressors they experience in their daily lives, which has given me so much more insight than I ever could have had without the BTG CHIP. I know that as a healthcare professional, I will have more awareness as to how significantly communities shape lives, and how critically important environment and culture is to incorporate into healthcare delivery.”
- L. Teague, School of Nursing

“…helping to prepare a Sisters Place home to welcome a homeless, distressed family with only the clothes on their backs, watching camp children experiencing the wondrous joy of the zoo or the delight and pride of passing their deep water swimming test, reminds me that positive social change is possible, ever so slowing at times, often “inch by inch”, but still possible. I am very grateful and humbled by the totality of this experience.”
- A. Donsky, School of Social Work and Graduate School of Public Health

---

**Life Skills Resource Guide and Modules – at GLCC**
Paula Amin, School of Medicine
Connor Marchewski, School of Nursing

*Community Mentor:* Lyndsey Sickler, Director of GLCC
*Academic Mentor:* Elizabeth Miller, MD, PhD, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC

**The Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Pittsburgh (GLCC) and Youth Drop-In Center, Downtown**
The Gay & Lesbian Community Center of Pittsburgh (GLCC) provides gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals, their families and supporters in Western Pennsylvania with resources and opportunities to promote visibility, understanding, and equality within the LGBT communities and the community at large. As part of the Service Access to Youth, the GLCC works toward these goals through education, social support, networking, and advocacy. (http://www.glccpgh.org/about-the-glcc/mission)

**The Project:**
The student interns developed a set of workshop materials to augment existing community resources that would be useful for the GLCC’s clientele. These workshops addressed topics including résumé building, housing searches, nutritious shopping and eating, and communicating with health professionals. The interns developed the material such that clients could reference it as needed on their own, and that center staff could use the material to easily present 30 minute workshops. The final materials are living documents that will be edited as resources change and clients continue to give feedback on efficacy.
Rites of Passage - at Gwen's Girls
Leticia Dwomor, School of Medicine
Katie Holler, School of Public Health
Community Mentors: Denise McGill, MSW, Gwen’s Girls, Inc. and Lynn Knezevich, MSW, LSW, Executive Director, Gwen’s Girls, Inc.
Academic Mentor: Jon Pletcher, MD

Gwen’s Girls, North Side
Gwen’s Girls was founded in 2002 by former Pittsburgh Police Commander Gwendolyn J. Elliott. Ms. Elliott had noticed the plight of girls and young women in high risk populations and the lack in services that would meet their complex needs. The mission of Gwen’s Girls is to empower girls and young women to have productive lives through holistic, gender-specific programs, education, and experiences. Gwen’s Girls offers services for girls aged 8 to 21, including foster care, after-school programs, summer camp, prevention, reunification and a group home. Camp Destiny, Gwen’s Girls’ summer camp program, focuses on providing structured time for the participants to focus on building life skills, hobbies, interests, and general summer fun.

The Project:
During the interns’ time with Gwen's Girls, they researched, designed, and piloted a curriculum to be taught to girls between the ages of 10-13. The curriculum entitled ‘Rites of Passage’ aims to inform and empower girls to take ownership over the changes their bodies experience during puberty. In addition age appropriate information was taught about healthy relationships, communication within relationships, sex education, and body image. Through clear and direct language, the interns strived to demystify and normalize the changes and experiences girls encounter during puberty.

Braddock Healthy Children’s Guide – at Heritage Community Initiatives
Xilin Chen, Graduate School of Public Health
Kiera Mallett, School of Social Work
Community Mentor: Laura Oliver, MSW
Academic Mentor: Rachel Fusco PH.D., M.S.W.

Heritage Community Initiatives, Braddock
The mission of Heritage Community Initiatives, located in Braddock PA, is “to enable individuals and organizations to improve health, education, economic strength, and social vitality in their communities,” as well as to familiarize funders and collaborators with the diverse services offered by the organization.

The Project:
Throughout the summer nutrition program, interns led the children through various activities that addressed topics such as physical health, anger management, mental health, oral health and nutrition. The interns encouraged the children to engage their peers in activities such as ABC Volleyball, Kick Ball, and jumping rope to promote more physical activity throughout the day. The interns provided educational sessions about emotional regulation, such as utilizing support systems when upset, which were followed by projects such as finger painting, sensory activities, and art therapy empowerment crafts. Interns developed a booklet which includes healthy snack recipes for children, physical activities, play therapy activities, and a section for the parents. In the parent section interns included the prices for the snacks in the recipes and where parents can identify fresh food within their community. The parental provides encouragement and quick physical health tips. There is also an adult guide to emotional regulation and, how they can empower their children to express their emotions in healthy ways instead of through aggression.
Discover Science – at Hazelwood YMCA
Ida Brockman, School of Medicine
Alibek Mereke, Graduate School of Public Health
Community Mentors: Monique Wingfield, Lisa Reihl
Academic Mentor: Martha Ann Terry, PhD, School of Public Health

Hazelwood YMCA, Hazelwood
The mission of the Hazelwood YMCA is to strengthen the community by providing a safe space as well as recreational, educational and social services. The programs at the YMCA include afterschool programs, summer camp, community lunch, food pantry, farm stand and free tax preparation. Through these programs, the Hazelwood YMCA instills hope and empowers change in the lives of their members.

The Project:
At the Hazelwood YMCA, the BTG interns worked closely with the children and the staff to help ensure a fun, safe environment to help the campers grow and learn. The aim of the BTG interns’ project was to develop specific science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curriculum for the Hazelwood YMCA youth programs. The project objectives include encouraging campers to recognize science in their every day lives as well as to encourage further participation in STEM-related activities. In addition, STEM curriculum includes several health-related projects that promote health and prevent early exposures of risk factors. The projects included in the curriculum utilize easily available resources and tend to be hands-on and age appropriate. The curriculum is intended to encourage discussion among the group, allow children to ask questions, as well as to continue reinforcement of the main points within the material.

“My experiences from this summer and working with this population has inspired a passion to be an advocate for the youth, who can sometimes be deemed voiceless either because they are not heard or they haven’t yet learned how to communicate what they want to say. But they all have a voice and they have powerful things to say and share.”
—L. Dwomor, School of Medicine

“...this summer has taught me so much about the complex issues that surround individuals experiencing homelessness, the challenges involved in getting access to care, and the enormous impact these barriers have on a person’s overall health—physical, mental, and social.”
—R. Morace, School of Nursing
Rites of Passage - at Gwen's Girls
Leticia Dwomor, School of Medicine
Katie Holler, School of Public Health
Community Mentors: Denise McGill, MSW, Gwen’s Girls, Inc.
and Lynn Knezevich, MSW, LSW, Executive Director, Gwen’s Girls, Inc.
Academic Mentor: Dr. Jon Pletcher, MD

Gwen’s Girls, North Side
Gwen’s Girls was founded in 2002 by former Pittsburgh Police Commander Gwendolyn J. Elliott. Ms. Elliott had noticed the plight of girls and young women in high risk populations and the lack in services that would meet their complex needs. The mission of Gwen’s Girls is to empower girls and young women to have productive lives through holistic, gender-specific programs, education, and experiences. Gwen’s Girls offers services for girls aged 8 to 21, including foster care, after-school programs, summer camp, prevention, reunification and a group home. Camp Destiny, Gwen’s Girls’ summer camp program, focuses on providing structured time for the participants to focus on building life skills, hobbies, interests, and general summer fun.

The Project:
During the interns’ time with Gwen's Girls, they researched, designed, and piloted a curriculum to be taught to girls between the ages of 10-13. The curriculum entitled ‘Rites of Passage’ aims to inform and empower girls to take ownership over the changes their bodies experience during puberty. In addition age appropriate information was taught about healthy relationships, communication within relationships, sex education, and body image. Through clear and direct language, the interns strived to demystify and normalize the changes and experiences girls encounter during puberty.

“I truly believe that I gained more from my experience with Bridging the Gaps than I could possibly have contributed. The lectures and readings were valuable, but the daily hugs and hellos and songs with the children, their excitement to learn in fun and engaging ways, and their willingness to talk about their own, often challenging life situations were really what made this summer unforgettable. I know this experience will help guide me in how I one day practice medicine, and I am sincerely grateful for it.”
-I. Brockman, School of Medicine
**Healthy Living: Nutritional Guidance From Plant to Plate – at Sister’s Place**

Art Donsky, School of Social Work/Graduate School of Public Health

Rose Morace, School of Nursing

*Community Preceptors:* Mary Parks, CSJ, Executive Director, Sisters Place and Patricia Wood, MSW, Program Director, Sisters Place

*Academic Preceptor:* Mark S. Friedman, PhD, Assistant Professor, Behavioral and Community Health Sciences, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh

*Sisters Place, Clairton*

Sisters Place is a supportive housing community assisting single parent families experiencing homelessness in Southwestern PA. Their mission is to assist families toward self-sufficiency by providing housing and supportive services. They provide housing and supportive programs for families in both a temporary and long term capacity. Programs include: child development and education case management; summer camp; food bank; and therapeutic support groups.

**The Project:**

After shadowing the Sisters Place case managers for three weeks, the student interns developed an assessment tool to determine what needs the residents felt most important to healthy living. Based upon the results of the assessment the interns sought to raise awareness about healthy life choices, encourage positive, nutritious at-home family eating, and increase community interaction and outdoor activities. The student interns provided an easy to read brochure for healthy living focusing primarily on children’s nutritional needs as suggested by the residents. They also provided an interactive project in which residents potted tomato plants to grow at home. Finally, partnering with Grow Pittsburgh, student interns created a new 6’ by 4’ community vegetable and flower garden adjacent to the Sisters Place program and learning centers located within the Century Townhomes complex where the residents live.

---

**‘Quality Time Handbook’ for Mothers in Recovery at Sojourner House**

Natalie Fiato, Graduate School of Public Health

Karen Quach, School of Pharmacy

*Community Preceptors:* Sharon Jones, MS, LPC, Sojourner House; Karen Garland, B.S., Assistant Clinical Supervisor & Counselor, Sojourner House

*Academic Preceptor:* Martha Ann Terry, PhD, Graduate School of Public Health

**Sojourner House, Garfield**

Sojourner House and Sojourner House MOMS (Mentoring, Opportunity, Motivation, Spirituality) provide compassionate, faith-based residential recovery services to mothers and children in the Pittsburgh area. We help addicted mothers learn to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and chemical abuse while rebuilding damaged relationships with their children. Sojourner House believes women can shatter the chains of addiction and hopelessness when surrounded by what means most to them: their children.

**The Project:**

The student interns completed a literature review surrounding the topic of maternal addiction, influence on children and parenting skills, and parenting education in drug treatment facilities. The interns also drafted a qualitative interview guide and conducted a parenting focus group with clients to discern what needs the women had regarding parenting skills. Based on the gathered information, the interns constructed an educational handbook consisting of the following topics: Mother’s Self Care & Coping Skills, Discipline & Your Child, and Ages and Stages: What to Expect and How to Play. Attentive to the various ages of children at Sojourner House, this comprehensive handbook addresses the following stages of development: Baby, Toddler, Preschool and Grade School. Ultimately, the handbook is intended to improve parenting skills, build confidence in the woman’s ability as a mother, and strengthen the bonding relationship between mother and children.
Prospect Park: The Stories of Refugees – at South Hills Interfaith Ministries
Samara Rosenberg, School of Social Work
Jocelyn Shoemake, Graduate School of Public Health

Community Preceptor: Casey Rich, Prospect Park Family Support Center, South Hills Interfaith Ministries
Academic Preceptor: Thistle Elias, DrPH, MPA, Graduate School of Public Health

Prospect Park Family Center, South Hills Interfaith Ministries – South Hills
South Hills Interfaith Ministries is a human services organization that seeks to empower struggling families to achieve self-sufficiency. The Prospect Park Family Support Center provides home visits, activities, and referrals primarily to families with children ages 0-5, with a focus on healthy child development, health care, and parenting support.

The Project:
The summer interns, Jocelyn and Samara, interviewed and filmed local community members who wished to share their personal life stories. The film follows three main themes which are: memories, life in the U.S., and hopes for the future. Jocelyn and Samara also created surveys for the family center that can be used to assess what programs older individuals in the community may be interested in. They also created both a gardening workshop and a dental workshop. The gardening workshop taught individuals how to make recycled plant pots and how to plant different herbs and chilies. The dental workshop targeted mothers with young children (ages 0-5) and taught them about appropriate dental care practices for different age groups, nutrition, appropriate feeding practices and what to expect as a first time mother going to the dentist.

At Bridging the Gaps – Pittsburgh, it is our sincere pleasure to support the talents and aspirations of our many dedicated students and the remarkable organizations that host them each summer.

Joan Harvey, MD, Program Director
School of Medicine
Thistle Elias, DrPH, MPA
Program Co-Director
Graduate School of Public Health
Summer Rae Haston, Program Administrator
Graduate School of Public Health
Kali Stull, Administrative Intern
Social Work/Public Health Masters Student

“...The refugee community embodies strength and resiliency. I have been humbled by my experience with Bridging the Gaps and I believe that this internship has increased my capacity to be a thoughtful and well-rounded healthcare provider in the future.”
- J. Shoemaker, Graduate School of Public Health