

Thank you

To the many community and faculty mentors and members of the BTG-Pittsburgh Advisory Board

To the Deans of each 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

To those who have provided additional support and in-kind contributions this year!

To our frontline workers, health care workers, our first responders, our 'essential' workers – we are ALL essential and regardless of our physical distance, we are in this together.

BTG Pittsburgh is a member of the Bridging the Gaps Network. Bridging the Gaps is a collaboration among multiple academic health institutions in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and over 100 community organizations, linking the interprofessional education of health and social service professional students with the provision of health-related services for vulnerable populations.



Community Health Internship Program

2020

Celebrating 23 Years

♦ **University of Pittsburgh** ♦

Nursing ♦ Dental ♦ Social Work ♦ Pharmacy ♦ Public Health ♦ Medicine

**Honored to be working this summer
with & within the communities of:**

♦ Braddock ♦ Hazelwood ♦ East Liberty ♦ Garfield ♦
♦ South Hills ♦ Clairton ♦

“Working with YES has been a remarkable experience for me, and I can tell I have grown both professionally and as an educator this summer. Regardless of setting, be it in a clinic or in the community, education is a critical component of health care, and I relish the opportunity to practice and develop these skills. The students at YES are exceptional, and each day I leave feeling refreshed and accomplished. The joy I’ve felt working with these young adults helps me remember why I love working in health, which is an important break from didactic work.” – W. Michaels, School of Medicine

“I’ve learned a great deal about the coordination of EHS services and how difficult it has been to administer services during the COVID-19 pandemic. I’ve also had the chance to speak with families who have expressed a multitude of concerns, but who have also demonstrated extreme resilience and found ways to laugh in spite of the challenges they face... it is working on the ground that has made my work as a public health professional more personal and confirmed my commitment to achieve more, one step at a time, for families just like these.”-F. Swann, Graduate School of Public Health

Bridging the Gaps - Pittsburgh:

- provides health and social service professional students opportunities to work directly with local, underserved communities, to better understand their health concerns and needs, and
- provides health-related services, 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 the program 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, sharing challenges and gaining insight into creative interventions.

A 6-Week Curriculum on Best Qualities of A Mentor

Leo Julian, School of Nursing

Lindsay Pelcher, Graduate School of Public Health

Community Mentors: Jessica Gumbert, Braddock Youth Project Programs Manager

Laura Kelley, Heritage Community Initiatives Director

Academic Mentor: John Maier, PhD, MD, School of Medicine

Braddock Youth Project, Braddock

Braddock Youth Project is a work skills excelled program that provides the community's youth with the means to create and sustain community projects. Their programs include a gardening team, a mentoring team, and a media team. The mentoring team partners with Heritage's HOST to help in classrooms, form bonds with the kids and act as mentors.

Heritage Community Initiatives, Braddock

Heritage Community Initiatives is a community-based non-profit organization in Braddock that provides the community with education, transportation and nutrition programs. Their education programs (Heritage Out of School Time and 4 Kids Early Learning Center) provide out of school time care where they are engaged in age-appropriate enrichment activities that promote successful learning and guide them to make healthy choices.

The Project:

Braddock Youth Project was looking to expand the capabilities and scope of knowledge of the mentoring team in order to further enrich the children that they work with at Heritage's HOST program. Bridging the Gap interns addressed this need by creating and presenting a six week curriculum based around Marylin Price-Mitchell, PhD's article, *Mentoring Youth Matters: Six Qualities That Make You a Good Mentor for Teens*. The curriculum was created with the goal of equipping the mentoring team with tangible skills and relevant concepts that would provide them with a robust framework to better guide youth and nurture peer relationships. The hope is that a synergistic effect will be created through the influenced youth in the HOST program and carry a beneficial effect to East Pittsburgh at large.

Los Recursos Más Útiles: Resource Packets for the Latinx Community

Teresa Andersen, School of Nursing

Raven Hilfiker, School of Social Work

Community Mentor: Diana Escobar-Rivera, Youth Service Director, Casa San Jose

Academic Mentor: Mary L. Ohmer, PhD, MSW, MPIA, School of Social Work

Casa San Jose, South Hills

Casa San Jose is a Latino community resource and welcome center, located in Beechview, Pittsburgh. They offer a variety of services for the immigrant population of Pittsburgh including assistance with DACA renewal, legal and medical clinics, youth programs to promote civic engagement and assist with school work, and immigration services. Advocacy is also an important pillar of the organization, and they advocate for immigrant rights and a culture of acceptance and adaptation in Pittsburgh.

The Project:

The student interns created a survey about the needs of the community to be administered in person in Spanish, with options to provide answers in written or oral format. Survey results were analyzed to determine information that should be included in a packet for immigrants that have newly arrived in Pittsburgh, called "Nueva Llegada," and a pamphlet on children's social, emotional, and physical health, called "Los Niños en Casa". The "Nueva Llegada" packet compiled resources that are most useful to the immigrant population and was created to be accessible to people of all literacy levels because it included a strong visual component. When creating the "Los Niños en Casa" pamphlet, the student interns also created a resource hub on the organization website, compiling Spanish-language educational resources on the social, emotional, and physical development of children.

Developing a Mental Health and Wellness Guide for Center of Life

Amber Olander, Graduate School of Public Health

Olivia Flood, School of Social Work

Community Mentor: Joy Cannon, Director of Programming, Center of Life

Academic Mentor: Thuy Bui, MD, University of Pittsburgh Department of Medicine

Center of Life, Hazelwood

Center of Life was founded in 2002 by Tim Smith after witnessing a need for the children of Hazelwood to have a place to spend time after school. The mission of Center of Life is “to provide children and their families with life skills, education, training, and resources necessary to be strong and make their communities strong”. Center of Life provides a wide variety of programs that include family engagement opportunities, community outreach, after school homework assistance, tutoring, dance and jazz lessons to children in grades K-12.

The Project:

After meeting with staff members at Center of Life, the Bridging the Gaps student interns determined that due to the uncertainty and stress of the current times there was an increased need for mental health support. Based on this identified need, the student interns first collaborated with staff to create a mental health checklist to be used during virtual check-in calls with students. Expanding upon this idea, the student interns went on to develop a Mental Health and Wellness Guide for children and their families. Included within this guide are activities and resources pertaining to exercise, art, and self-care for both children and their caregivers with a focus on mental health. This guide will provide Hazelwood families with an additional resource to use for mental health and wellness.

Community Needs Assessment: Impacts of COVID-19 and Racial Injustice Protests

Ciera Payne, School of Social Work

Frank Swann, Graduate School of Public Health

Community Mentor: Deborah Gallagher, M.Ed, Director of Early Head Start and Family Center Services

Academic Mentor: Patricia Documét, MD, DrPH, Graduate School of Public Health

COTRAIC Early Head Start, Hazelwood

COTRAIC was founded in Pittsburgh in 1969 by several Native American families in order access newly released training and education funds for Native Americans and to recapture cultural roots of Native Americans living in Pittsburgh. After achieving nonprofit status in 1972, the organization continued on to add programs beneficial to Native Americans, including employment and training programs and elder programs. In 1986, COTRAIC introduced Head Start, followed by Early Head Start services in 2000, both of which provide quality child care services to low-income children and their families, independent of cultural and racial identity. COTRAIC partners with a number of childcare facilities throughout Southwestern PA and in Philadelphia, and has a team of its own employees and dedicated COTRAIC classrooms. It also gives families the option to receive home visits, where children complete developmental activities, receive health screenings, and may participate in socializations with other families in the community.

The Project:

The context of COVID-19, in addition to national protests occurring due to racial injustice and police brutality in the US, led to staff concerns about how current events were affecting both employee and family health. In response, the student interns created a Community Needs Assessment report that investigated how these events impacted either ability of employees to deliver services, or ability of families to access child care services.

Community Needs Assessment: Impacts of COVID-19 and Racial Injustice Protests (cont'd)

The Project (cont'd)

Interns developed a survey questionnaire for both employees and families to collect basic demographic information as well as information about such topics as family food security, access to transportation, and neighborhood safety/violence. The employee survey featured an open-ended, essay-style response to discuss recent national events. The family survey featured an alternate interview protocol to speak with families over phone or video to discuss how events have shifted child care needs. Results offer COTRAIC additional information about perceived strengths and gaps in care for families enrolled in EHS services, and also provides insight into potential avenues of support for employees.

“Working with Casa San Jose this summer has been such an amazing opportunity and I have been able to learn so much about immigration and the variety of struggles faced by the immigrant population in Pittsburgh. I looked forward to working with Campamento Sonrisa every day and getting to know the kids who are part of the Casa San Jose Community. I was so inspired by the work of everyone at Casa San Jose and I will carry their mission of advocacy and acceptance with me in my future as a nurse.” -T. Andersen, School of Nursing

Community Resource Guide

Darien Boerger, School of Nursing

Alexandria Gariepy, School of Social Work

Community Mentor: Meghan Briggs, MA, Director of Programs at Sojourner House

Academic Mentor: Sharon Connor, PhD, School of Pharmacy

Sojourner House, Garfield

The Sojourner House provides compassionate, faith-based residential recovery services to mothers and children in the Pittsburgh area. The recovery programming consists of life skills coaching, parenting education, and clinical counseling. Sojourner House also provides in-house childcare and connections to relevant community resources for the residents to enhance their recovery at Sojourner House and beyond.

The Project:

BTG interns created a community resource guide to help bridge the gap between service delivery and care coordination services to ensure quality of care/patient needs were being met holistically. The students designed the community resource guide with a variety of different supportive service options that could be utilized, including; child care, housing, legal services, transportation, and food/misc to promote autonomy and assist in informed share care decisions. The students were able to interview a variety of agencies to make sure they were suitable options, and they were able to create a list with direct contacts from each agency that could be utilized as well. In addition, students created a list of different NA/AA virtual meeting options for the women to utilize in response to COVID.

Skills Spotlight

Amanda Lee, School of Nursing

Walker Michaels, School of Medicine

Christina Toval, Graduate School of Public Health

Community Mentor: Denise Jones, M.Ed, Program Director

Academic Mentor: Todd Bear, PhD, MPH, Graduate School of Public Health

Youth Enrichment Services, East Liberty

Youth Enrichment Services was founded in 1994 based off of a pilot program in West Virginia called Project Yes. It is designed to create educational experiences for underserved and minority youth in the Pittsburgh area. At the foundation, YES uses mentorship and programming to empower and enrich the lives of children and teens. It has a multitude of programs like career exploration, job readiness, college readiness and diversion programs for juvenile offenders.

The Project:

The 'Skills Spotlight' designed and implemented for YES is a four week, eight session course designed to equip 'Summer Magic' students with important life skills to promote healthy living and success in professional settings. Each session is one hour long, and is designed to maximize student engagement while working within the confines imposed by Covid-19.

Key skills were selected, including time management, stress reduction and exercise, and lessons focused on how these factors impact the students, and actionable skills they could use in their everyday lives. Project design was collaborative and iterative, with feedback collected from YES staff and students after each session that resulted in organizational changes to improve engagement. Ultimately, sessions were delivered in small groups of 3-5 students and one facilitator, and focused on peer-to-peer discussion and reflection.

Skills Spotlight (cont'd)

The Project:

YES has been provided with access to the presentations used for each session, as well as detailed lesson plans with instructions on discussion topics, exercise execution and sources for additional information when relevant.

“This experience grew my understanding of the physical and mental challenges associated with living in under resourced areas. The opportunity to collaborate with community members, as well as health and social service professionals through Bridging the Gaps has better prepared me for my future as a social worker. I am extremely grateful for being given the opportunity to collaborate with Center of Life. It opened my eyes to the passion and resiliency of the Hazelwood community, as well as the community organizations that are working to serve their residents every day on multiple levels.”
-O. Flood, School of Social Work

From Clairton to Anywhere - Creating a Resource to Facilitate Career Exploration

Julia Donnelly, Graduate School of Public Health

Samuel Greiss, School of Nursing

Community Mentor: Brandon Ziats, YOD Director of Programming

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Martha Ann Terry, PhD, Graduate School of Public Health

Youth Opportunities Development, Clairton

YOD was formalized in 2014. It was founded by Brandon Ziats, who has a background in social work. Brandon previously worked with an organization called One Vision One Life, which had the goal of preventing retaliatory violence. After he left One Vision One Life Brandon founded YOD with the goal of preventing violence before it even started. YOD hopes to achieve this goal by aiding the social and academic development of the boys it serves. All of the boys who participate in YOD are between the ages of 10-15 and they were all African American, although there is no racial requirement to participate. During the school year YOD acts as an after school program where boys are given dinner, time to complete homework, and time to socialize/ play games. During the summer the programming is more like a summer camp. The boys participated in many great outdoor enrichment activities this summer like biking, kayaking, and fishing. Time was dedicated to things like history lessons and math lessons but the focus of this summer was embracing the great outdoors.

The Project:

During the first two weeks of the internship the pair of interns worked to create video content that complemented YOD's focus on teaching the boys about the great outdoors. The rest of the time spent with the community partner was focused on creating their final project, a career guide.

From Clairton to Anywhere - Creating a Resource to Facilitate Career Exploration (cont'd)

The Project (cont'd):

It is a self-guided booklet that directs users to a career path that best fits their skills and interests and then provides information on various jobs ranging from a plumber to a museum curator. The project also includes eight vignettes of successful black men to reinforce the overarching idea behind this project, which shows the boys at YOD how they can look inward to point themselves in the right direction toward a successful, fulfilling career.

“My experience at COTRAIC and with Bridging the Gaps has been humbling and eye opening. I was able to get a realistic view of what it takes to provide quality care to families while maintaining the safety and morale of staff during a pandemic. I have been able to see what resilience looks like and how an organization can come together to support, learn, and improve services and organizational culture.”

-C. Payne, School of Social Work

“I could not be more grateful for this experience. Despite working remotely, we were able to find creative ways to meet and interact with the community in a meaningful way. This was my first time working with a community directly since starting my MPH, and in just two months, we were able to accomplish more than I thought possible... Brandon and the YOD staff serve as role models every day for the boys and community, but also became role models for myself on how to effectively and passionately serve a community.”

– J. Donnelly, Graduate School of Public Health

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 and serve our communities each summer.

Thistle Elias, DrPH, MPA

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*“I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart and **stand up** for what you truly believe.”*

- John Lewis

*“You **must** do the things you think you cannot do.”*

- Eleanor Roosevelt