



Bridging the Gaps (BTG) envisions a future where healthcare professionals and communities unite in a powerful, transformative partnership—one that not only promotes holistic wellness but also advances opportunity and ensures high-quality, accessible healthcare for all. For the last 35 years, we have worked tirelessly to make this vision a reality.

Bridging the Gaps was founded in 1991 by two Philadelphia medical students who partnered with a group of faculty, all of whom believed serving local communities was just as vital as lab research. With philanthropic support for summer stipends and infrastructure, their work quickly gained momentum—first attracting fellow medical students, then expanding to other schools and health disciplines such as nursing, social work, dental medicine, and physical therapy.

Now, 35 years later, through powerful partnerships built between community organizations, local leaders, and academic health centers / institutions across Pennsylvania and into New Jersey, Bridging the Gaps has become more than a program. It is a movement redefining healthcare education and practice, forging lasting connections between future health professionals and communities that need them. Students gain empathy for and fellowship with the communities they serve by understanding their histories, amplifying their voices, and actively working to improve health and wellbeing. At the same time partnering organizations serving underserved populations receive help to sustain and/or extend essential service.

At its core, BTG provides health professional students with a paid, hands-on opportunity to engage in meaningful, community-driven work, generally during their first summer of training. Through a collaborative curriculum across Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Erie, Allentown, Reading and Camden, students gain critical experience that extends far beyond the summer. BTG offers year-round learning through seminars available to students, alumni and community partners with continuing education credits available. Advanced rotations/elective opportunities in community settings are also available to students.

BTG now spans ten locations in two states representing eight academic health centers / institutions and has partnered with more than 660 community-based organizations. In 35 years BTG has empowered over 6,500 program alumni who now serve in every corner of the healthcare field. BTG alumni are forming their own network to champion the power of community partnerships for advocacy and service. This is more than education—it is a commitment to partnership, collaboration, and lasting change.

Three years ago, BTG received an award for capacity building from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to review our strategy and explore new opportunities. These efforts have led to the development of a stronger Alumni Network, an enhanced focus on advocacy for communities, and the creation of a feature-length documentary film that highlights how BTG is reshaping the healthcare workforce while simultaneously contributing to the capacity of community-serving organizations to create lasting change.

As we enter 2026, BTG stands at a pivotal moment, ready to leverage over 35 years of multi-sector relationships to deepen our impact. After engaging with stakeholders through interviews and two retreats, we are finalizing a four-year plan to introduce an advocacy component to the program. This new effort will empower community partners and align with the needs of both our students and those they serve.

Now more than ever, we need to ensure our health and social service workforce have the skills to continue to grow this work within the communities we share. We are also committed to extending the services of our community partners through a cadre of future health care professionals dedicated to learning from those they serve in an effort to achieve well-being for all. Finally, we are building our capacity to serve as a convener to share knowledge, skills and resources across multiple stakeholders groups, including community partners, alumni, students and others committed to health, well being and access for all.



www.bridgingthegaps.info

Elements BTG brings together



35 years

of responsiveness
to stakeholders & a
changing world

6500+ alumni

from 11+ health & social
service disciplines

Creative Arts Therapy, Dental Medicine, Law,
Education, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Veterinary
Medicine, Public Health, Social Work, Health and
Rehab Sciences, Podiatry, Physician's Assistant

&

650+ community partners

since 1991

140 community internships each summer

Cooper Medical School of Rowan University

DeSales University

Drexel University (incl. Reading)

Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (incl. Seton Hill)

University of Pennsylvania

University of Pittsburgh

Temple University

Thomas Jefferson University



8 academic health centers & universities in 10 locations

Community Partner Sites in 2025

African Family Health Organization (AFAHO)
Alliance Hall of Allentown
American Heart Association, Breathe Free PA
American Lunch Association
Asylum Pride House
Barber National Institute
Barclay Place
Beyond Literacy (BeLit)
Bible Center Church - The Oasis Project
Brevillier Village
Broad Street Love
Camden Area Health Education Center (AHEC)
Camden Coalition
Casa Guadalupe Center
Center for Family Services
Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice
Center in the Park
Center of Life
Children's First
Clean Air Council
College of Physicians of Philadelphia
Community Wellness HUB
Covenant House Pennsylvania
Depaul USA
Drexel Food Lab
Drexel Kindergarten Bridge Program
Educators 4 Education
Frankie's World
Gaudenzia- Philly House Women's Program
Get Fresh Daily
Girls Inc.
Greater Philadelphia Health Action
Greener Partners
Hall Mercer
Helping Harvest
HMS School, School for Children with Cerebral Palsy
Hope Rescue Mission
Human Good - Tioga Presbyterian Apartments
Inglis House
Joseph's House of Camden
Latino Community Center
LECOM Health Nursing and Rehabilitation Center
LECOM Medical Center and Behavioral Health Pavilion
LECOM Senior Living Center



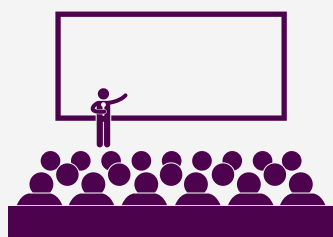
Legacy Youth Tennis and Education
Lenfest Community Center for Workforce Partnerships
Lighthouse Women & Children's Center
Lutheran Settlement House
Make-a-Wish
Mary's Shelter
Mazzoni Center
Merakey - P.A.D.
Mercy Center for Women
Mercy Neighborhood Ministries
Mothers in Charge
Nationalities Service Center
No More Secrets, Mind Body Spirit
Old Pine Community Center
Olivet Boys & Girls Club of Reading & Berks County
Parkside Regency at South Shore
Phila Dept of Public Health, Ambulatory Health
Philadelphia Family Pride
Philadelphia FIGHT
Philadelphia Senior Center
Prevention Point Philadelphia
Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley
Puentes de Salud
Red Shield Family Residence , The Salvation Army
Greater Philadelphia
Reimagine Reentry, Inc
Sankofa Community Farm at Bartram's Garden
Smith Memorial Playground & Playhouse
Social Needs Response Team (SNRT)
Southwest Community Development Corporation
Spectrum Health Services
St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, Center for
Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs
St. Christopher's Center for the Urban Child
St. Christopher's Summer Meals Program and
Cap4Kids
Students Run Philly Style
Sunrise of Philadelphia
The Cooperative, Southern New Jersey Perinatal
Cooperative
To Our Children's Future with Health
Visitation Homes
Voices for Independence
Westmoreland Community Action
Westmoreland Drug and Alcohol Commission Inc.
William Way Community Center
Youth Enrichment Services
Youth Opportunities Development

What We Do



Community Health Internship Program

Students of health and social service fields are matched with partnering community organizations for the 7-week summer Community Health Internship Program (CHIP) across the region, culminating in an annual symposium with poster session to share their work with the larger health and social service community and the Alumni Network.



Seminar Series

The BTG Seminar Series draws upon the expertise of participating community partners, program alumni and academic health centers/universities to address topics related to population health and care coordination.

The sessions are designed to augment professional curricula in various content areas, and to offer concrete strategies for addressing issues affecting our nation's populations. Seminars are held during the fall, winter, and spring months and open to students, alumni, and community partners. **Continuing education credits are available.**



Advanced Community Health Rotations

BTG students in Philadelphia can complete this interdisciplinary experience to become more skilled in clinical / advocacy service, while working collaboratively with communities.



Alumni Network

The BTG Alumni Network (BTGAN) was formed in response to alumni feedback. BTGAN is led by alumni co-chairs and is growing rapidly to connect, amplify, and support the work of alumni of the CHIP program. This includes a member directory (under construction), mentoring, speaking engagements, networking events, and continuing education credits.

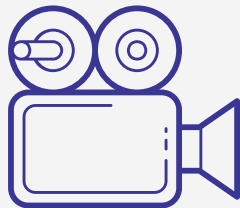
How We Are Growing



Community Advocacy Program (in development)

It was clear from the activities of the RWJF capacity building effort that the BTG Network and its stakeholder-partners wanted expanded training in advocacy skills.

Through subsequent group meetings and retreats we focused on what it would take to build and sustain an advocacy training component that would be both impactful and transformative for students and community partner sites. We are now looking to incorporate a new and robust set of advocacy learning applications into the BTG program that offer benefit to students and community partners.



Professional Documentary

The Bridging the Gaps feature length documentary premiered at the BTG 35th Anniversary Symposium on October 6, 2025.

Under the direction of experienced filmmakers, Andre Robert Lee and Nick Pitcavage, with Wendell Pierce's narration, the film speaks to the need for a health system that is responsive to the needs of the people it is designed to serve. It also captures what it takes to build and sustain a meaningful program that brings benefit to all partners in an ever-changing world. Our goal is to utilize this documentary as a tool to bring together diverse sectors working towards a health system that addresses the multiple factors that impact health.



Convener

Given the reach of BTG in the nonprofit organizational and academic worlds, as well as our alumni and the many sectors they represent, BTG is able to connect a vast network of collaborators built over 35 years. BTG has expanded its efforts as a convener to share expertise, resources, and ideas among diverse sectors.

Our efforts so far have included sessions for partnering nonprofits with grantmakers, amplification of activities on social media, education through the Seminar Series, and the use of the documentary to bring people and organizations together in a shared goal of improving the ways that health and social service systems meet the needs of those they serve.



Bridging the Gaps

A nation where health
and well-being are
optimal for all
communities

Vision

To optimize health and well-being through
collaborative cross-discipline training of
health and social service professionals while
providing service in community settings.

Mission

To provide health-related service for under-resourced
populations while building a cadre of health and social
service professionals able to work in partnership with
the communities they serve.

Goal