

City of Allentown Bureau of Health Nutrition and Physical Activity Program

1. **Name and position of Supervisor:** Kati Fosselius, Public Health Dietitian, Nutrition and Physical Activity Program, City of Allentown Bureau of Health
2. **Position Description:** The Summer Service Fellow matched with the Nutrition and Physical Activity Program of the Allentown Bureau of Health will take on a leadership role in at least 2 of 4 major department initiatives, described below. Once matched, the Fellow and the program Supervisor will work together to determine specific responsibilities for the position, based on programmatic needs as well as the interests of the Fellow.
 - The Allentown Bureau of Health plans to pilot a new Green Cart initiative this summer through the City's Summer Playground Program. This new program is designed to generate excitement among youth about eating fruits and vegetables, and will involve bringing a mobile cart to various Summer Playground Program locations and giving away free produce to the participants. The Fellow would be involved in creating a schedule for the initiative, purchasing (and possibly doing minimal preparation of) the produce, and serving as the on-site Fruit and Veggie "vendor." The Fellow will have the opportunity to determine creative strategies for making this program particularly appealing for kids; this would be an ideal project for a student with some interest in developing marketing skills. We anticipate that the Fellow would also have the chance to participate in a press event unveiling this new initiative.
 - The Allentown Bureau of Health collaborates with the Allentown Department of Parks and Recreation on the City's Imagination Playground in a Box (IPB) initiative. The IPB is a playsystem that encourages physically active, child-directed, unstructured play while fostering creativity and imagination. The IPB is characterized by "loose parts," allowing for a dynamic play environment and therefore extending play opportunities for participants. For more information on the IPB, visit <http://www.imaginationplayground.org>. For the second year in a row, the City of Allentown will incorporate the IPB into its Summer Playground Program, hosting it at multiple sites and providing hundreds of students with the opportunity to interact with this unique playsystem. The Summer Service Fellow would be trained as an IPB Play Associate, whose role is to ensure children's safety, extend (but not direct) play, and encourage peer interaction. The Fellow would not only serve as the primary Play Associate during the summer but would also train Summer Playground Program staff as well. Finally, the Fellow would be responsible for documenting the participants' experiences with the IPB through photos, on-site interviews, reports, and a PowerPoint presentation and/or video clip.
 - The Allentown Bureau of Health is likewise working in collaboration with the Allentown Department of Parks and Recreation on launching a new program aimed at increasing physical activity among adults aged 50 years

and older. A series of 10 wellness stations, called the LifeTrail, will be erected at Cedar Creek Parkway this spring. In order to encourage use of the new equipment through fostering a socially supportive environment, the City will initiate a LifeTrail Club. The LifeTrail Club will offer monthly meetings featuring speakers who will answer participants' questions on a variety of health-related topics, such as safe exercise habits, heart health, and chronic disease prevention. Club members who routinely use the equipment will be rewarded with entries into monthly prize drawings each time they utilize the trail. The role of the Fellow in this initiative would include securing and scheduling speakers for the monthly meetings, soliciting donations for the raffle prizes, and utilizing event planning skills to manage all logistics involved with the monthly meetings. The Fellow would also be involved in marketing the Club to community members, group, and agencies. Finally, the Fellow would create short surveys asking Club members about their usage of LifeTrail, and would analyze and summarize survey results.

- The Summer Service Fellow will serve as a part-time recreation leader for Alliance Hall of Allentown's 17th annual Alliance Summer Recreation Program, held at Central Elementary School at 9th & Turner Streets in Allentown. The Alliance Summer Recreation Program is a collaborative effort by several organizations providing recreation, arts and crafts, swimming, field trips, breakfast and lunch to inner-city children in Allentown, PA. The program registers approximately 250-300 children ages 7-13, with 150 participating daily on a drop-in basis during the program's 5 week operational period in July. Program participation is free of cost to the youth. Community Development Block Grants, corporate and private donations and in-kind contributions fund the program. Under the direction of Joe Webster, an elementary school PE teacher in the Allentown School District, the Fellow will collaborate with other high school and college students to supervise youth participants and lead educational and recreational activities. The Fellow will be invited to develop and deliver new programming for groups of participants. The Fellow will also provide administrative support to the program through managing registration forms and attendance sheets, coordinating field trips, and communicating with participants' parents.
- The best candidate for this position would be one with a background, or at least a strong interest, in public health. Ideally, this person will be passionate about nutrition and physical activity as they relate to overall wellness and to the prevention of chronic disease and obesity. Experience working with inner-city youth would be especially beneficial. Also, organizational skills, attention to detail, strong writing skills, and the ability to collaborate with diverse groups of people will be important in this position. The ideal candidate will feel comfortable taking on some amount of project management for two of the projects described above.

3. Description of anticipated impact:

- The Green Cart pilot initiative was conceived as a weapon in the war on obesity, which can be caused by malnutrition secondary to neglect. Paradoxically, many overweight youth are “overweight yet undernourished,” consuming diets high in calories but low in nutrition. By making it fun to eat healthy foods, the Summer Service Fellow has the potential to encourage new, health-promoting habits among Summer Playground Program participants that could last a lifetime. With a combined rate of overweight and obesity among school-age children in the Allentown School District of 40%, the need for initiatives like this one is clear. Future funding to expand this initiative to additional venues during the school year (such as at community sporting events) will be dependent on the proven success of this pilot, so the Fellow will have the opportunity to influence future Bureau of Health programming.
- Under the direction of a Muhlenberg College volunteer, the Imagination Playground in a Box was successfully incorporated into Allentown’s 2010 Summer Playground Program, and proved to increase physical activity levels, imaginative play, and cooperation among participating youth. The Fellow will have a unique opportunity to foster the creative and collaborative aspects of play among Summer Playground Program participants, helping youth to form friendships and learn more about themselves and their physical environment. Through chronicling the children’s experiences with IPB throughout the summer, the Fellow will support the City in meeting specific grant requirements and will very possibly open the door to future funding opportunities based on the impact of this creative and exciting initiative.
- With escalating overweight / obesity rates and incidence of chronic disease, providing and promoting routine physical activity opportunities in the community is more important than ever. However, for most people, it is difficult to change behaviors without a strong support system. The LifeTrail Club seeks to break down that barrier for the too-often-neglected older adult population in Allentown by providing a forum for social support. The Fellow will have a direct impact on this program and the health of its participants. Since the success of the inaugural year of the Club will likely predict participation in years to come, the Fellow’s role in the development of this program will be vital.
- Staffing the Alliance Summer Recreation Program is one of the largest expenses to the running the program, and one that is often not funded directly through other sources. Having a Summer Service Fellow available to work with the Alliance Summer Recreation Program would allow this valuable program to continue without compromising its quality. This long-standing program is an incredible resource for the families of the community. Through the Allentown School District’s Summer Feeding Program, the Alliance Summer Recreation Program provides daily breakfast and lunch to all participants, thereby alleviating hunger for children who might not otherwise eat during the day when school is not in session. Particularly for families with limited financial resources, this free

program may be the only recreational opportunity some of these children have. In addition to recreation, the Alliance Program offers children the opportunity to learn positive life skills, develop self awareness, and build self esteem. As one of the recreation leaders, the Fellow will make a significant impact on the development of many of the program's participants, serving as a role model and mentor.

4. **Anticipated Schedule:** This proposed schedule provides a template for how the Fellowship might be run. Details will vary depending on which of the 4 projects described the Fellow will help to lead.
- June 6 – August 12
 - Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (with 1-hour lunch breaks)
 - ~ 20 hours / week Green Cart on-site activities
 - ~ 6 hours / week IPB on-site activities
 - 1 Saturday / month LifeTrail Club meetings(will alter weekly work schedule to accommodate for these extra hours)
 - ~ 12 hours / week Alliance Summer Recreation Program
 - i. On these days, schedule will be 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. with no lunch break; Fellow will eat with program participants
 - ii. Afternoon swimming
 - iii. Some educational field trips
 - Additional hours will be spent primarily in the office on tasks necessary for chosen projects as well as in meetings of Nutrition and Physical Activity Program department, Alliance Summer Recreation Program staff, and various community coalitions