

# THE COLUMBUS-ATHENS SCHWEITZER FELLOWS PROGRAM

Purpose: To facilitate service projects to benefit the Columbus and Athens communities, and simultaneously develop emerging professionals who have the skills to address unmet health-related needs throughout their careers.

THE ALBERT  
SCHWEITZER  
FELLOWSHIP®  
*Addressing Health Disparities  
by Developing Leaders in Service*

## Rising Up Strong

### Background

Research extensively documents that people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) experience health disparities. There is a high prevalence of secondary conditions such as obesity, hypertension and gastrointestinal issues within the I/DD community. Narrowing to the state of Ohio, according to a 2013 Ohio Disability Data Report, 18.2% of all Ohio children (age 18 and younger) are living with a disability. Furthermore, the prevalence of disability among children increases with age. Additionally, in Ohio the most frequently reported disability category among children was cognitive difficulty (79%), and self-care difficulty (16.3%). Children with disabilities more likely have a delay in seeking treatment for medical conditions, inadequate access to dental health leading to poor oral hygiene, and have poor nutrition which leads to higher rates of obesity and an overall poorer health than children without a disability. These disparities significantly widen when race, socioeconomic status, and other intersectional identities are considered.

### Project

Rising Up Strong is a health promotion program for Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. This project aimed to increase health and wellness knowledge among participants, promote a health lifestyle, and encourage health autonomy among participants. Some of the topics Rising Up Strong covered included:

- Stress Management
- Building Healthy Relationships
- Nutrition
- Physical Activity
- Oral Health
- Personal Hygiene

### Impact

Students and School Staff thoroughly enjoyed Rising Up Strong. When one student was asked, “How do you take care of your teeth?”, he responded that he flossed for the first time ever after our oral health lesson plan. Additionally, feedback forms were provided to school staff. These forms consisted of 4 main sections:

- Program Objectives
- Instructors
- Content
- Additional Comments

Ratings of each section were on a 1-5 Likert scale with “1” being the lowest rating and “5” being the highest rating. Each section averaged over a “4” rating.

### Community Partner

The Columbus City Schools Office of Special Education is dedicated to providing academic and behavioral support to students with disabilities. My site mentor was Katherine Leffler, Executive Director of the Office of Special Education.

### Academic mentors

Susan Havercamp, PhD – Associate professor of Psychiatry, Psychology and Genetic counseling, the Director of Health Promotion and Healthcare Parity Program and the Director of Behavior Support Services at the Ohio State University Nisonger Center



  
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**Christine Chilaka**  
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“Start early to instill in your students awareness that they are on this earth to help and serve others; that is as important to pass on to them as knowledge.”

—Albert Schweitzer, PhD, MD