

Weaving Connections: Drexel NPASS Helps Unravel Stress in the NICU

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Introduction

- The National Perinatal Association's Student Society (**NPASS**) supports the mission of National Perinatal Association (**NPA**) to improve perinatal care in the U.S.
- **Drexel University's NPASS Chapter (Est. 2021):**
- **seeks** to further NPA's goal by bringing together an interdisciplinary group of students interested in perinatal and neonatal care to learn from and collaborate with one another.
- **Collaborates** with the Neonatal/Infant Intensive Care Unit (NICU) faculty at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) to support families facing stress.

CHOP and Drexel NPASS Collaboration

- In the NICU at CHOP, infants are often admitted due to prematurity or medical complications, causing stress for parents and caregivers.
- To support them, CHOP offers parent support groups like a knitting group, but faces logistical challenges in yarn preparation due to high demand.
- In April 2023 and 2024, Drexel NPASS identified CHOP as a community partner to organize a service event to prepare yarn for their parent support group.
- Drexel NPASS recruited undergraduate and graduate students for these events through flyers, email listservs, and word of mouth.

Yarn Rolling Events

In April 2023 and 2024, with the support of CHOP and Maternal Child Health Student Organization, **over 30 students** separated and rolled **over 100 spools of yarn** for CHOP's knitting group. The event fostered **education, community engagement, and empathy**, encouraging ongoing involvement in hospital parent support groups and reflecting on student awareness and education in perinatal care.



Education and Empathy

- Attendees learned more about the experiences of parents and families in the NICU and about Drexel's NPASS chapter from Drexel NPASS's President and Clinical Psychology PhD Candidate, Leah Sodowick.

Community Engagement

- These events **were free of cost** for attendees. At the end of the events, members were encouraged to volunteer and partake in the hospital knitting groups.

Lessons Learned and Practical Application

- During one event, a Clinical Psychology Doctoral Student, shared, "This event gave us the rare opportunity to simultaneously be with friends and do something good for the community. That's a pretty unbeatable combination!"
- Overall, these community events:
 - Raised awareness about perinatal mental health and care
 - Facilitated dialogue to inform policy and research
 - Promoted partnerships with local hospitals for extended NICU support
 - Recruited at least 5 new NPASS members

Future Initiatives

- Drexel NPASS plans to host more community service events to support NICU needs beyond the NICU setting.
- We hope to **serve as a model for other NPASS chapters operating within psychology departments** across the country.

