

# Bridges to Medicine: Inspiring the Next Generation through Community Partnerships



Madeline Awad, Mason Eastman, Jennifer Irvin  
Barnes Jewish Hospital, St. Louis, Missouri

## Introduction

Bridges to Medicine is a program dedicated to introducing middle and high school students from underserved communities to healthcare careers. In partnership with Barnes-Jewish Healthcare (BJC), the program provides immersive, hands-on experiences in various medical specialties. Collaborating with the community organization, Black Girls Do STEM, Bridges to Medicine specifically focuses on engaging young Black girls, encouraging them to explore careers in healthcare and STEM.



## Objectives

Participants will learn strategies for designing an effective healthcare outreach program that provides exposure to various medical fields through hands-on simulations and professional interactions, with a focus on empowering underrepresented groups, including black girls in STEM.

“ I liked being hands on with the equipment and having meaningful conversations with the doctors and nurses. ”



## Methods

The program introduces middle school students to diverse medical fields, including respiratory therapy, radiology, surgery, emergency medicine, and nursing. Through interactive sessions at esteemed institutions such as the BJC Goldfarb School of Nursing and Washington University’s School of Medicine simulation center, students engage in lifelike simulations, realistic patient scenarios, and practical exercises. Highlights include hands-on demonstrations of colonoscopy procedures and the operation of surgical robotics, allowing students to gain direct exposure to high-tech medical environments.



“ I learned new things about medicine and healthcare workers’ lives. ”



## Conclusion

This partnership between Bridges to Medicine and Black Girls Do STEM underscores the importance of early career exposure for Black girls, who are historically underrepresented in both STEM and healthcare fields. By addressing disparities in representation and career opportunities, this initiative fosters a sense of belonging in healthcare professions for young Black girls, helping them to envision and pursue career paths they may not have previously considered.

Bridges to Medicine and Black Girls Do STEM aims to inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals by offering early exposure, mentorship, and real-world experiences. These initiatives are essential for building a more diverse and inclusive healthcare workforce that better reflects the communities it serves.

“ I want to come back every weekend and keep learning more! ”

