

2026 Community Impact Challenge Winners

Anna Fish (Campbell University)



Anna Fish is a Doctor of Physical Therapy student at Campbell University and the student project leader of a community balance and fall-prevention program in rural Harnett County, North Carolina, where she is from. Through the APTA North Carolina Community Impact Challenge grant, she developed and implemented an eight-session program in partnership with Spring Hill United Methodist Church to help older adults feel safer and more confident with community ambulation and daily activities while reducing their overall fall risk. Most participants had experienced a fall previously, and fall prevention and reducing their fear of falling were goals that the entire group was motivated to address.

The program met approximately twice a month for 1.5 hours. Participants completed an initial evaluation and final re-evaluation, with the sessions in between focused on dynamic balance, dual-task activities, strengthening, and functional mobility. Rather than limiting balance training to traditional exercises, sessions incorporated added load to familiar functional tasks, increasingly challenging movement demands, and fun obstacle courses designed to simulate the unpredictable challenges people may encounter in their everyday environments.

The program emphasized helping participants translate their physical abilities into greater confidence and safety during real-world activities. The goal was not simply to improve performance during exercise, but to help participants feel more prepared to navigate their homes, communities, and daily routines independently. Standardized measures, including the Activities-specific Balance Confidence Scale and Mini-BESTest, were used to assess balance performance and confidence throughout the program.

As someone who grew up in Harnett County, this project was especially meaningful to Anna because it allowed her to bring physical therapy and fall-prevention resources directly into a community that she cares about. The program also created a foundation that future Campbell DPT students can continue and potentially expand to additional community organizations throughout Harnett County.

Brisa Rivera Mondragon (Surry Community College)



Brisa Rivera Mondragon is a second-year Physical Therapist Assistant student at Surry Community College located in Dobson, North Carolina. Her path to physical therapy was shaped by personal experience: watching her parents and neighbors endure chronic pain from physical demanding labor, often relying on traditional remedies rather than seeking professional care due to language barriers and a lack of culturally informed resources.

Those experiences became the foundation of her Community Impact Challenge project, Bridging the Gap, a bilingual community wellness event designed to increase awareness of and access to physical therapy within the Hispanic/Latino community. Through this project, Brisa hosts bilingual (English/Spanish) education sessions that teach practical, evidence-based strategies for managing pain and improving mobility, paired with a take-home wellness kit so participants can continue their care independently. The goal is not only to increase awareness of physical therapy, but also connect community members with local clinics, helping to reduce fear and build trust between underserved populations and the healthcare system.

Brisa is passionate about serving people who have not always had equal access to quality healthcare, and she believes every individual deserves care that respects their culture, language, and lived experience regardless of their background. As she continues her studies, she remains committed to expanding access to physical therapy, strengthening trust between healthcare providers and the Hispanic/Latino communities, and inspiring the next generation of bilingual PT and PTA professionals to serve where they are needed most.