

NPA Member Spotlight

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Hope Thilges

Hope Thilges is a fourth-year doctoral student in the Clinical Psychology Training Program at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL) and member of the Pediatric Health Lab, directed by Dr. Timothy Nelson. Prior to moving to Nebraska, Hope received her bachelor's degree in developmental psychology with minors in integrative neuroscience and public health from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities (UMN). During her undergraduate studies, she was a part of Mayo Clinic's Undergraduate Research Employment Program and the Gunnar Laboratory for Developmental Psychobiology Research, which sparked her interests in pediatric pain rehabilitation, stress physiology, and mechanisms supporting child development.

Her clinical and research interests include examining biopsychosocial factors associated with child and adolescent health and wellbeing to inform prevention and intervention efforts, especially among youth experiencing chronic pain and their families. She is also a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow. Clinically, Hope is currently a student psychology extern at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital in Omaha, NE, where she primarily works on the pediatric acute rehabilitation unit. She previously completed a clinical placement at the University of Nebraska Medical Center's Department of Psychiatry and the Department of Psychology at Munroe-Meyer Institute.

How long have you been a member of NPA?

Hope has been a member of NPA since 2025 following receipt of a gifted student membership by a generous donor. She joined after attending NPA events, such as NPA's webinar, "Culturally Responsive Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Tips, Tools and Techniques" and the NPA 2024 Fall Conference (Autism and ADHD Assessments for Youth and Adults). She has been a part of NPA's Membership Committee since March 2025. As part of her activities on the NPA Membership Committee, she has engaged in membership recruitment and retention, especially increasing student awareness of NPA and opportunities for committee, advocacy, education, and professional development engagement (which were all opportunities that encouraged her to join NPA and one aspect she loves most about it)! Her career has benefited from educational and professional development opportunities, including training in youth autism and ADHD evaluation and suicide risk assessment, along with connecting with others in the field.

What's a project you're working on right now? Why is it meaningful to you?

I am a member of UNL's Pediatric Health Lab, where I work with Dr. Timothy Nelson, and I collaborate with my mentors at UMN's Institute of Child Development (Dr. Megan Gunnar) and Mayo Clinic (Drs. Leslie Sim, Cynthia Harbeck-Weber). Across projects, I have sought to investigate biopsychosocial factors associated with health and health-related outcomes among children and adolescents, with recent work focusing on the role of executive control, home and neighborhood food environments, psychopathology, and stress physiology in relation to youth health. It is incredibly meaningful to engage in work seeking to achieve a better understanding of factors associated with healthy development with the hopes of informing targeted prevention and intervention efforts that can support children and families!

Any tips or advice for new NPA members?

Please do not hesitate to express your interest in getting involved with NPA! In my experience, joining the Membership Committee was a very easy process, where NPA Director Carmen Skare was able to provide information about the committee and joining monthly meetings. NPA has been so welcoming to me as a student member and has allowed me to be involved in ways that feel manageable with my schedule. There is great flexibility and variety in opportunities for involvement!

What do you like to do when you aren't working? Any fun hobbies/interests?

I love to try out new restaurants and coffee shops (especially with other lab members and graduate students!), video call with family and friends, go to markets or other fun events, watch TV shows and movies, and read!

What is your favorite place you've traveled to, or what's on your travel bucket list?

One of my favorite places that I have traveled to most recently is Houston, Texas! I especially loved visiting The Museum of Fine Arts, the Space Center, and Discovery Green! I have many places on my travel bucket list, including England, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, and Greece.