

HOLISTIC HEALING PILOT PROGRAM

The Holistic Healing Pilot Program was funded through a one-time \$50,000 grant award from the New York State Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Prevention to address the need for continued healing in the aftermath of the racially motivated mass shooting at the Jefferson Avenue Tops supermarket on May 14th, 2022. Funding was awarded in June 2023 for grant activities continuing into January 2024. All grant activities were complete at the time this report was published. The following is a summary of this pilot program from start to finish.

Sometimes referred to as a community healing series, the Holistic Healing Pilot Program was designed to create safe spaces for East Side residents to express themselves as they move through their healing journeys and explore a variety of holistic strategies to aid in coping with and healing from individual and collective trauma.



The Holistic Healing Pilot Program was comprised of a series of three free holistic mental health interventions—Sawubona Healing Circles, healing-centered yoga, and art workshops—delivered by four community-based organizations led by community leaders: AfroChick Yoga, BC Designs, Eat Off Art, and HOPE Consulting, LLC. Interventions were implemented at community locations across Buffalo’s East Side in order to prioritize residents of the neighborhoods affected by the Tops massacre. Venues included 8 Days of Hope, the African American Cultural Center, the Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Center’s Monroe House, Delavan Grider Community Center, Gloria J. Parks Community Center, Mt. Olive Baptist Church, the Tri-Main Center, and the WNY Peace Center. Six Sawubona Healing Circles were held virtually. All in-person workshop participants were provided with a nutritious meal from one of two local New York State certified Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBES), EM Tea Coffee Cup Cafe and Everyday Gourmet. Yoga workshop participants were provided with yoga mats and blocks, and art workshop participants were provided with art supplies including canvases, paint, and paintbrushes to allow them to continue to engage in these healing practices at home. The first 200 Holistic Healing Pilot Program participants received a Self-Care Kit consisting of a journal, sleep mask, set of exercise resistance bands, stress ball, essential oils, a herb/vegetable planter kit, copies of the *Let’s Talk About Mental Health* and *Let’s Talk About Grief* newsletters, and information on local and national mental health resources.



HOLISTIC HEALING PILOT PROGRAM

The Holistic Healing Pilot Program is rooted in two functions of the ECOHE as defined by the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021: piloting models and programs to improve health disparities as well as with promoting public awareness and community education with the goal of supporting healthy lifestyles among disadvantaged and marginalized people.

"Sawubona"
is a Zulu greeting meaning,
"I see you."

Outcomes of the Holistic Healing Pilot Program included the successful delivery of 50 free holistic mental health interventions to 320 participants at community-based locations throughout the East Side of Buffalo. Many community members returned to participate in multiple sessions, indicating that those participants found the workshops impactful and beneficial. Each participant was asked to complete a brief survey following each intervention designed to assess the impact of the intervention. 80% of participants complete this survey, and of those participants, 98% indicated that the intervention was helpful or very helpful. 99% of participants said that they would be likely or very likely to utilize a strategy learned or tool provided in the future, and 96% said that they would be likely or very likely to share a strategy learned or tool provided with someone they know (family member, friend, neighbor, etc.). 95% of participants who completed the survey indicated either that they were Black/African American or a resident of an East Side ZIP code. The figures on the following pages show the demographics of Holistic Healing Pilot Program participants as well as evaluation data from the participant survey.

Other intended outcomes of the Holistic Healing Pilot Program included increased individual and community wellness, increased community engagement in holistic mental health and self-care activities, and increased trust and community building among participating community members, groups, and organizations. A key intended outcome was to reduce stigma and change the conversation around mental health in the Black community by creating champions of mental health self-care who can share skills and resources obtained from participation in these interventions.

The Holistic Healing Pilot Program was very well received. Quotes from participating community members are shared on the next page.

This series promotes Black-led togetherness, emotional support, and community healing for the Black community in the form of Sawubona Healing Circles, art workshops, and yoga at locations throughout Buffalo's East Side.

HOLISTIC HEALING PILOT PROGRAM

“This circle was an answer to my prayer.”

-Sawubona Healing Circle Participant



“This was a great place to be. Connecting with others and knowing I am not alone with my emotions, feelings, validations.”

-Sawubona Healing Circle Participant

“This led me to listen to others and to understand that I am not the only person dealing with life issues and that it helps to talk to release some of your burdens.”

-Sawubona Healing Circle Participant

“Addressing some of the issues brought up was very emotional for me, but I also think [the facilitator] gave many tools to handle ourselves and at the same time face these hurdles thoughtfully.”

-Sawubona Healing Circle Participant



“It was great for my mental health. I needed that!”

-Yoga Workshop Participant

“It is great for the community! We need more programs like this.”

-Yoga Workshop Participant

“My mind and body felt like they were one.”

-Yoga Workshop Participant

“Class helped me focus and tune in with myself and my thoughts.”

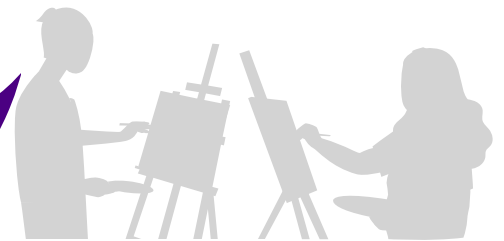
-Yoga Workshop Participant

“I enjoyed the opportunity to release stress in a safe place.”

-Yoga Workshop Participant

“I didn't think I would enjoy this as much as I did. We have to prioritize healing more.”

-Art Workshop Participant



“Amazing, meditative, creative and healing session.”

-Art Workshop Participant

“Surprising what came up! Feeling a bit of relief...”

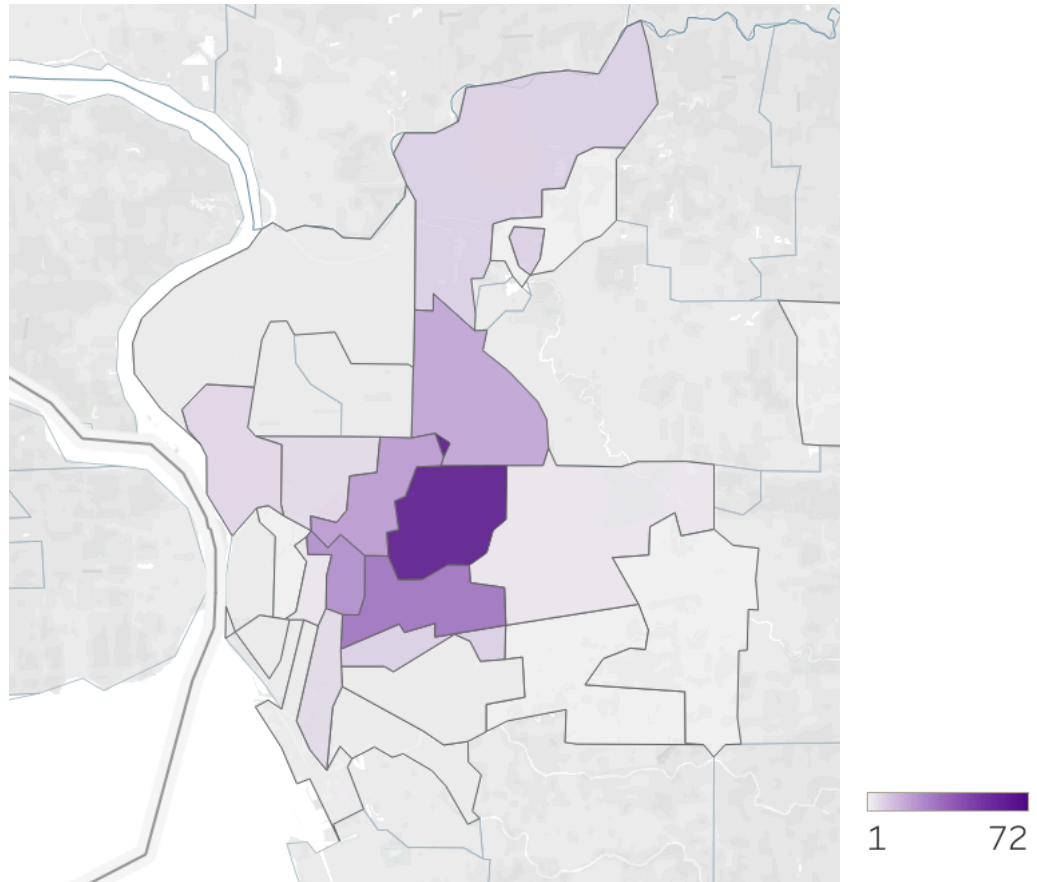
-Art Workshop Participant

“Loved the self-care/artist materials to take and use at home.”

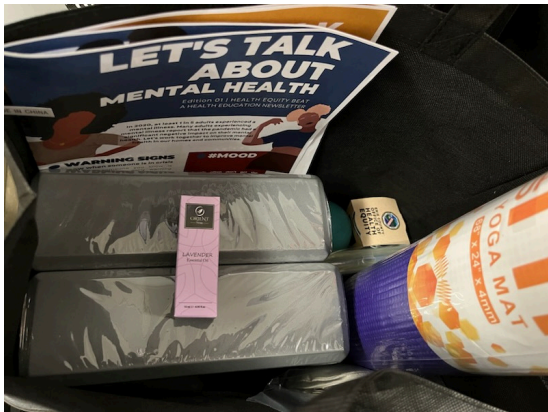
-Art Workshop Participant

HOLISTIC HEALING PILOT PROGRAM

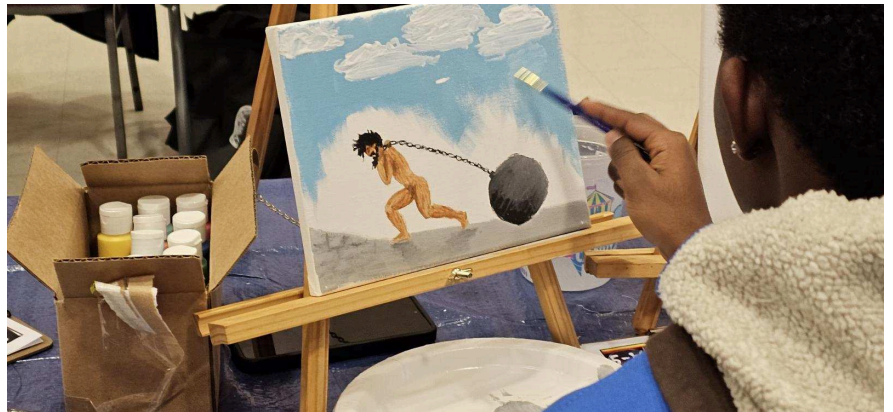
Holistic Healing Participants By ZIP Code



The above map shows the ZIP codes of the people who attended the ECOHE's Holistic Healing Pilot Program. The darker colors represent higher numbers of participants. ZIP code 14215 had the highest number of participants.



Holistic Self-Care Kit and Yoga Supplies



Art That Heals Workshop

HOLISTIC HEALING PILOT PROGRAM

Holistic Healing Participants by Race

	Art Workshop	Sawubona Healing Circle	Yoqa Workshop
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	1%	
Asian	1%		
Black or African American	84%	87%	90%
Middle Eastern or North African	1%		
More Than One Race	1%	2%	1%
White	2%		
Do Not Wish to Say	10%	10%	8%

Holistic Healing Participants by Sex Assigned at Birth

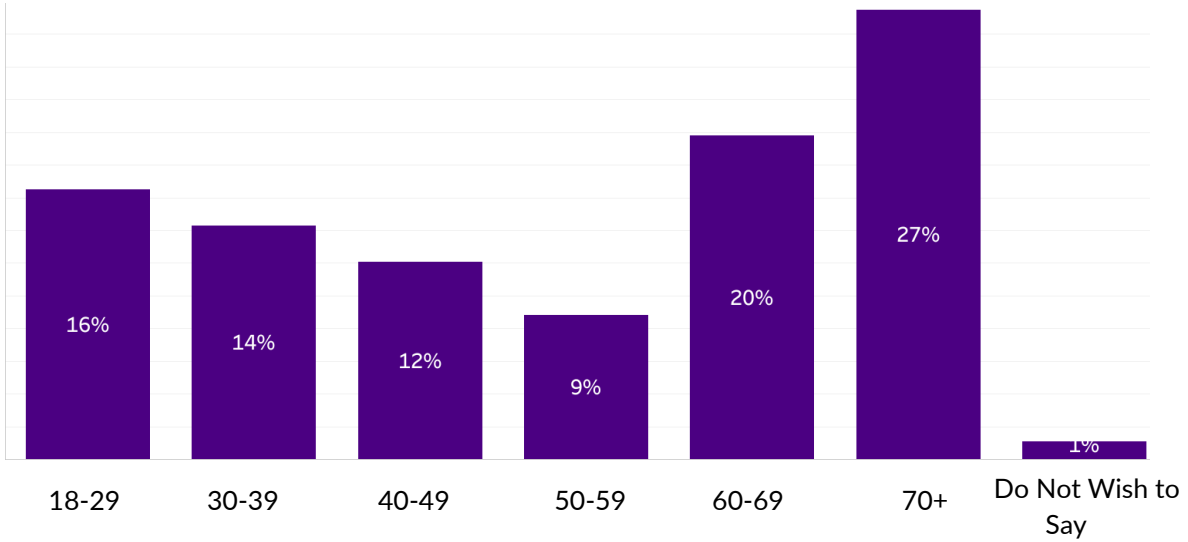
	Art Workshop	Sawubona Healing Circle	Yoqa Workshop
Male	16%	10%	1%
Female	79%	83%	95%
Do Not Wish to Say	4%	7%	4%

Holistic Healing Participants by Gender Identity

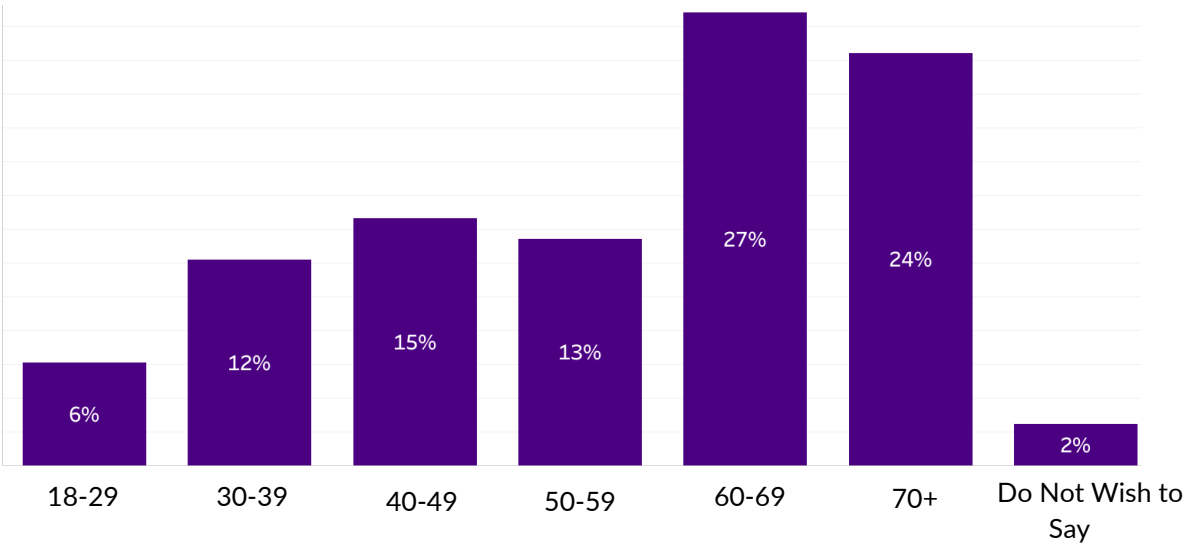
	Art Workshop	Sawubona Healing Circle	Yoqa Workshop
Man	15%	9%	2%
Woman	78%	80%	94%
Non-Binary			1%
Queer	1%	1%	
Do Not Wish to Say	5%	10%	2%

HOLISTIC HEALING PILOT PROGRAM

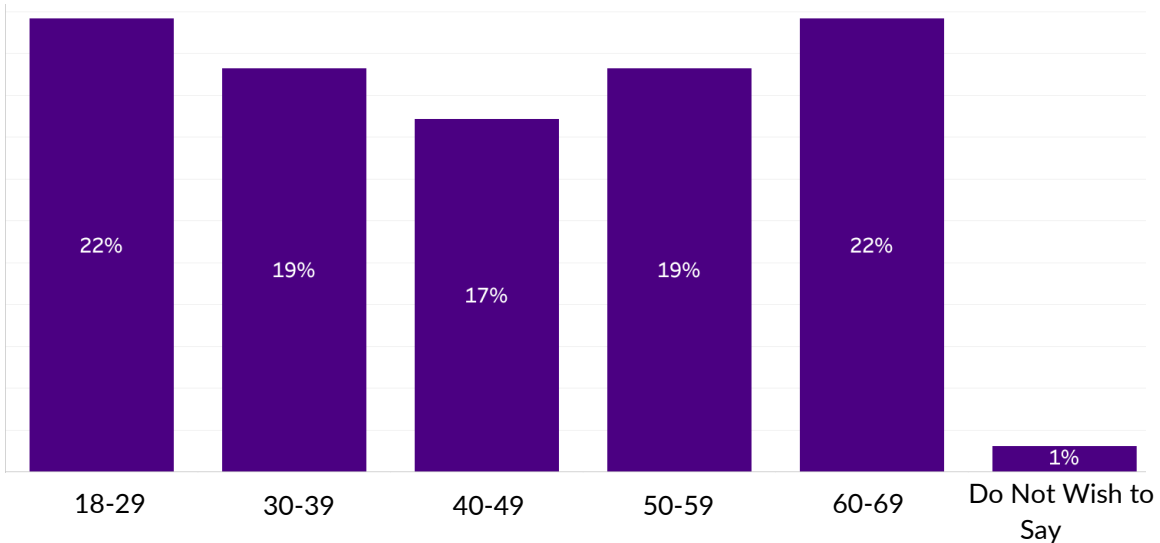
Holistic Healing Art Workshop Participants by Age



Holistic Healing Sawubona Healing Circle Participants by Age

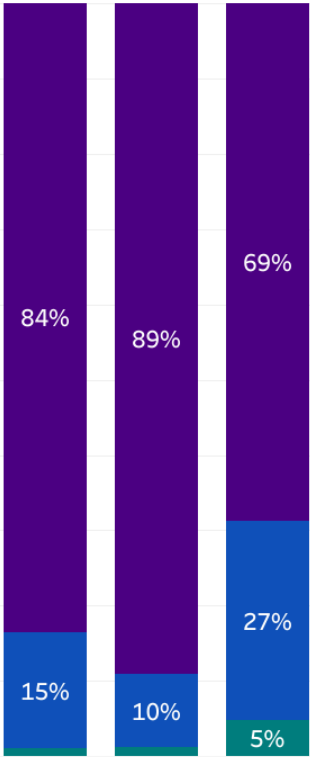


Holistic Healing Yoga Workshop Participants by Age



HOLISTIC HEALING PILOT PROGRAM

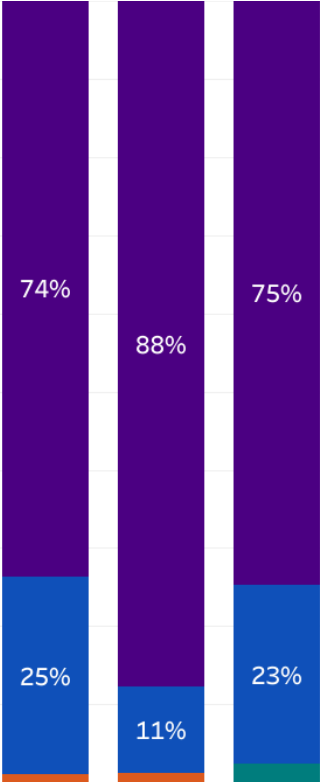
Today's Program Was:



Art Workshop Sawubona Healing Circle Yoga Workshop

- Very Helpful
- Helpful
- Do Not Wish to Say

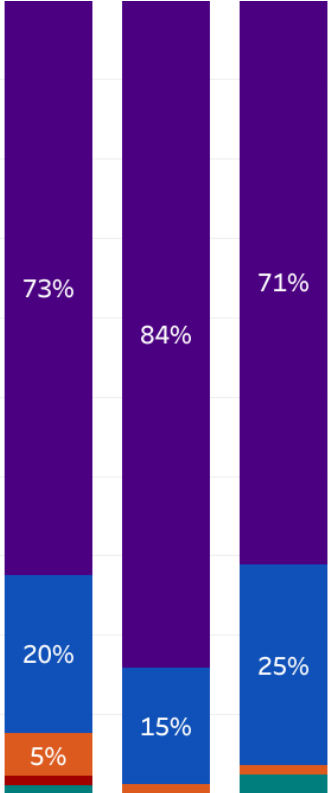
I Would Use a Strategy or Tool From Today's Program in the Future



Art Workshop Sawubona Healing Circle Yoga Workshop

- Very Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Do Not Wish to Say

I Would Share a Strategy or Tool From Today's Program With Someone I Know



Art Workshop Sawubona Healing Circle Yoga Workshop

- Very Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Very Unlikely
- Do Not Wish to Say

HOLISTIC HEALING PILOT PROGRAM

Though short in duration, the Holistic Healing Pilot Program included several sustainability efforts. Participants were provided with community resources and materials to allow them to continue to engage in these holistic mental health practices on their own after the conclusion of the Holistic Healing Pilot Program. Many community members vocalized the need for these types of interventions to continue. Some workshop facilitators are planning to continue to facilitate holistic workshops and programming beyond the end of the Holistic Healing Pilot Program. Each facilitating community organization was provided with participant feedback from their workshops, including both quotes and responses to program evaluation questions. These community partner organizations were encouraged to utilize this data when seeking funding for continuing or future programming, and each facilitating organization was connected to free grant assistance from the ECOHE.