



SeekHealing

Impact Report

2025



"SeekHealing has made me feel connected in a new community where I was totally alone."

Asheville

50 S. French Broad Avenue #138
Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 222-5029

1.5K+ connection events

7.1K+ sign-ins

190+ Listening Training graduations

85+ Elders-only events

40+ BIPOC-only events

20+ LGBTQIA-only events

What participants say



Waynesville

116 Depot St
Waynesville, NC 28786
(828) 222-5029

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To everyone seeking healing across our communities, *2025 was a wild ride.*

To everyone seeking healing across our tired world right now...I'm with you in the paradox.

***Healing isn't something I can find and check off my list –
or something I can force the world to do. And seeking won't get
me anywhere without first accepting where I am, right now.***

Healing is something we do together: by listening to each other, and reminding each other that at the end of the day, we are all seekers. Across our lines of difference, we are connected to each other. We may hold certain power or privilege or titles or status or credentials, but as long as we hold those privileges with conscious awareness, they only matter because they help us serve each other more effectively. Because we're not doing anything if we're not doing it together.

If you are reading this, you lived through 2025 alongside us – and you already know there is no single word for what last year asked of us.

It was a year of whiplash for the non-profit sector and, I suspect, for most of the people in our lives. In a shifting national landscape, the work of caring for each other became more complicated and more urgent at the same time. Here in Western North Carolina, we spent the year learning what the first year of disaster recovery actually feels like – slower and stranger than any of us expected. **On many days, the most honest thing we could do was simply keep showing up.**

And we did. Over, and over, and over again.



In 2025, SeekHealing went through what we have come to call our 1.0 to 2.0 transition: a season of organizational transformation we could not have navigated without the partners who rallied around our new Community Catalyst Program and regional disaster readiness initiative. Our deepest thanks go out to the Center for Disaster Philanthropy, Vital Strategies & Frontline Solutions, VAYA Health, and Dogwood Health Trust. You believed that the people most equipped to rebuild social health in WNC are already living here — holding communities together, often invisibly — **and that our job is to resource them, not replace them.**

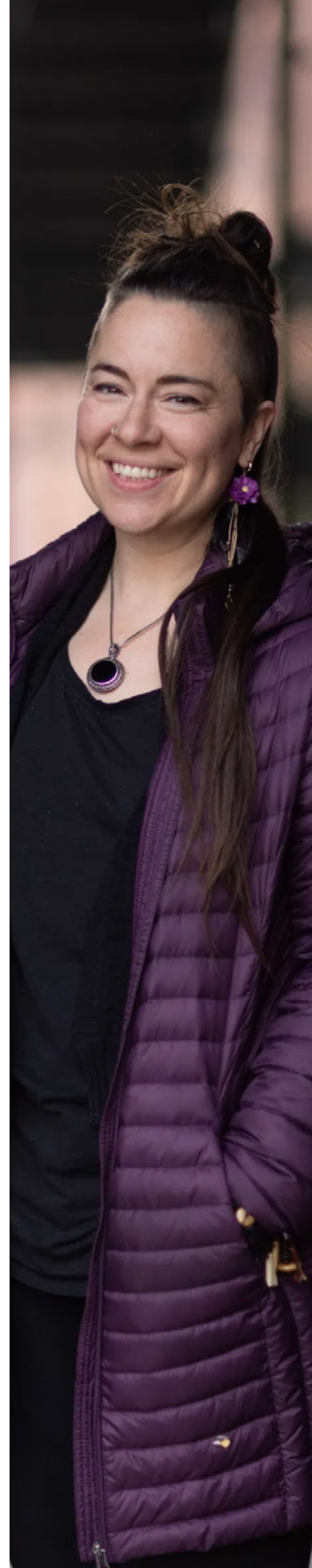
From April through October, we designed the Catalyst Program and rebuilt our org chart at the same time, all while never pausing the public programs that thousands of seekers rely on every week. Our two SHFT cohorts graduated and certified more than 30 new Social Health Facilitators throughout the year, and then, in the fourth quarter, we welcomed our first cohort of 20 Community Catalysts.

This is SeekHealing's first pass at structured, personalized training for the grassroots organizing skills that are needed to launch social health initiatives, in addition to the trauma-informed facilitation & harm reduction skills that SHFT teaches. It empowers leaders through apprenticeship, coaching, live classes, social network activation, local fundraising, and more. It permits measurable social health initiatives to be delivered into the farthest reaches of rural WNC, beyond Seek's facilities in Asheville and Waynesville.

In the not-distant future, this new program infrastructure will allow us to support new SeekHealing chapters and other Catalyst-Led programs in cities all over the country.

What was a grant narrative on paper a year ago is now a living network of neighbors helping neighbors.

In 2025, we served over 3,500 people who signed into events dedicated to healthy social connection over 7,000 times. We provided over 30 scholarships to SHFT participants, 10 of which were dedicated to BIPOC leaders who are raising the bar for harm reduction and safe BIPOC-led, BIPOC-serving spaces across Western NC. Connection-centered programs were delivered every day by people in mental health recovery, people living in rural isolation, LGBTQ neighbors, people involved in the justice system, people with low income and unstable housing, community elders, and young people with big visions.





I want to be honest about the harder parts, too. The Executive Triad we established in 2024 was dissolved this year, after thoughtful feedback from across the organization, and we have been learning to share power more dynamically through a brilliant governance model called sociocracy (learn more from our friends over at [Sociocracy for All!](#)). Our group programs & connection events flourished, but our one-on-one offerings — Seeker Pairs, Connection Missions, Listening Line calls — slowed during a year of significant staffing transitions. The new infrastructure created by the Community Catalyst program is poised to activate our one-on-one mutual aid offerings at an unprecedented scale, though about a year later than originally hoped.

In Waynesville, it's also worth noting that our total event count came down – not because we offered less, but because we offered differently: longer, more open, more accessible gatherings for neighbors, especially during the acute phases of Helene recovery early in the year. Ultimately, we held space for more combined total hours of healthy social connection in fewer, longer containers.

What surprises me most, looking back, is how closely our internal “organizational” shift mirrors what has been happening in our programs. We are becoming an organization that no longer directs people in how to connect through top-down administration of programs, but one which supports people facilitating connection in their own way, for their own people (with the support of all the great systems, containers, and tools SeekHealing has built over the years). The practice of sharing power inside SeekHealing through sociocracy is grounded in the same values we are using to strategically activate & empower that kind of grassroots organizing. **As within, so without.**

I am with you in the paradox of this moment. Healing is not a finish line. Seeking is the practice. Thank you for practicing it with us.

In gratitude,

Jenesis Nicolaisen

Co-Founder and Executive Director, SeekHealing
they/she



About SeekHealing

Vision

We envision a world where everyone belongs, where resilient and compassionate communities thrive at a slower pace – a world people no longer wish to escape, but want to live in together.



Mission

We facilitate meaningful human connection to strengthen social health, address loneliness, and equip people with the power to give and receive authentic and compassionate support from each other. We do this to improve the effectiveness of mental health treatment systems and reduce deaths of despair.

heart moment



"I've been on an autism unmasking journey the last several years, and SeekHealing has been instrumental at holding me through that journey and equipping me with tools to develop the emotional awareness and communication skills to be happy in my unmasked state."

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People

SeekHealing serves people across local communities in Western North Carolina, through grassroots organizing as well as on-site at partner locations and two community centers in Buncombe and Haywood counties. Participants span a wide range of backgrounds, life experiences, and identities: people who are struggling with loneliness and its impact on their health, as well as people who want to share the resources they have to uplift their neighbors.



We dedicate the finite resources available for program delivery to creating these systems of mutual aid especially for individuals whose experience represents one or more intersections of the following historically marginalized demographics: Black, Brown, Indigenous or Spanish-speaking; LGBTQIA+; younger than 25; older than 65; low-income and/or housing unstable; disability; justice-system-involved; living in rural isolation; and/or neurodivergent & mental health recovery.

Those who become program facilitators & organizers are trusted local leaders who already occupy formal or informal leadership roles in their neighborhoods and communities. They are the artists, Peer Supports, organizers, healers, elders, and youth leaders who are already holding modern communities together - usually invisibly and without adequate support.

SeekHealing community members are those of us most determined to address the root causes of illness: social isolation, disconnection, lack of support, and mistrust.

We are seekers who come together united by a shared hunger for something deeper than small talk, outcome-based conversations, and surface-level interactions.



Programs

We provide grassroots, community-based programs that directly address loneliness and create a safety-net for mental health crises by rebuilding social health. These programs train and compensate everyday people to organize and facilitate experiences of authentic human connection where it's needed most. We often call these "social health experiences," "trust-building events," or "healthy social interactions."

Programs led by SeekHealing "Community Catalysts" and "Social Health Facilitators" ensure that healthy social connections are happening out there in a world drowning in information overload and systematized interactions. We call these programs social health initiatives, and they include things like **Connection Practice Meetings**, **Listening Training classes**, **Connection Missions**, **Seeker Pairs**, and **Community Socials**.

Program Highlights

Program Highlight: WNC Social Health Programs

In 2025, we provided accessible and regular mental health first aid in Western North Carolina communities through a variety of events that promote healthy social connection: most notably, Connection Practice meetings and Listening Training sessions.

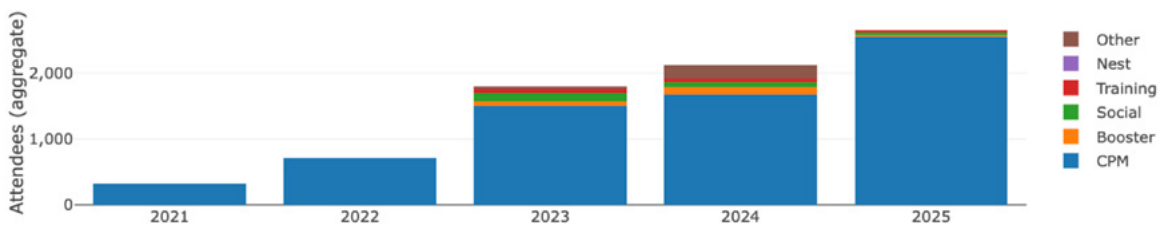
These events took place at two SeekHealing Centers in Waynesville and Asheville, NC; as well as online and on-site at partner facilities. Participants were referred to these events through local treatment centers, private therapists, non-profit case managers, social workers, and justice diversion programs.

In 2025, almost 4,000 people in need of more meaningful relationships & healthy social connection accessed SeekHealing's public programs.

Attendance by Location

Asheville

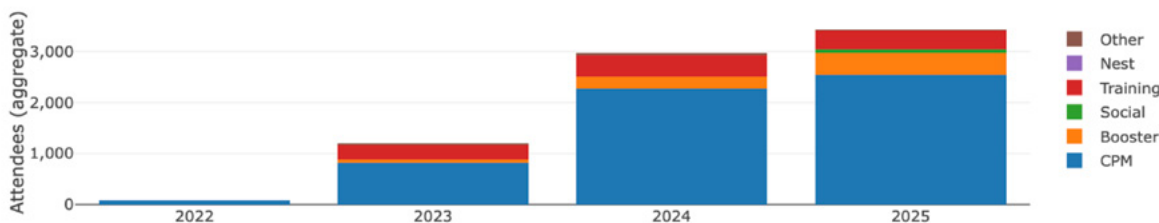
At least 300 more sign-ins every year



7,613
sign-ins

Online

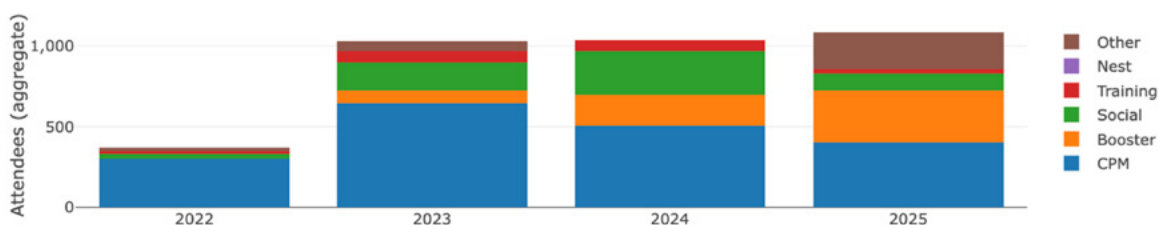
Almost half of our total sign-ins online happened in the last year!



3,515
sign-ins

Waynesville

Sign-ins have been consistent for the last 3 years, despite a drop in number of events in 2025



7,689
sign-ins

1,506

Events hosted to build healthy connection for marginalized communities

7,170

Total sign-ins across events

3,833

Unique participants engaged

109

Recovery-focused events (substance use & mental health)

47

events dedicated to the BIPOC community

88

events dedicated to seniors

157

events for those living in rural isolation

52

events dedicated to our neurodivergent community

193

People trained in Listening Training

12

Public, donation-based training courses

heart moment

"After more than a decade of trying one solution after another in an attempt to deal with my addiction, SeekHealing made by far the biggest impact.

For the first time, I feel much less shame, and I have much more control over my cravings."

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Program Highlight: Community Catalyst Course

In 2025, we designed and launched the Community Catalyst Program to activate a regional network of “social health catalysts” – local leaders, healers, artists and facilitators from eight historically marginalized demographics – to restore social capital and build long-term resilience in our region post-Hurricane Helene.

20 Community Catalysts are now being empowered with stipends, technology systems, training and coaching to support their community organizing work. We're especially proud of the programs very first Catalysts, Ariel Harris and Mark Smith, who began organizing Connection Practice meetings for isolated elders in downtown Asheville before the Catalyst Program was even funded. At one Monday meeting, every elder hand in the room went up when the facilitator asked who had recently worried about a friend's cognitive health. These are the conversations that don't happen in a clinical setting – and they are exactly the conversations that help people feel less alone, and that can be used to connect people with more support when they need it most.

The innovation at the heart of this initiative is a new kind of regional public health infrastructure: one that equips everyday residents to lead mental health first aid and resilience-building in their own neighborhoods and communities.

Program Highlight: Social Health Facilitation Training (SHFT)

Social Health Facilitation Training (SHFT) is an immersive training course that empowers grassroots leaders to create safe, trauma-informed, and non-clinical support groups and social events that address loneliness. Students learn how to create sustainable healing connection experiences one-on-one and in groups without overgiving, burning out, or carrying the burden of others' mental health and recovery alone.

In 2025, we delivered two SHFT cohorts with a 94% graduation rate across 31 total participants. 11 of these participants completed our certification program and are now involved in delivering social health programs in their local communities.



Program Highlight: Listening Training

In 2025, 193 people completed Listening Training — bringing the all-time total to 803 trained listeners. High-engagement participants consistently name listening skills as among the most transformative things they gained from SeekHealing — and many report that these skills have changed their relationships, their parenting, and their professional lives.

"It flipped my communication skills on their head."

"I use the tools with my family."

"I think it has made me a better listener...Some of my close friends have remarked that they noticed a change in me and it's made them want to go to SeekHealing as well."



heart moment

"SeekHealing has made me feel connected in a new community where I was totally alone. It helped me so much. It also helps me feel like other people in the world care about connectedness and there's hope for a less lonely future."

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The Problem / Challenge

SeekHealing was built in direct response to twin crises.

Loneliness

We are living through a loneliness epidemic. Across the United States and globally, millions of people report having no one to turn to in a crisis, no close friends, and no sense of belonging in their communities.

The U.S. Surgeon General declared loneliness a public health crisis in 2023, citing impacts on physical health equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

heart moment



"SeekHealing helped me realise what true connection feels like, and I haven't been the same since. I was able to see clearly how I had been avoiding connection for decades due to childhood conditioning, and how I am lonely despite being surrounded by people."

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Disconnection

Beyond loneliness, many people struggle with the skills required to connect at all — listening without fixing, sharing without fear, and being present with others in pain.

Social media, remote work, and the erosion of third places have left many people knowing how to communicate but not how to truly connect.

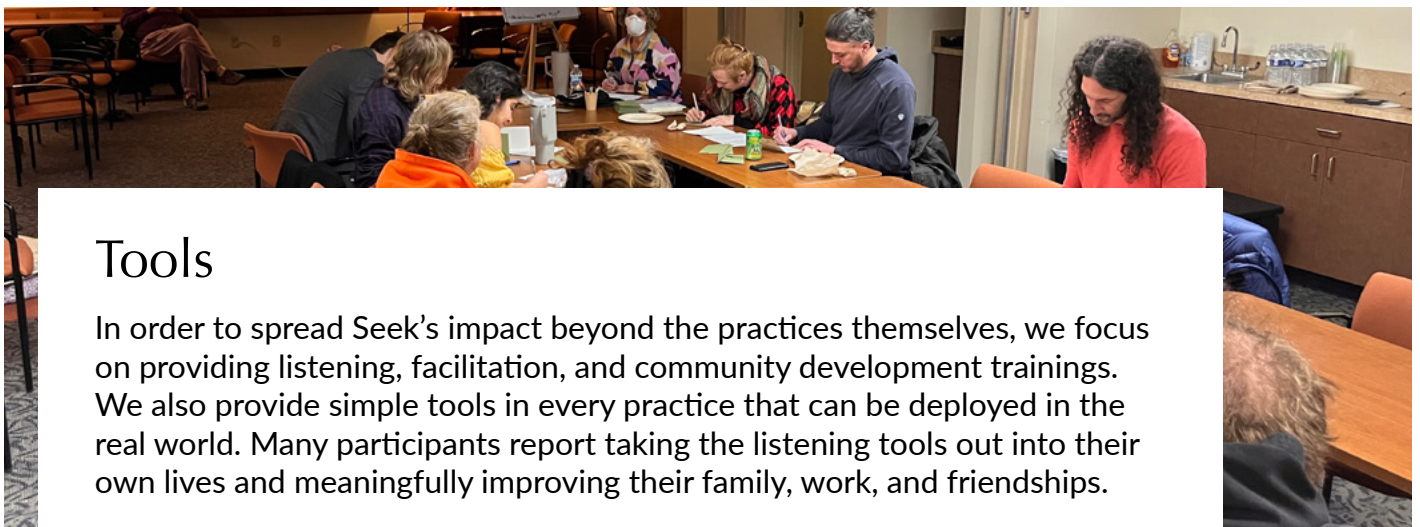
SeekHealing was built in direct response to these twin crises.

SeekHealing's Approach



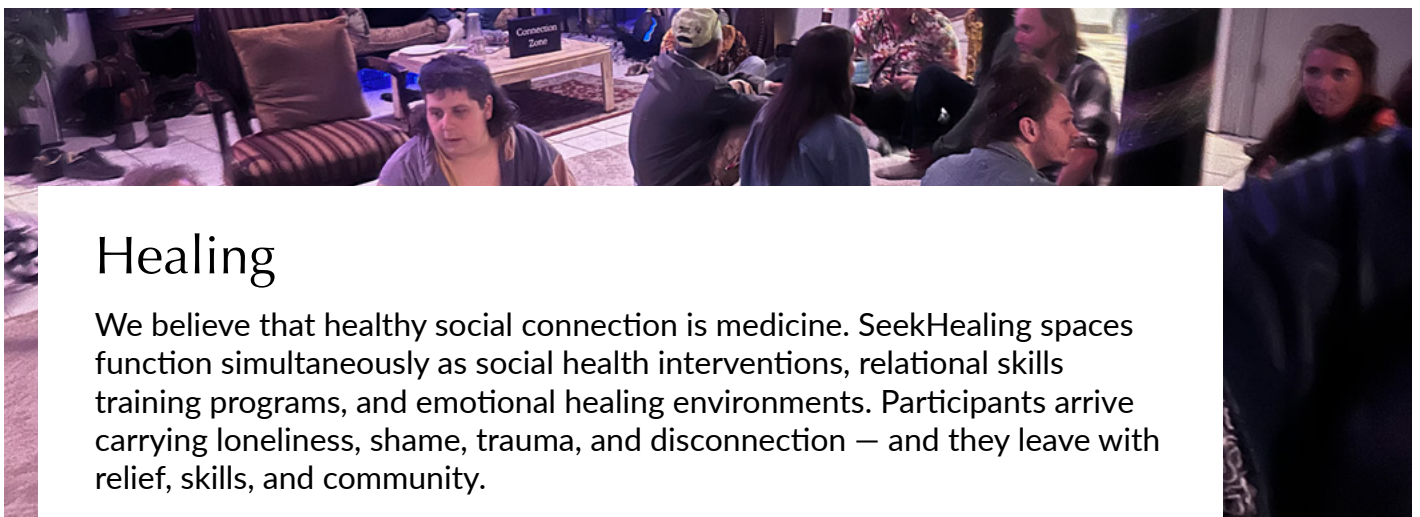
Community

SeekHealing uses a structured set of relational practices — including guided listening practices, facilitated sharing circles, and peer-to-peer connection formats — to create environments where deep connection becomes possible quickly and reliably.



Tools

In order to spread Seek's impact beyond the practices themselves, we focus on providing listening, facilitation, and community development trainings. We also provide simple tools in every practice that can be deployed in the real world. Many participants report taking the listening tools out into their own lives and meaningfully improving their family, work, and friendships.



Healing

We believe that healthy social connection is medicine. SeekHealing spaces function simultaneously as social health interventions, relational skills training programs, and emotional healing environments. Participants arrive carrying loneliness, shame, trauma, and disconnection — and they leave with relief, skills, and community.

Challenges People Enter With Based on Seeker Surveys

1. Loneliness + Isolation

Most commonly reported struggle.

2. Shame & Unprocessed Trauma

Strong across healing and emotional wellbeing themes.

3. Difficulty Connecting or Communicating

Before SH, people report surface-level interactions and fear of vulnerability.

4. Emotional dysregulation

Stress, overwhelm, depression, anxiety.

5. Limited support systems

Many cite crises without sufficient resources.

What's Going Well Based on Seeker Surveys

1. Deep, sustainable connection

2. Rapid emotional relief

People use words like shifted, lift, peace, relief

3. Healing

Trauma, shame, addiction

4. Skill acquisition

Listening, boundaries, empathy

5. Identity growth

Confidence, self-awareness

6. Empathy and diversity integration

Learning from people who are different from oneself

7. Increased meaning/purpose

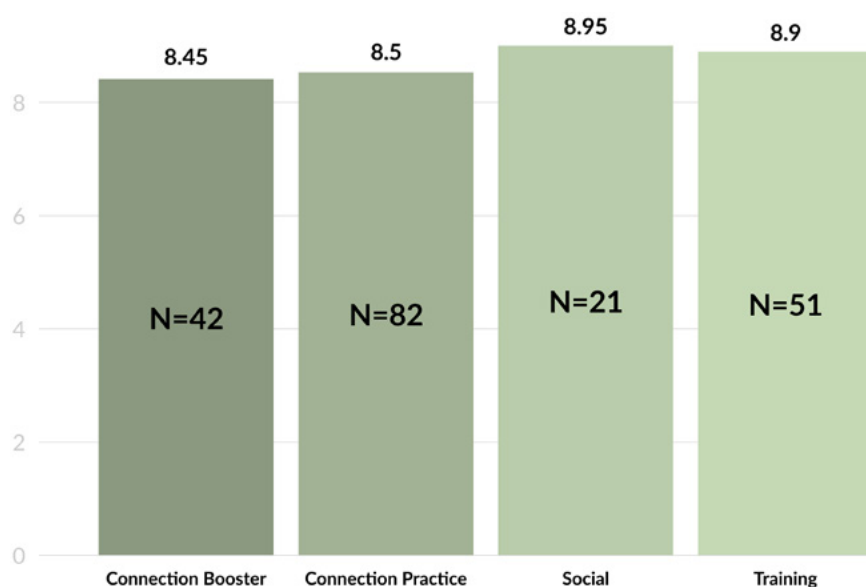
Especially from contributing to community

This research made possible Customer-First Measurement (CFM) tools provided by our partners at the Stand Together Foundation, as well as SeekHealing's Resident Researcher, Sara Ness.

A Foundation for Transformation Based on Seeker Surveys

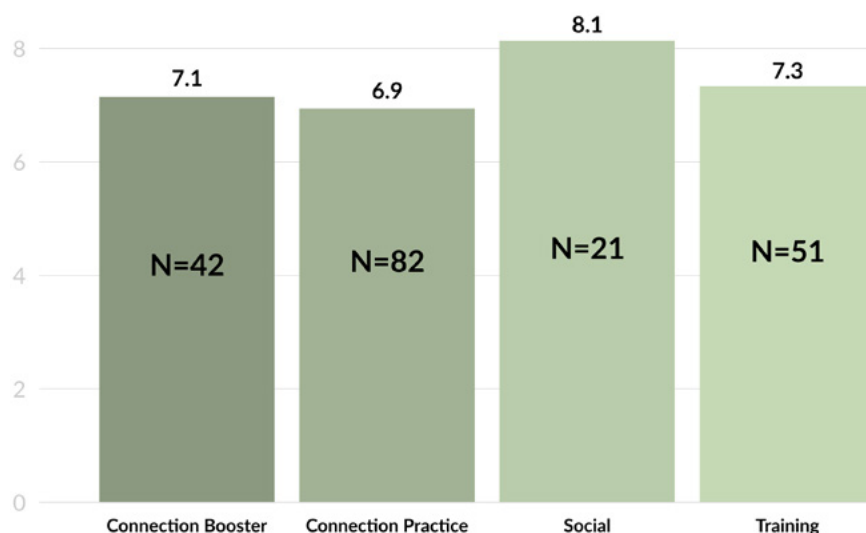
Net Promoter Score

How likely are you to recommend SeekHealing to someone in a similar situation as you?



Net Transformation Score

Has SeekHealing helped you transform your life for the better?



All this Made Possible By



Dogwood Health Trust



**Center for
Disaster Philanthropy**



**Vital Strategies &
Frontline Solutions**



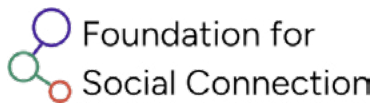
VAYA Health



Eaton Corporation



**Stand Together
Foundation**



**Foundation for
Social Connection**



**The Astral Freeman
Family Fund**



heart moment

"[Seek] has taught me how to truly listen and that it is safe to share when I feel vulnerable. I've learned that human suffering happens to every human and I am truly never alone."

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Many thanks for the photography in this report made possible by the generosity of Bittersweet Creative and their brilliant photographer, David Schmidgall

Building Trust Across Lines of Difference

SeekHealing's programming is intentionally built to reach communities most impacted by disconnection and least served by traditional mental health resources. In 2025, our events hosted:

Participants consistently report that SeekHealing is one of the few spaces where they encounter people across socioeconomic, experiential, and identity differences — and leave with expanded empathy and reduced bias.

"Met people across the socioeconomic spectrum."

"It has helped me feel seen and heard around difficult experiences. And given me an opportunity to see and hear others that I would not have I not been a part of this community."

"I was given a set of tools that allowed me to interact with other individuals without trying to fix or change the challenges they might be facing. The stories they shared offered me perspective into lives that are different and similar to my own, which made me feel more connected to others more generally, even outside of the group."

A notable strength of our model: SeekHealing is functioning as a bridge-building, bias-reducing social ecosystem — an outcome that distinguishes it from most social-emotional learning programs.

Access remains a priority challenge. Our data shows that 48% of non-attendees cite work or family schedule conflicts, 40% name anxiety or emotional barriers, and 18% face transportation or connectivity limitations. Our Online program (584 events, 3,429 sign-ins in 2025) is a direct response to these barriers — and continues to grow.



“As a caregiver for elders, I can’t get out to socialize as much at all, but I’m able to connect with people at Seek on Zoom without leaving the house.”

Governance Evolution: Embracing Sociocracy

2025 marked a significant turning point in how SeekHealing governs itself. After operating with a more traditional top-down organizational structure, SeekHealing made the intentional decision to transition to Sociocracy – a consent-based governance model that distributes decision-making, honors all voices, and creates transparent, accountable circles of responsibility.

This shift was not without friction. It required letting go of familiar structures, navigating uncertainty, and alchemizing the best of what came before into something more resilient and participatory. The result is an organization better equipped to grow without losing its soul.

What is Sociocracy?

Sociocracy is a decentralized governance system that supports effective and efficient process while increasing connection, agency, and co-creation among members.

There are 5 main fractals that manage the work of SeekHealing, organized hierarchically as shown below. Each of them have a specific domain over which they have full decision-making power. Decisions that cannot be made at a lower level of the hierarchy are elevated up to the next level.

At SeekHealing, sociocracy does not mean “no hierarchy.” It means that we share power dynamically, and empower each fractal to have full authority over their domain. This requires all participants to advocate for the resources required to fulfill the objectives of their role and/or fractal, and to actively say “no” to work or decisions that are outside of their domain.

Our organization is set up so that each fractal must come to consensus around decisions that they’re making. The consensus process is about passing proposals that have minimal risk for the project at hand, not about which ones are most popular.

The model organizes all working community members into “fractals.” At SeekHealing, there are 5 main fractals that do the work, organized hierarchically according to decision-making power. Each fractal has a specific domain over which they have full decision-making power. Decisions that cannot be made at a lower level of the hierarchy are elevated up to the next level.

Please watch this video to learn more about Sociocracy. You can also read more about it on the website of our partners at this amazing non-profit, [[Sociocracy for All!](#)]

For more detail about SeekHealing’s organizational structure, [check out our “Keep it Simple, Sweetheart” summary, [here](#).]

Team Growth

Staff



Reid Andry
Training Director



Manveer Dulay
Marketing Lead



Mitchell Gomez
Fundraising Wizard



Melisa Gonzalez
Senior Operations
Director



Tikva Kingrea
Inspired Partnerships
Lead



Sydney McGary
SHFT Enrollment Lead



Sara Ness
Resident Researcher



Jenesis Nicolaisen
Executive Director



Caitie Picot
Fundraising
Coordinator



Alison Reeves
SeekHealing
Cheerleader



Bea Reid
Catalyst Program
Director

heart moment



"SeekHealing helped give me tools to better understand and truly listen to others. It also gave me one new friend! And many other friends if I returned more often I'm sure. It also was one of the first times I admitted out loud that I thought I had a problem with weed. I'm 65 days sober today— and a big part of that was being able to share what I was feeling in a non-judgmental setting."

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Loki Donohue



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Susan Freeman



Jennifer Garrett



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Rob Heskett



Sara Ness

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**Dr. Rachel
Wurzman**



Lauren Tevelow



Joshua Ginsberg



Challenges & Learnings

Vulnerability as a Value

SeekHealing's model asks something countercultural of participants: to be vulnerable in a world that rewards armor. This is both our greatest strength and our most significant access challenge.

Our data shows that 40% of non-attendees cite anxiety or emotional barriers to participation — even among people who have attended before. This is not a failure of our programming. It is evidence that we are reaching people who carry real pain, and that our work of lowering the threshold to connection is never done.

What We Heard

Our 2025 participant research surfaced important learnings:

The community gap: The single largest unmet expectation is deep, lasting friendship. Most participants get some community — but fewer experience it at the depth they hoped for. This points to the need for more intentional continuity structures (e.g., a low-barrier buddy system, in-event connection pairing) beyond the event format itself.

The contribution gap: Many participants — especially those who disengage — want to give to the community, not just receive. When contribution pathways are unclear or high-barrier, we lose people who could become our most committed members.

Scheduling as an access issue: Nearly half of non-attendees cite work and family schedules. Most events occur during work hours. Evening offerings could materially increase reach without changing the core experience.

The Listening Line: Calls and texts answered dropped significantly in 2025 (41 answered vs. 76 all-time average). This warrants attention and investment heading into 2026.

What We're Doing About It

- Exploring evening and weekend event formats
- Redesigning contribution pathways to lower the barrier to involvement
- Developing in-event connection pairing practices
- Offering followup resources other than the Listening Line
- Continuing to normalize anxiety and emotional barriers through event framing and pre-event communication

"People are not opting out of SeekHealing. They're getting stuck at the doorway. Our job is to widen the doorway — not rebuild the house."

Thank You

SeekHealing exists because of the people who show up — to events when they are anxious, to the Listening Line when someone needs to be heard, to volunteer roles when there is more to give. Every sign-in is an act of courage. Every conversation is a small revolution against loneliness.

To our Seekers, volunteers, facilitators, partners, and funders: thank you for believing that connection is possible, that healing is real, and that community is worth building.

Impacted by this work?

You can join us in community reciprocity by offering a monthly gift to SeekHealing's Mycelial Collective.

By joining The Mycelial Collective, you aren't just a "donor" on a spreadsheet. You are providing the steady, quiet nutrients that allow our community to breathe. Much like the fungal networks beneath a forest floor, your monthly gift is the invisible infrastructure that distributes support to wherever the need is greatest—whether that's a 6 AM call to the Listening Line or a scholarship for someone starting their first Listening Training.

In a world that often feels fragmented and lonely, you are making a radical choice to invest in the power of human connection as a primary form of healthcare.

What to expect as a member of the Collective



Monthly "Shadow & Light" Updates

Once a month, you'll receive a short video or note from our team sharing one challenge we're navigating and one moment of connection that moved us.



Quarterly Connection Prompts

Every few months, we'll send you a reflection or a "relational tool" you can use in your own life to practice deeper listening.



Invitation to the Circle

Twice a year, we host a Collective-only Connection Practice meeting. It's a space for you to be heard and held, just as you help us hold others.

**We believe that no one should have to navigate the human experience alone.
With your support, we can bring this medicine to more cities across the
country in 2026 and beyond.**



SeekHealing's mission is to facilitate meaningful human connection to strengthen social health, end loneliness, and equip people with the power to give and receive authentic support.

SeekHealing.org