

# AOSW 2026



## Annual Conference

**June 10-12, 2026**

Pre-Conferences: June 9, 2026

#AOSW2026

Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront  
Portland, Oregon USA



# One Less Lonely Group: Improving program attendance through innovative delivery methods, changing group structure and thinking outside the box

Presentation:

Katie Tremel, MSW, LCSW

Abstract:

Katie Tremel, MSW, LCSW

Brynn Parkinson, MSW, LCSW

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## Learning Objectives:

- Participants will be able to identify and utilize tools for revitalizing programs in unique communities.
- Defining what success means in psychosocial programming through assessment tools, participant feedback and staying grounded in social work values.
- Implement program changes, such as content frequency, titles and registration to support programs that best meet participant needs.

# Why getting folks into groups and programs is important:

(What research says)

...General support groups can encourage “psychological empowerment” and reduce distress levels for cancer patients (Ziegler et al., 2022).

In a study on support group empowerment: the strongest perceived changes were in ‘being better informed’, ‘enhanced social well-being’ and ‘feeling more confident in the relationship with their physician’ (Ziegler et al., 2022).

The NASW Code of Ethics has Human Relationships as one of its core principles, stating: ‘Recognize that relationships are a key vehicle for change and engage members as partners in the helping process’.

# Why getting folks into groups and programs is important:

(What social workers know)

Our moral compass is steady and sound

In a group of 2 - 20 participants, every voice matters

Patient-centered, whole-person care

ETHICAL Group Facilitators

# The ETHIC Model



**E** -Examine values (personal, society, agency, client)



**T** -Think about what NASW Code of Ethics (2010) specifically addresses issue; look at laws, cases



**H** - Hypothesize about consequences



**I** - Identity who could benefit/who could be harmed



**C** - Consult with supervisor and/or colleague/attorney

# The struggle with group attendance is real

I have been an AOSW member for over 10 years now and SWON has countless threads on this topic:

Posted Aug 29, 2023 02:54 PM

Good afternoon Fellow AOSW Members:  
I am going to be starting a support group, with the assistance and collaboration of Cancer Bridges, at my clinic starting next month. I am reaching out to you for guidance and tips on how to run a successful cancer support group. Please respond with any suggestions. I appreciate your time and attention to this matter.

Reply

Posted Jan 25, 2024 02:15 PM

Hello all! My supervisor secured a grant to start 2 support groups specific to breast and cervical cancers. Our team is not well-versed in running groups. Any support or resources to help us out is greatly appreciated!

Posted Mar 09, 2026 05:48 PM

I was wondering if you all are having trouble getting support group participation, and if not, how are advertising/marketing to get more participants?



Posted Apr 11, 2023 01:09 PM

Good Afternoon.  
I run a general cancer support group. Members have to pre-register as we cap the group at 12. The last few months I have had limited participation with sometimes only a couple people. For those who run a support group that has a pre-registration do you ever cancel the group if you have only 1-3 people signed up?

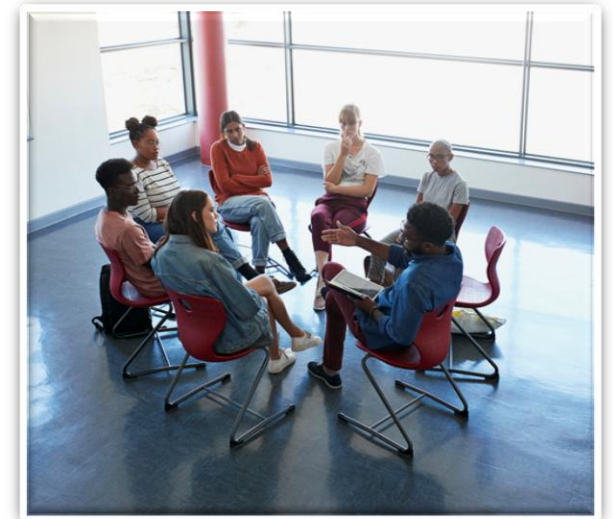
Reply

Posted Aug 01, 2024 07:18 PM

For those of you who do support groups, do you recruit only within your patient groups or in the greater community?

# Support Group Experience

- I've been an LCSW for 10 years and worked in Oncology Social Work for 12 years
- I've facilitated support groups in some capacity for 18 years
  - Low-Vision Support Group
  - Sensory Support Group for people with advanced dementia
  - Specialty/time-specific oncology support groups (funded research study)
  - All Cancer Support Group (10+ years)
  - Subbed various support groups



# Who we are: CSC South Central Indiana

- We are a 501(c)(3) non-for-profit organization that serves Bloomington, IN (home of Indiana University) and the greater south-central region (11 surrounding counties).
- We offer all **FREE** programs to those affected by cancer.
  - Wellness programs, psychosocial support, social groups, financial support, etc.)
- Offsite programs (3 infusion centers, 2 radiation oncology centers)
- A very small staff of 3 – 4 employees
  - Currently 1 in the program department (please help me).
- Partnerships and collaboration with several community organizations
  - Local Healthcare system, other non-profits, IU, etc.



Very important to note:

**Improving program and support group attendance can be done in a healthcare setting!**

# Analyzing & Collecting Data

## Database

- Allows us to track trends across each month/years

## Annual Survey

- Google Forms
  - User-friendly
  - Brief
  - Captures quick feedback

## Facilitators

- Quarterly Meetings
- Facilitator Supervision
- Email/phone/1:1 correspondence

**CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY SOUTH CENTRAL INDIANA**  
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Section 1 of 3

### Cancer Support Community South Central Indiana (CSCSCI) Participant Survey

**B I U ↺ ↻**

Cancer Support Community South Central Indiana (CSCSCI) is a non-profit in Bloomington, IN that provides free, supportive resources to anyone impacted by cancer - patients, survivors, caregivers, loved ones, and bereaved. You may have engaged with us through programs like the following: National Cancer Survivors Day (NCSA), Survivors Summit, SAVI Bras, Calendula Cream, Tumblers, Comfort Kits, Kids Backpacks, Chemo-Completion Gifts, Art Cart, Wig/Hat Fittings, Massage Therapy, Patient Assistance Fund (PAF) gas & grocery gift cards, Sound Bath, Book Club, individual counseling, and various support and social groups.

To view our program calendar, check out our website here: <https://cancersupportscin.org/program-calendar/>

I participate at CSC as a... \*

Person with cancer/patient/survivor

If you stopped attending programs, what was your reasoning?

Location of program

Day and/or time of programs

Type of programs offered

Services no longer applicable/needed/wanted

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What CSC programs do you find most helpful?

Long answer text

What CSC programs do you find least helpful?

Long answer text

# Program Evaluation: Let's get started

## **We evaluated:**

- All-Cancer Support Group
- Music Therapy Group
- Mindfulness Group
- Qigong for Health and Vitality

## **We grouped these programs into two categories:**

- Support groups (All-Cancer, Music Therapy)
- Wellness classes (Mindfulness, Qigong)

# Support Groups: **All-Cancer**

**History:** We started this support group in 2024 and for 2025, we wanted to grow attendance. So, what did we do? We looked at our Annual Survey.

Participants wanted:

- An educational component
- Have more people at the group itself

In 2025 we added:


- Education quarterly (a speaker or specific topic)
- Changed the Name
- Made a new flyer

## Flyer and marketing reflected:


In 2025 we added:

- Education quarterly (a speaker or specific topic)
- Changed the name
  - ‘Bedford Cancer Support Group’ → ‘Cancer Connections at Bedford Hospital’
- Updated the flyer

*(Don't be intimidated by making a flyer!)*



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# CANCER CONNECTIONS

## Bedford Hospital

**1<sup>st</sup> TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH | 3:00 - 4:30 PM**

**Have you felt alone in your cancer journey, or have you wondered what others are experiencing?** If so, please join us at this monthly meeting to connect with others who have been impacted by cancer. Anyone with a past or present cancer diagnosis, and any loved one of someone who has or has had cancer, is welcome to attend. Discussion is facilitated by Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Brynn Parkinson.


Some meetings will begin with a brief educational session, and other meetings will be solely dedicated to group discussion time. Meeting dates and education sessions for the second half of 2025 are listed below.

<b>July 1st</b>	<b>Introduction to Ecotherapy: Healing in Partnership with Nature</b>
<b>August 5th</b>	<b>All time dedicated to group discussion</b>
<b>September 2nd</b>	<b>What Do You Want to Hear from Others When You are Diagnosed with Cancer?</b>
<b>October 7th</b>	<b>All time dedicated to group discussion</b>
<b>November 4th</b>	<b>Genograms and Ecomaps: Assessing and Building Your Support Network</b>
<b>December 2nd</b>	<b>All time dedicated to group discussion</b>

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*Meetings are held in-person only.*

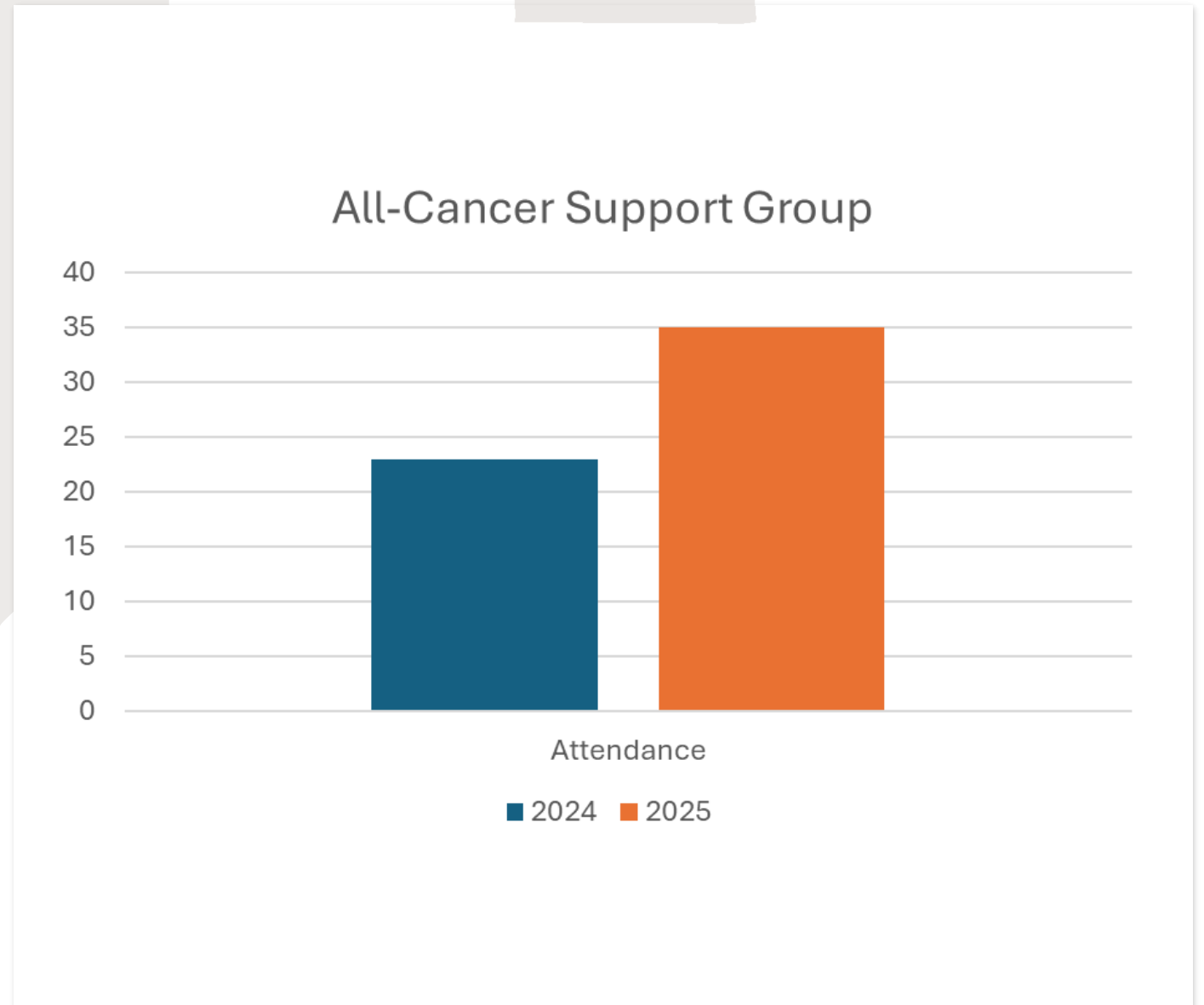
To RSVP or for more information contact:  
Brynn@cancersupportscin.org or call 317-981-2260.

 **LOCATION**  
IU Health Bedford Hospital  
Bass Conference Room  
2900 16th St. | Bedford, IN 47421

# Results: All-Cancer Support Group

- 2024
  - 23 participants
- 2025
  - 35 participants

52% increase from 2024 → 2025



# Support Groups: Music Therapy

**History:** This group began in 2022 and attendance has always been low (1 – 2 participants). We look at the group attendance for 2023, 2024 and 2025.

- We decided:
  - Survey: was not helpful this time (no feedback here)
  - BUT, we know music therapy is a wonderful resource and beneficial to survivors!
  - So, we shook things up...

*...low costs and lack of side effects of music therapy, and the moderate-to-strong stress-relieving effects of music therapy are very important for the prevention and treatment of stress-related problems*

(Witte, M. et al, 2020, p. 149)

## Flyer and marketing reflected:

In 2025 we added:

- A name change
  - ‘Supportive Sounds Music Therapy Group’ → ‘Music & Imagery Series’
- From a ‘group’ to a ‘series’
- For 1 month, offered 2x
- Registration required
- Updated the flyer

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# MUSIC & IMAGERY SERIES



Facilitated by:  
Board-certified Music Therapist, Valerie Jones

## Monday, July 14th & 28th

### 5:30pm – 7:00pm

Explore your inner wisdom through a transformative journey of sound and self. This session invites you to experience the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music—a powerful, music-centered approach to expanding consciousness and deepening insight. Let carefully selected music guide your imagination, intuition, and emotional awareness in a supportive group setting.

**This program will be held in-person only.**  
**FREE for any person impacted by cancer (survivor, patient, caregiver, loved one)**  
**NO musical experience necessary**  
**For ages 18+**

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To RSVP or for more information email:  
[Brynn@cancersupportscin.org](mailto:Brynn@cancersupportscin.org)  
or call 812-233-3286.

 **LOCATION**  
**Cancer Support Community**  
1719 W. 3rd Street | Bloomington, IN 47404

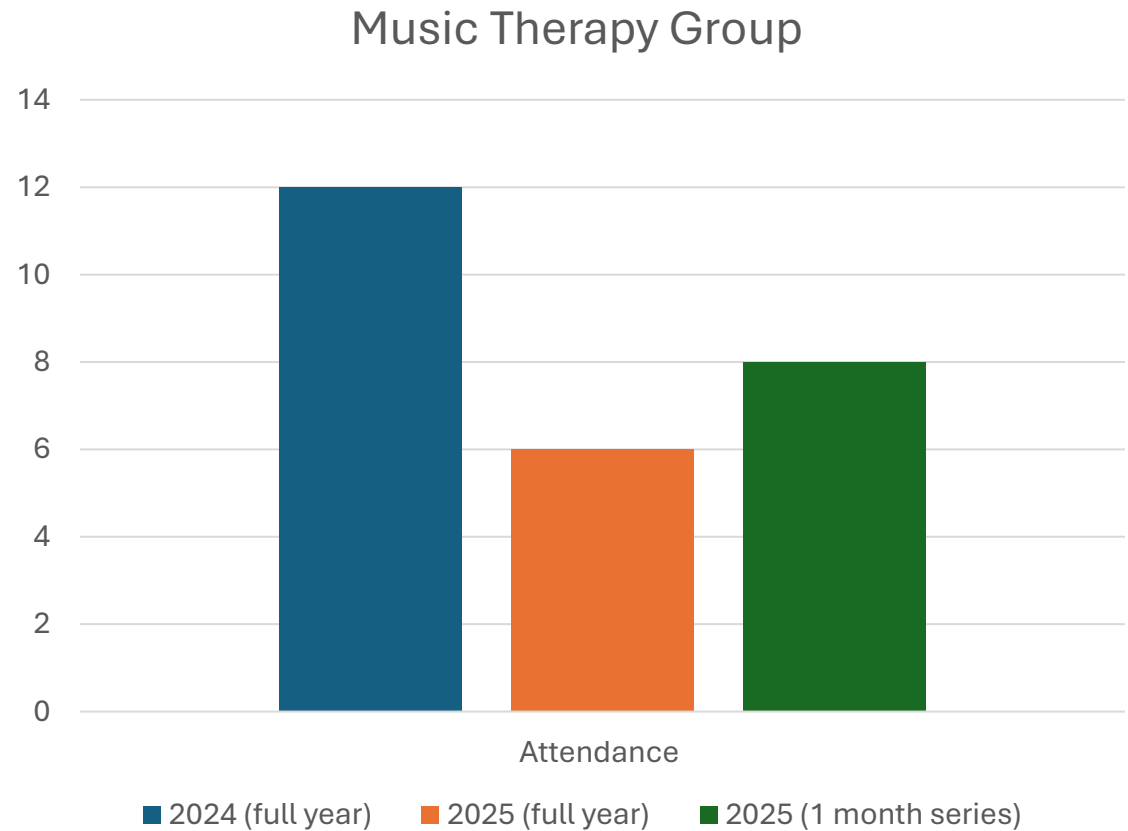
# Results: Music Therapy Group

- 2024 participation (offered 1x/mo)
  - 12 Total
- 2025 Participation (offered 1x/mo)
  - 6 Total
- 2025 Music & Imagery Series (offered 2x in one month)
  - 8 Total

## Music Series:

67% of 2024 attendance in 1 month

75% of 2025 attendance in 1 month



# Wellness Classes: **Qigong for Health and Vitality**

**History:** This program began in 2024 as 'Seated Chi Kung' and in 2025 it changed to 'Qigong for Health and Vitality'

- We decided:
  - The facilitator requested to 'change things up' to see about increasing attendance
  - Annual survey sited wellness programs as one the most needed/popular programs

*“There is an increasingly mature evidence base documenting the robust positive effects of exercise on a broad variety of important health outcomes in individuals living with and beyond cancer.”*

(Wang & Zhou, 2021)

## Flyer and marketing reflected:

In 2025 we added:

- A slight change in group format
  - Moves/motions different, chair optional
- A name change
  - ‘Seated Thai Chi’ → ‘Qigong for Health & Vitality’
- Updated the flyer



The flyer features a photograph of a group of people practicing qigong. A woman in the foreground is smiling and has her hands held out in a qigong gesture. The background shows other participants, some blurred. The text is overlaid on the image and below it.

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# QIGONG FOR HEALTH & VITALITY

## Every Thursday

### 10:00am - 10:45am

Qigong is a gentle movement practice that uses slow, flowing motions to reduce stress, enhance focus, and support emotional and physical well-being; participants may choose to stand or sit.

**This program is held both in person and virtually.** For more information contact Katie at [katie@cancersupportscin.org](mailto:katie@cancersupportscin.org) or call **812.233.3286**.

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To join or for more information email:  
[Katie@cancersupportscin.org](mailto:katie@cancersupportscin.org)  
or call 812-233-3286.

**LOCATION**  
Cancer Support Community  
1719 W. 3rd Street | Bloomington, IN 47404

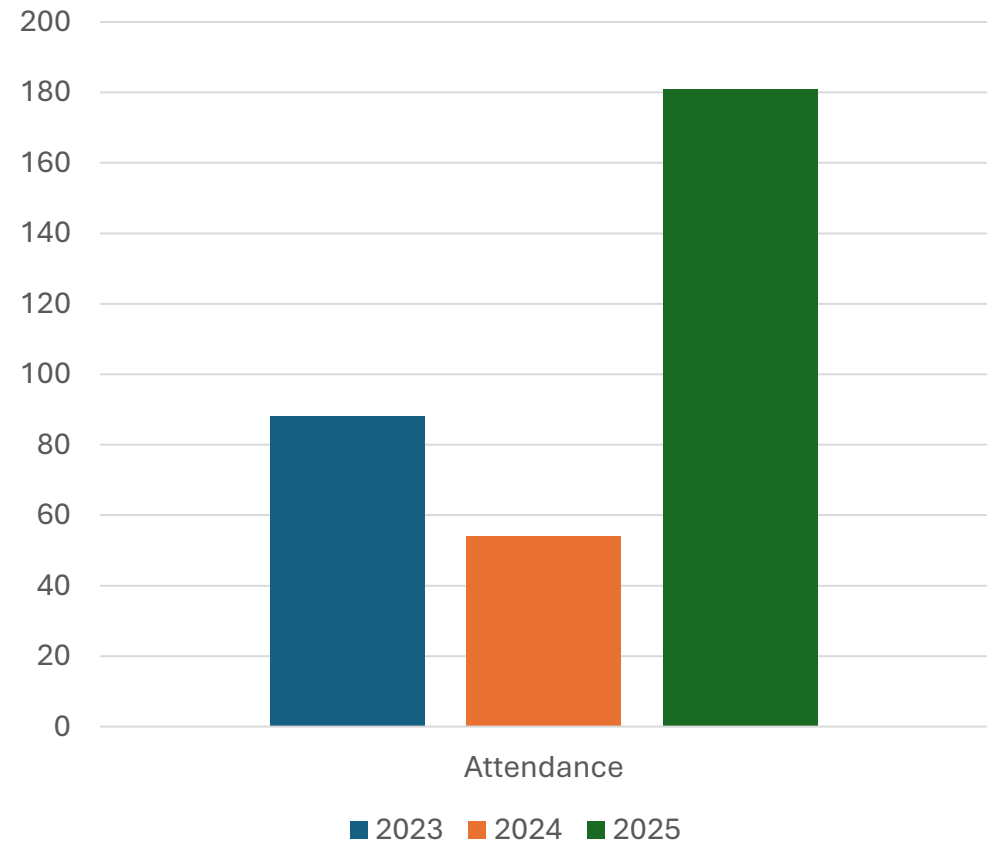
# Results: Qigong for Health and Vitality

- 2023 participation
  - 88 Total
- 2024 Participation
  - 54 Total
- 2025 Participation
  - 181 Total

39% decrease from 2023 → 2024

235% increase from 2024 → 2025

## Qigong for Health & Vitality



# Wellness Classes: **Breathe & Release**

**History:** This program began as 'Mindfulness Group' in 2023 and changed to 'Breathe & Release' in 2024.

- We decided:
  - The facilitator requested a name change to be more inviting and inclusive
  - Annual survey showed participants love this facilitator

*“The evidence suggests that mindfulness may treat depression by targeting the very inflammatory pathways that correlate with a worse prognosis in cancer.”*

(Chayadi, Baes & Kiropoul, 2021)

## Flyer and marketing reflected:

In 2025 we added:

- A time change
  - Moved from late afternoon to the noon hour
  - Data reflects lower attendance in late afternoon/evening programs
- A name change
  - ‘Mindfulness Group’ → ‘Breathe & Release’
- Updated the flyer



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# Breathe & Release

**1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of Each Month | 12:00pm**

Breathe in and receive... breathe out and release. Our breath is our constant companion. There is no “wrong way” to breathe, but a little bit of practice and attention can help us to breathe more skillfully.

In this lunch-hour meeting, we will take some time to simply breathe together. We’ll also discuss practices, meditations, and other approaches to welcoming in the breath, and enjoying the release of exhale.

**This program will be held in-person and virtually.**

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To attend or for more information email:  
**Brynn@cancersupportscin.org**  
or call 317-981-2260.

 **LOCATION**  
Cancer Support Community  
1719 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street | Bloomington, IN 47404

# Results: Breathe and Release

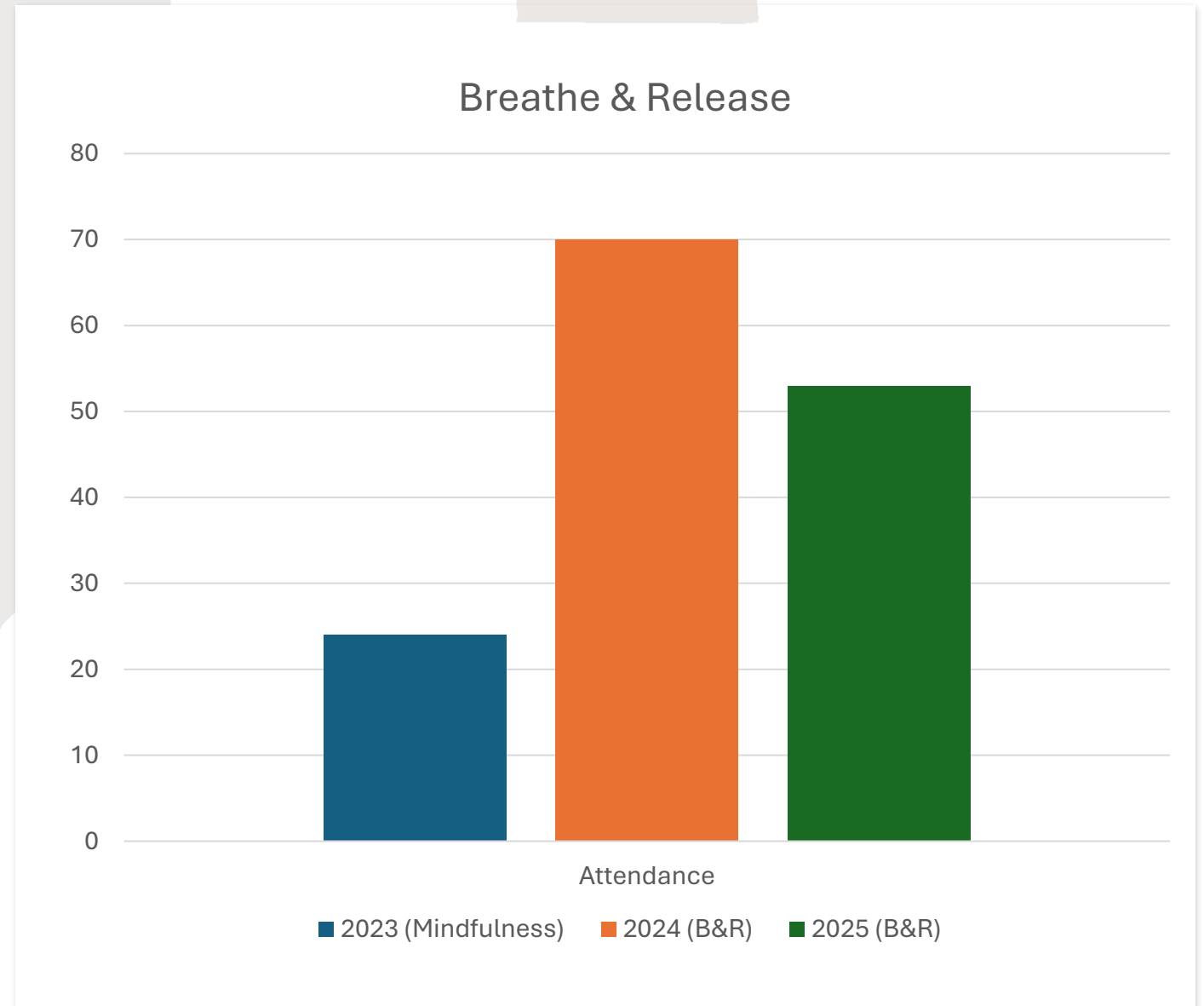
- 2023 participation
  - 24 Total (Mindfulness Group)
- 2024 Participation
  - 70 Total (B&R)
- 2025 Participation
  - 53 Total (B&R)

192% increase from 2023 → 2024

24% decrease from 2024 → 2025

## What this tells us?

Some programming needs to evolve every few years to make it new again to our community



## Of course, Limitations

**A newer organization with room for growth**

- We are always finding new ways to promote/market ourselves

**Changing population**

- This never stops!

**Outlying circumstances**

- Illness, weather, death, etc.

## Social work values to the forefront

### **We must remember:**

- Quality over quantity:  
even one person at a  
group MATTERS
- We are providing a space  
for people to feel  
welcomed, safe and  
heard
- Keeping a social work  
lens, always

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