

Community Living Room

An Ebb & Flow Connections Cooperative
Project



The Community Living Room is a non-clinical, person-centered environment for people seeking social connection and emotional support.

The primary objective of the Community Living Room is to utilize the concept of connection as a framework for prevention in a no-cost, community-based supportive space.



Who's It For?

The Community Living Room is for anyone who is feeling loneliness, isolation, grief, or strong emotions and need someone to talk to and connect with.

What's it like?

For each pop-up, 2-3 trained listeners are present and trained in Emotional CPR. The connection can be 1:1 with a listener or in small groups with participants.

Pop-ups are offered in 3-hour segments. In some spaces, they might look like coffee and connection, while in others, they could look like an ice cream social.

Pop-ups are based on the community's needs and offered to everyone, including facility staff.

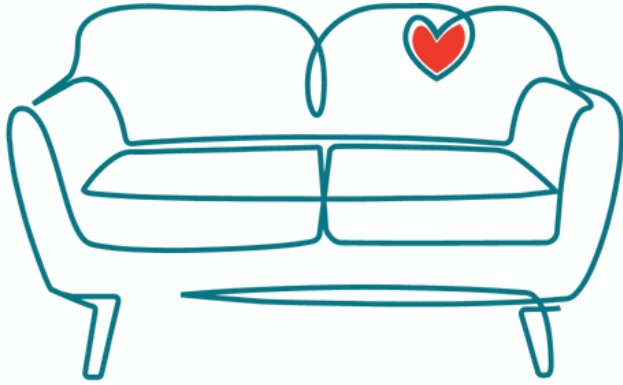


EBB & FLOW
Connections • Cooperative

Karen Iverson Riggers
kiversonriggers@gmail.com
920-527-0810

Lynn McLaughlin
920-810-7479
lynn@dandalliance.com

The History



Community Living Room

Our work began in 2019 by providing Emotional CPR training in Fox Valley through LEAVEN, a non-profit organization that provides financial assistance to needy people. LEAVEN recognized that people coming for financial support were also experiencing emotional distress. They received funding to provide Emotional CPR training to their staff, volunteers, and faith-based community partners. They also implemented a “Listening space” at the LEAVEN Community Resource Center. The space was staffed by individuals who completed the 12-hour Emotional CPR Practitioner Certification, and the listeners began hearing the stories of people in our community.

When the pandemic hit in 2020, expanding Emotional CPR became urgent and critical to building the capacity of individuals who could provide support throughout our community. Through our work, over 1,800 people have been trained in Emotional CPR. Participants come from all walks of life and represent various community organizations, including non-profits, businesses, faith communities, schools, law enforcement, county government and human services, clinicians, and more.

The LEAVEN Listening Space demonstrated the importance of connection as prevention. To expand listening space opportunities, we obtained a 6-month planning grant to explore the concept of Community Living Rooms. We identified the need for a non-clinical, person-centered environment with the primary objective of connecting as a framework for prevention. We interviewed over 60 community stakeholders and learned that pop-up spaces would allow us to bring the environment to all community areas for people seeking social connection and emotional support.

In 2023, we received a grant from the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region to pilot pop-up Community Living Room spaces in collaboration with multiple community partners, including Menasha Public Library, Kaukauna Library, ESTHER, Pillars, Building for Kids, Mile of Music, and Thompson Center on Lourdes. Pop-ups were also provided at multiple community events.

In May, the Office of the U.S. The Surgeon General released an advisory report identifying social isolation and loneliness as a public health crisis, acknowledging the work we seeded in 2019. At the end of 2023, Ebb & Flow Connections Cooperative received a grant in collaboration with Winnebago County from the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment through the Medical College of Wisconsin to expand the Community Living Room in Winnebago County beginning in 2024.

In 2024, Ebb & Flow Connections Cooperative will continue to offer pop up Community Living Room spaces - both in person and virtual - and will open a permanent Community Living Room space in the fall of 2024 in downtown Appleton in the Rise affordable housing development one block north of the library and transit center.

Who is Ebb & Flow Connections Cooperative?

Ebb & Flow Connections Cooperative is a worker owned cooperative formed in 2021 in Northeast Wisconsin. Ebb & Flow Connections Cooperative is committed to expanding opportunities for social connection and emotional wellness that improve the quality of life for people in our communities. We are passionate about creating spaces where people feel seen, heard, and valued. Through training, listening healing spaces, and consultation, we offer opportunities for people to learn about and experience emotional wellness and healing.