



Art-making at FIG/Future Ink Graphics

## ‘Prescribing’ the Arts to Treat Mental Health and Loneliness

Knowing the powerful impact engaging with the arts has on mental health and loneliness, The MetroHealth System’s **Center for Arts in Health** has launched **ArtsRx**, a pilot project that allows providers to “prescribe” arts activities and experiences for their patients.

The project, funded through a \$16,578 **ArtsNEXT grant** from the **Ohio Arts Council**, links patients with opportunities for creative expression led by local artists and arts organizations.

When patients receive their “prescription for the arts” from their provider, they can participate in active engagement opportunities, like art and music making, writing and movement workshops; passive engagement experiences, such as viewing an art exhibit, listening to live music or attending a performance; or both. Patients can participate in as many activities as they would like during the pilot period, which runs through May 12. And it’s all free.

“When you ask someone about their past, so much of the meaningful experiences they share are often immersed in artistic pursuits,” said Psychologist Eric Berko, PhD, who works with the MetroHealth Integrated Behavioral Health Team. “The existential loneliness we experience is reduced by shared experiences of beauty and connection: And that is the arts.”

Loneliness, like food insecurity, financial strain and lack of access to reliable transportation, is a social driver of health – a social condition that inhibits a person’s chance for a healthy life.

MetroHealth’s Institute for H.O.P.E.™ screens patients for SDOH and connects them with community resources that can help. The Institute also develops initiatives to fill the needs that existing

programs aren’t able to meet.

The ArtsRx pilot program is one of those initiatives. Linda Jackson, Director of the Center for Arts in Health, said the program is a response to the high levels of social isolation and stress seen in patients.

Last year, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy declared social isolation a public health crisis that increases the risk of premature death by more than 60 percent. It’s linked to cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, dementia and suicide. That crisis has been seen in MetroHealth’s own patient population, where 92% of the patients screened are shown to be at risk for social isolation.

Those are the patients the ArtRx pilot program is designed to serve. Patients who receive their primary care at Old Brooklyn Medical Center, Ohio City Health Center and Main Campus are eligible to participate if they screen at-risk for social isolation or are referred by an Integrated Behavioral Health provider.

The program activities are hosted and led by MetroHealth Center for Arts partners including **FIG/Future Ink Graphics**, **Inlet Dance Theatre**, **Cleveland Museum of Art Community Arts Center**, **Julia de Burgos Cultural Arts Center**, **Cleveland Public Library** and **Djapo Cultural Arts Institute**.

The activities all take place at locations within the Clark-Fulton community, including the PIVOT Center for Art, Dance and Expression. All arts engagement activities prescribed are offered free of charge, and transportation is provided for patients who need it.

# Creative Art Therapies Group Sessions Now Available to Seniors



*"Under the Surface," a sample artwork created by a MetroHealth art therapist for a group session, reminds us that our perspectives are limited, and there is a world larger than our senses can capture.*

The **Creative Arts Therapies** team expanded its services to provide ambulatory group sessions for Senior Care and Red Carpet patients who may be experiencing stress and social isolation.

Groups focus on building coping skills and managing life transitions through the creative arts modalities, which can have a positive impact on the overall management of health and wellness.

"As a creative person, coming to Art Therapy and Music Therapy has been the balance I needed in addition to my talk therapy and medication," said Cheryl Stewart, who participates in sessions at the Old Brooklyn Campus. "It's like "undercover" therapies – you don't feel like you are in therapy, but you gain skills, and the stigma doesn't get to you because it's art and music. The therapists bring something new every week, and we do the work in the most caring and kind way. In the end, you create a tangible reminder for your personal growth. I have gained a sense of peace by accepting who I am. As long as I can come, I will."

Patients need a referral from their provider to participate in the group sessions, which take place weekly in three MetroHealth locations: Old Brooklyn Campus, Spry Senior Strongsville and Spry Senior Brook Park.

## Unite Ohio: Life-Changing Connections

At MetroHealth, we understand that access to essential services is crucial for improving the health of our patients. We continue to partner with Unite Ohio, a network of healthcare providers and community organizations, to achieve this goal.

Since inception, more than **23,237 referrals** by MetroHealth staff have helped connect **11,830 patients** with essential resources, like fresh food, digital access, utility assistance and transportation. In Q1 2024, **1,745 referrals** were made by MetroHealth.

**Art Therapy Studio**, a recent addition to the Unite Ohio network, was founded more than 50 years ago at MetroHealth, making it the oldest medical art therapy program in the United States. Today, the nonprofit continues to make a difference in the lives of MetroHealth patients.

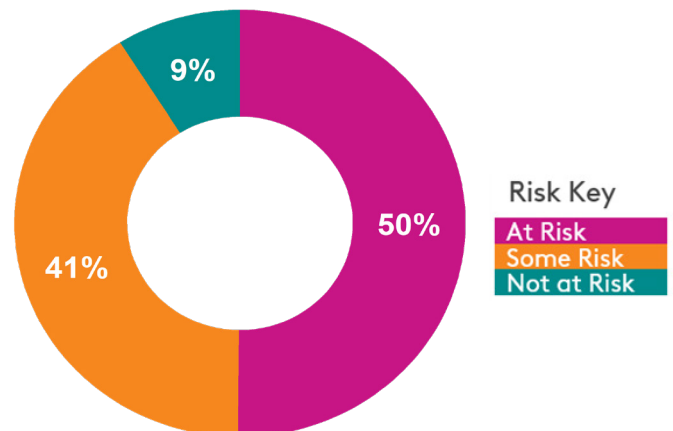
The group provides an estimated 40 contract hours of weekly art therapy to individuals in inpatient rehabilitation and outpatient cancer care. Art Therapy Studio is a valuable partner for MetroHealth's Creative Art Therapies team, offering extensive clinical knowledge and an innovative approach to the work. In 2023, MetroHealth's Creative Arts Therapies provided **4,843 art and music therapy sessions** throughout the System. In the first quarter of 2024, we conducted **1,252 sessions**.

In the first quarter, we conducted **18,531 screens** for social isolation, which recently was declared a public health crisis and is linked to cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, dementia and suicide.

Participation in the arts has been shown to reduce loneliness, isolation and symptoms of depression and anxiety.



## Social Isolation Risk Among Screened Patients: Q1 2024



## Program Updates

- This quarter, new art collections were added to clinics in our Middleburg Heights and Beachwood outpatient sites. **The Center for Arts in Health** carefully curates the artwork, ensuring the collections inspire **hope, healing and community** for all of our patients, visitors and employees. Since 2016, 16 facilities throughout the System have added nearly **2,000 works of art**, with more to be added in the future.
- **The SAFE Project** is an in-school, arts-based, primary prevention program that promotes individual resilience among pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st, 9th, 10th and 11th grade students. Through the arts, students explore how to channel their emotions and express themselves in healthy ways. During the 2023-2024 school year, the SAFE team completed **304 workshops in 35 classrooms** across four Cleveland Metropolitan School District locations, reaching **831 students**. Recent research, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, has shown a statistically significant increase in hope and school belonging, which are important psychological factors for adolescents. The results speak for themselves - the SAFE Project is gaining national attention for its innovative approach to prevention. To learn more, [CLICK HERE](#) to watch a video from a recent celebration showcasing student participation in the SAFE Project.
- Earlier this year, the **Center for Arts in Health** and Glick Center architects, HGA, conducted a study to investigate the impact of The Glick Center's art collection on patients, family members, visitors and employees. The study was Institutional Review Board-approved and received responses from **230 participants**. MetroHealth employees accounted for 65% of the participants; 28% were patients, family members or their visitors; and 7% were visitors to the facility for reasons other than visiting patients. The analysis of the survey data is currently ongoing. However, respondents have expressed appreciation for the unique artwork at The Glick Center.

I think the artwork reflects the community we serve and shows that MetroHealth cares more than just about healthcare.

I think the artwork is more personal and community oriented compared to the basic artwork usually seen in hospitals.

Love the connection to Cleveland and the diverse members of the community.

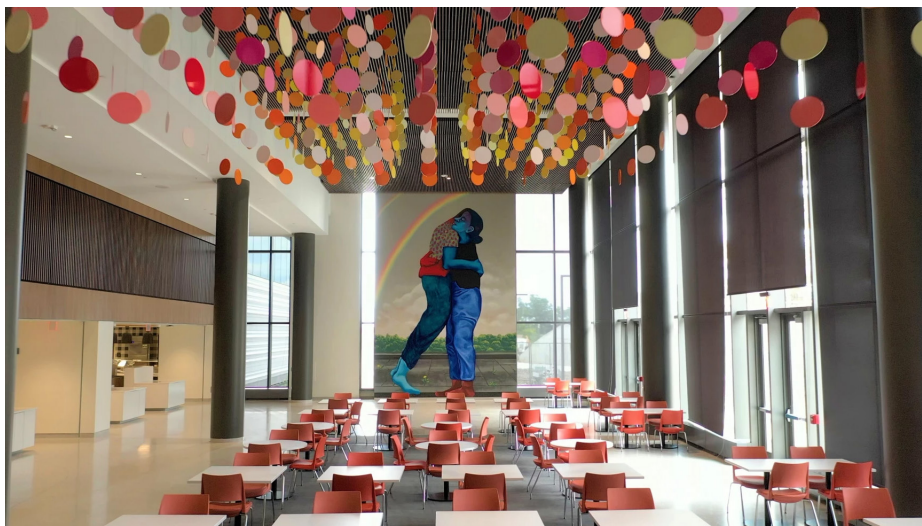
## COMMUNITY OUTREACH, RESEARCH & EVALUATION



This quarter, we participated in **37 community events**, published our work in **two publications** and showcased our program findings at **14 regional and national conferences and webinars**.

Recent highlights of our work include:

- [MetroHealth's School Health Program opens three in-school clinics with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and celebrates its 10th anniversary.](#)
- [MetroHealth leaders, the Institute for H.O.P.E.<sup>2</sup> and Ohio Senators demonstrate their commitment to addressing housing as a social driver of health before the Senate Select Committee on Housing.](#)
- In February, the Journal of Trauma & Injury published the article, "Changes in Interpersonal Violence and Utilization of Trauma Recovery Services at an Urban Trauma Center in the United States during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Retrospective Comparative Study," co-authored by Mark Kalina Jr., Senior Strategic Analyst for the Population Health Innovation Institute and the Institute for H.O.P.E.<sup>2</sup>



Lynnea Holland-Weiss' mural, "Embrace," is one of the most prominent pieces of art in The Glick Center.