

## **Community Engagement Chat: Building Community in the Wake of Tragedy**

The Engagement Chat Group met just days after the tragedy of the Buffalo mass shooting, and our conversation focused on the importance of strengthening bonds in our communities. Discussion topics included ways to increase neighborhood involvement, and a significant need to address mental illness and strengthen efforts to bring people back into the fold after the social interruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants discussed the impact that media has on culture and progress, and the need for increased creativity for both virtual and in-person events. A few ideas from the conversation were:

- Create events that build bonds and consider new ways to do that virtually
- Invite neighbors to bring a friend or family member to extend our reach
- Develop programs that support positive mental health and friendship
- Consider changes to the work life structure and create space for more and better community relationships
- Build partnerships with community anchors like churches, schools, community centers, youth groups, colleges, etc. and attend their events
- Develop mental fitness strategies to share with the community
- Incentivize participation in neighborhood events and activities with gift cards, door prizes, free services, educational options, etc.
- Create an inspirational, widely held vision for the future