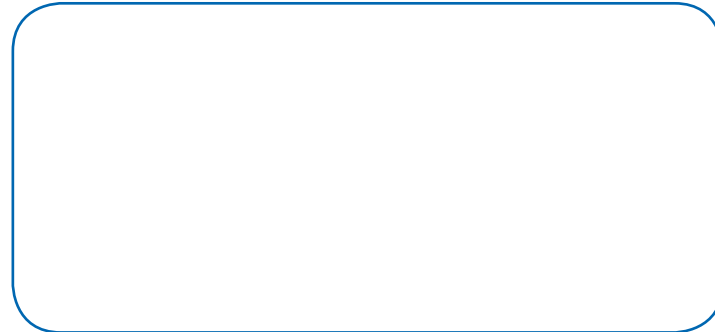


The Pennsylvania Compeer Coalition  
 3125 West Ridge Pike, Suite D  
 Eagleville, PA 19403



## Compeer International Conference Comes to Philadelphia!

Compeer, Inc. is delighted to announce that its 24th Annual International Conference will be held in historic Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on April 29, 30 and May 1, 2009.

The Conference will be hosted at the Radisson Plaza-Warwick Hotel in the heart of downtown Philadelphia.

More info can be found at [www.compeer.org](http://www.compeer.org), then click on the NEWS tab on the right-hand side.

## Bring the Compeer Model to Your County!

Key County Decision Makers:

Please invite Compeer to visit your county! A Compeer leader can come to your county for the purpose of doing a presentation, "All about COMPEER", at a meeting where consumers, family members and professionals come together.

Contact OMHSAS or one of the Pennsylvania Compeer Coalition representatives at the numbers provided. We welcome the opportunity of communicating with you about Compeer and to represent an established best practice model.

Compeer energizes mental health recovery through the healing power of friendship.

*Friendship is a powerful tool. Memories may fade but the impact of A trusted friendship lasts a lifetime. Bring the gift of friendship to people who desperately need it in your area!*

In the spirit of friendship,  
**Contact Compeer for more information**

**Ginny Mastrine, Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services**  
 Phone: 717-772-7926

**Joe Cruice, Director of Compeer, Suburban Philadelphia Area**  
 Phone: 610-631-1009

**Elaine Callihan, Compeer Program Coordinator in Butler County**  
 Phone: 888-329-0468 (toll free)



Fall 2008

## ABOUT Compeer

ARE YOU IN THE KNOW ABOUT COMPEER?

COMPEER is about recovery!

Compeer strives to help adults and children overcome feelings of loneliness, isolation and low self esteem through the supremacy of supportive friendships.

Compeer volunteers are helping individuals on their journey to recovery. Good things happen when you've got a friend! Compeer volunteers are those friends.

"How lucky I am to have a friend who sees me at my best and at my worst, and accepts me anyway."

Check it out on the web: [www.compeer.org](http://www.compeer.org) or send an email to [info@compeer.org](mailto:info@compeer.org). Alternately, go to [www.PARRecovery.org](http://www.PARRecovery.org), click on Statewide/Initiatives, then Other OMHSAS Initiatives then Compeer.

This publication is made possible by a collaboration between the Pennsylvania Compeer Coalition and the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS).

## Compeer Lancaster Celebrates "Uniquely You"

Much of the field of mental illness deals with topics like symptoms, treatment, medications, relapses and the hard work of recovery, but every October since 2004, Compeer Lancaster has sponsored an evening of lighthearted fun, food and laughter as the talents of the artists among us are enjoyed. 20-25 Compeer friends are the "featured artists" for this evening of celebrat-

The friendship many people find through Compeer helps them to believe in themselves again. Along with friendship, creative expression is another important avenue to healing and recovery. Often, in being able to express oneself through art, music or writing, a person gains back the voice that the illness has stolen. Each year there is a wide variety of creative expressions shared

that have included painting, drawing, singing, playing a musical instrument, knitting, stitchery, crafts, rhythmic gymnastics, poetry, ceramics, popsicle stick art, watercolors, crocheting, cake decorating, scrap booking, computer graphics, and more.



Marty M. with some of her drawings at the 2007 "Uniquely You" event.

This year's Uniquely You, A Celebration of Creativity, will be Tuesday, October 21, 7:00-8:30 p.m. at East Petersburg Mennonite Church, 6279 Main Street, East Petersburg, PA. All are welcomed to attend.

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**Pennsylvania Compeer Coalition  
Affiliates 2008-2009**

- Allegheny County Compeer @ PLEA  
412-243-3464
- Beaver County Compeer  
724-775-4165
- Butler County Compeer  
724-287-4083
- Bucks County Compeer  
215-785-2825
- Chester County Compeer  
610-436-4445
- Delaware County Compeer  
610-541-0790
- Fayette County Compeer  
724-438-6738
- Compeer Lancaster  
717-735-0667
- Compeer of Lebanon  
717-272-8317
- Compeer of the Lehigh Valley  
610-782-0361
- Compeer in the Central Susquehanna Valley  
570-784-9583
- Compeer in Philadelphia  
215-751-1800
- Compeer of Suburban Philadelphia  
610-631-1009
- Compeer in York and Adams County  
717-843-6973
- Compeer of Morgantown, W.VA  
304-296-6091
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse  
Services  
717-772-7926
- Compeer International  
800-836-0475

## Chester County Innovations

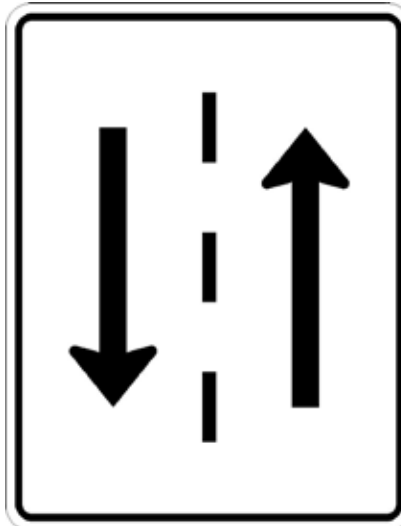
Three new initiatives marked 2008 for Compeer Chester County. The program has added 19 new one-to-one friendship matches this year.

COMPEER CHATS (focus groups) were held in February, March, and April to bring together volunteers, consumers, and mental health professionals for small-group discussion. Each chat was led by a team of trained facilitators from the affiliate's Board of Advisors. A total of 37 people participated. From their feedback, Compeer Chester County has developed a list of recommendations that are helping to propel the program forward.

"I was really impressed with the enthusiasm and positive energy in the room," commented one person who participated in a Compeer Chat.

A "GROUP" FRIENDSHIP evolved this year between members of a Chester County church and 16 adults living at a Long Term Structured Residence (LTSR) in the county. The Marsh Creek Church's Compassion Team, inspired by two of its mem-

bers who were already Compeer volunteers, decided to reach out to the men and women living at the LTSR. This has provided meaningful connections for the residents, who are in the process of making a transition from the state hospital to life in the community.



Church volunteers have now visited the LTSR twice for an evening of socializing, bingo, and dessert (which they provided). And seven LTSR residents have attended Sunday morning worship at the church!

With donor support, Compeer Chester County was able to produce a 30-second, professional video **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

customized to the county. The PSA, called "Two-Way Street," has been delivered to Comcast Cable and is airing on a number of channels at no charge. Staff are exploring possible ways to get the PSA shown on more popular Comcast channels as part of a paid schedule, using additional donations.

## Compeer Lancaster – Marty's Story

"My name is Marty. I am 55 and a mother of two grown children. I have had many opportunities in life—a loving mother, private school education, summer camp, and a lot of travel. I should have had a comfortable life. But as a teen, I remember being severely depressed. I had a low self-image. I thought about suicide all the time.

I did not seek help until I was 23 when I was hospitalized and diagnosed. By the time I was 40, mental illness was claiming my ability to cope, problem solve, think clearly, use good judgment and maintain relationships. A year and a half ago when I was referred to Compeer, I had destroyed my body with a razor blade; spent my en-

tire life savings on impulse spending and drug addiction; been jailed twice for shop lifting; destroyed my marriage and many of my friendships; lost love from family members; and most importantly I had lost my self-love.

**"Compeer gave me respect, love, care and an offer of friendship."**

Obviously, Compeer could not keep me from acting out or making wrong choices.

What Compeer could do and did was treat me with respect, interact with me as if I was the "Marty" I knew I could be, provide me with opportunities to interact socially with others and give me a friendship that was consistent and affirming.

When I look back on how "out of control" I was a year and a half ago, I am amazed at how far I have come. My health has been restored. I am able to enjoy the gift that life is. Compeer gave me respect, love, care and an offer of friendship. Those things enabled me to break free of my destructive past. I'm extraordinarily grateful!"

## Volunteering May Lead to Lasting Friendships

Fanny always has a twinkle in her eyes and a sweet smile for everybody. She is upbeat and enjoys being around people and laughing. She really enjoys getting together with her friend Mary for dinner, a movie, or a dip in the YWCA pool. Fanny said that being with her friend lifts her morale to its fullest. "She's like a sister to me" she says, "I can call and talk to her anytime, I love her."

Fanny and Mary met each other through the Compeer program at Mental Health America of York and Adams Counties. The mission of the Compeer program is to address the isolation and loneliness sometimes experienced by adults with mental health challenges, by recruiting volunteers to be a supportive friend and mentor.

Mary came to Compeer almost two years ago willing to help. She has a son recovering from a mental illness and has been interested in advocacy for a long time. While talking with Mary about her experiences, she said "I know the hard time people with mental illness have making friends - they are either shunned by soci-

ety or by their own fear of rejection."

Lack of education is a major factor in why there is such stigma concerning mental illness. Many times people with mental illness are portrayed as someone to fear. This is simply not the case. One in five people have experienced mental illness in one form or another. In fact most of us have experienced depression. Ask yourself what helped you get through it, and you will probably think of the friend who listened for hours, and got you out of the house when all you wanted to do was sit in the dark with your sweat pants on.

Fanny is living with a mental illness, and although she is outgoing, she felt that no one understood. She says that Mary, her Compeer, understands and she can talk to her about anything. "Mary is very understanding and reliable, and when I'm down she lifts my spirits" she says.

"Fanny and I go shopping, to the movies, and out to eat, or just hang out." "She has God in her heart and is a joy to be with" Mary says. "The bottom-line is that some-

times people need to have a friend that is not a doctor, case worker, parent or a family member, they just need a friend."

You can help fight the stigma surrounding mental illness and advocate for mental health, by becoming a Compeer volunteer. For more information about the Compeer program or to get an application, please contact Deanna at 1-717-339-0511, ext 203 or Debbie at 1-717-843-6973, ext 113.

Mary said it best, "it takes so little time and effort and you just may enjoy it."

Mental Health America (MHA) of York and Adams Counties is a non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating the stigma surrounding mental illness and the people that have them, by working for York and Adams Counties mental health and victory over mental illness through education, advocacy and supportive services.

MHA provides many services with programs, such as Compeer. To learn more about MHA programs please contact us at 1-717-339-0511 (Gettysburg) or 1-717-843-6972 (York).

## RHD Offers Assistance to New Programs

Resources For Human Development, Inc. (RHD) is a large, diversified non-profit social service organization. Headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, we currently sponsor human service programs in twelve states. Since 1970, we've worked quietly behind the scenes of many programs you may already know.

While RHD is based in Philadelphia and 70% of our programs operate in the five-county southeastern Pennsylvania area, RHD also provides an array of services in other parts of the

commonwealth, as well as 11 other states and employs nearly 4,000 people serving in 149 various programs. Compeer of Suburban Philadelphia became a member of the RHD family in the spring of 1991.



Jim Piasecki, (at left, [jimp@RHD.org](mailto:jimp@RHD.org)) corporate assistant director of RHD and Chuck Falasco, (right, [chuck@RHD.org](mailto:chuck@RHD.org)) budget manager of RHD work closely with Compeer's program director in both Montgomery and Delaware counties.

From providing residential services for individuals with mental illness, mental retardation, chemical addiction, and those who are homeless, to job training, assisted transportation, and crisis intervention--we're ready to provide assistance wherever the

need exists. RHD prides itself on its history of innovation, not only in the type and quality of the services we offer, but also in the management techniques we employ. Program directors and their staff have maximum authority, creativity, and autonomy. Our Central Office staff will provide fiscal supervision, management oversight, support and encouragement, and technical assistance to all programs.

At RHD, we're committed to the fundamental value of dignity and respect for all human beings, to the empowerment of our consumers and staff, to a collaborative management model, and to the importance of timely change and risk-taking.

RHD stands ready to offer our support and expertise in any county across Pennsylvania interested in starting a Compeer program in your county. We can be contacted at 215- 951- 0300 or visit our website - [www.rhd.org](http://www.rhd.org)