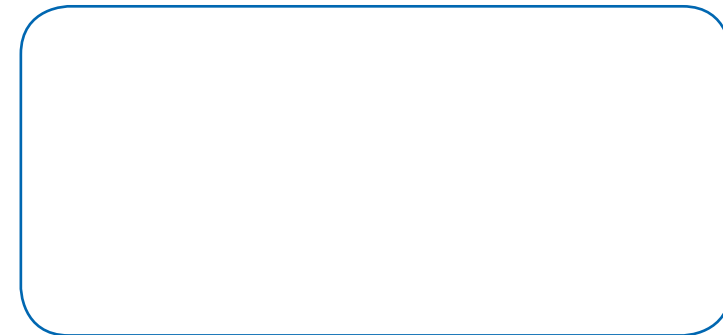


The Pennsylvania Compeer Coalition
 3125 West Ridge Pike, Suite D
 Eagleville, PA 19403



**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

Energizing Compeer and Volunteerism

The Pennsylvania Compeer Coalition is advocating for making friends and changing lives within the boundaries of Pennsylvania.

On January 20, 2009, Compeer was invited to do an introductory presentation at Venango County following an afternoon session of the "Recovery Implementation Team". The Recovery Implementation Team is a combined effort by providers of mental health services, County MH administration, and adult consumer representatives.

Compeer was again represented and the value of volunteerism highlighted at Indiana County's Community Support Program (CSP) forum held on February 5, 2009. A second promotional presentation is included as part of the agenda for February 26, 2009 at the Armstrong County CSP meeting. Armstrong/Indiana County joint mental health administration has expressed an interest in Compeer.

The PCC welcomes the opportunity to assist all counties in Pennsylvania that give consideration to Compeer and express a desire to begin a Compeer program, bringing an inclusive component to mental health recovery services. Technical Assistance is made possible through the corroborative support of OMHSAS.

The PCC recognizes that one of the most important factors in mental health recovery is understanding and acceptance of friends. Compeer friendships can make a difference through reassurance, companionship, by encouraging social strengths and bridges to the community.

Compeer believes in volunteerism. Compeer volunteers promote mental health recovery through the healing power of friendship. www.PAcompeercoalition.org



Spring 2009

ABOUT Compeer

COMPEER FACTS

Friendship is a game that two can play and both can win! A good friend is there through good times, struggles and sorrows. A true friend understands life's problems, the daily ups and downs, equalizing a shared completeness. COMPEER friendships will be there throughout recovery's journey.

COMPEER volunteers provide a service that makes a big difference in the lives of many. COMPEER friendships are a "best practice" in mental health recovery. COMPEER offers a winning readiness for making friends and changing lives.

To learn more, go to www.PACompeerCoalition.org or contact one of our representatives:

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

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

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



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 Celebrates 35 Years of Making Friends and Changing Lives

While we are well into 2009, 2008 was a very special year for Compeer, Inc. commemorating 35 years of service to the mental health community. Following is a brief history of Compeer then and now...

In 1973, the Mental Health Association of Rochester, N.Y. began a program called Adopt-A-Patient. The program matched volunteers with individuals in the state hospital system to help in their transition from the hospital into the community. These were the first steps toward a dynamic yet struggling endeavor into the recovery-oriented organization recognized today as Compeer.

Soon after, the founder and director of this new program, Bernice Skirboll, decided to change the name to Compeer. The new name brought revitalized identity to the program, better conveying the agency's mission of providing companionship and treating people with mental illness as equals or peers—"Compeer" had greater appeal to volunteers. To build the program, Skirboll broadened its outreach to mental health professionals, volunteers, funders, consumers and affected families.

In 1980, the N.Y.S. Office of Mental Health recognized Compeer with its Natural Support System Award and supported expansion of Compeer in other communities throughout the state. Three years later in 1983, Compeer began to replicate services to other states and soon after, other countries including Canada, the Netherlands and Australia..

Today, Compeer Inc. and its 80 affiliates serve people diagnosed with mental illness, with the goal of enabling mental-health consumers to become more socially integrated by fighting the loneliness and isolation of mental illness. Today, nearly 5,000 Compeer volunteers support more than 7,000 adults and children in mental-health care in the U.S., Canada and Australia. The American Psychological Association (APA) recognizes Compeer as a best-practices model.

Across Pennsylvania, Compeer has 14 programs. Together, we have formed the PA Compeer Coalition, a strong coalition of programs working to spread friendship across Pennsylvania through our matches while helping to start new programs. Happy Birthday Compeer and many more years of friendship to come.

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In Their Own Words

Results of Compeer Chester County's self-evaluation survey for 2008 included some powerful comments from program participants, as well as mental health professionals who refer people to the program. Comments included:

- "My friend '...is very supportive, extremely helpful, a very good listener, and makes me laugh."
- "She has helped me with finding new friends."
- "I speak up more now."
- "We laugh and talk together well, and we are considerate of how we act with each other."
- "I have sent a few more referrals to Compeer because of (my client's) positive experience."

- "My friend and I are a very good match. We identify with each other and enjoy talking..."
- "My own self-esteem has grown due to my contact with Compeer – reaching out to help another has been an immeasurable blessing to me."
- "I could not be happier. This organization is superb and I am so proud to be a tiny part of it."
- "Compeer provides a wonderful opportunity for clients to develop friendships and increase their socialization."
- "We enjoy a great friendship. We get along well, have fun together, and enjoy similar interests."
- "It's just helpful knowing someone else cares."

Compeer Principles Highlighted with Philadelphia's Transformation

By Jeff Shair

The mental health system in Philadelphia is in the process of being transformed to provide greater opportunities for persons in recovery. This initiative is a holistic approach, as persons in recovery are being asked what they want to do with their lives instead of just how they can cope with their problems. Mental health agencies in our city are encouraged to structure their day programs so persons in recovery can have fuller lives and realize their full potential. Furthermore, programs are now being tailored to the individual rather than the individual adapting to the programs. Partial Hospital programs are becoming obsolete with agencies including participants in all facets of program planning.

My position as a consultant for the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health requires my input on how well I think the agencies are doing with transforming their programs to becoming more recovery-oriented. I often give feedback on how persons in recovery can have richer lives by discovering new talents and hobbies with the support of staff and other key people in their lives. The transformation process emphasizes looking at persons in recovery as unique individuals rather than by their diagnoses.

One of the key components of the transformation is Community Integration. In essence, persons in recovery should have the opportunity to enjoy activities in the community with the general population. This focus promotes a sense of belonging, and Compeer Inc. has valued this concept since its inception thirty-five years ago. Thus, Compeer friendships are built by doing things together in the community. Thankfully, Compeer has historically embraced this view.

Barber Cuts for a Cause

A Lebanon barber put his scissors to work to raise money for two worthy organizations.

Dan Moyer, owner of Moyer's Barber Shop in Lebanon, donated all proceeds from each head of hair he cut one day — during Cuts for a Cause — to Compeer of Lebanon County and to Lebanon County Christian Ministries' food bank.

"My father-in-law [Dennis Mellott] is on the board of Compeer, and he came to me with the idea," Moyer said. "It's a neat organization, and I never knew about it before. I hope it will help get the word out and people will volunteer there."

Cuts for a Cause has two purposes, Mellott said.

"We were looking for a way to raise awareness of Compeer of Lebanon County because a lot of people don't know anything about it," he said. "This (benefit) is part awareness and part fundraising."

"I think it is wonderful," said Ida Carvell, executive Director of Compeer Lebanon. "Dennis and his family are very generous people. I hope it brings in business for Dan, and I hope it helps more people learn about what we do."

Money from the fundraiser will be used for volunteer training and the occasional group social gatherings Compeer sponsors for volunteers and clients. The organization is always looking for new volunteers, Carvell said. Research shows that people recovering from mental illness integrate more easily into the community with the aid of a Compeer friend, she said. "It is just a real simple thing to do," she said.

For more information about Compeer of Lebanon County, call 272-8317 or visit online at <http://www.compeer-lebanon.org>.

A Long-Lasting Friendship

Pat and I have been matched as friends through Bucks County Compeer for over 6 years now! It's hard to believe that we've known each other that long and that we have grown that much older together as friends. We recently had an opportunity to reflect on our friendship and experiences with Compeer and shared our stories at the Compeer holiday luncheon.

Pat's story.

My friendship with Alyssa is the best thing that ever happened to me. When I was in school, I had heard of the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Bucks County, and always wished I could join but didn't know how. Even though I have 3 sisters of my own, I still wished for a sister as a friend. My own sisters were good to me. But a lot of times, they didn't have patience with me or do fun things with me.

One day while attending Pennel Mental Health Center's Group Therapy, all of a sudden right out of the clear blue sky, I happened to meet Sue who at that time was the head of the Compeer program. She showed a video of how the program worked. I was so excited and interested I signed up immediately.

We arranged a meeting. Sue came to my house to interview me to find out what my likes, dislikes, hobbies, and interests were in order to match me up with a Compeer volunteer who was compatible. Before she left, Sue told me she thought she had the perfect match for me. It turned out to be Alyssa. A few days went by until I got to meet Alyssa at the office in Bristol. We hit it off right from the start, and now, almost 6 years later, Alyssa is still as dedicated and enthusiastic as she was that very first day.

Our friendship keeps growing as time goes by. We enjoy each other's company. When we get together, talk on the phone, or by e-mail, Alyssa always has time to listen, care, and understand. After I'm in touch with her, I always feel better.

The Compeer program probably didn't have in mind for our friendship to last this long. But thankfully and prayerfully, Alyssa will forever and always be my very best friend and sister.

I hope the program can continue so that others will have the opportunity to meet a lifelong friend like I did.

Alyssa's story.

I, too, am very thankful to have found the Compeer program. I came across it very coincidentally, through a volunteer website. Once I learned more about the program, I knew I wanted to volunteer. The idea that Compeer would match me in a friendship with someone suffering from a mental illness is what really interested and compelled me at first to volunteer. There is a long history of mental illness in my family. While I personally have never been diagnosed, I do know that I have more of a risk and that I really need to be aware of that risk factor. Because of that history, I feel a lot of empathy for people with mental illnesses and thought Compeer would be right for me.

I also was, and still am, really drawn to the friendship aspect of Compeer. Like Pat, I once wanted to be involved with Big

Brothers/Big Sisters where I would be matched with a child. I liked that Compeer had a similar style – but the wonderful part of this is that you gain a friend. It's so important to have good friends and trusting, caring relationships. I was happy to gain a new friend through Pat, and as she said, I know that she is grateful for our friendship as well.

Our friendship and lives have truly grown over the past 6 years. I am more of a shy person and I remember meeting Pat, feeling quiet and not completely sure what to talk about. But we slowly got to know each other and as we did more activities and talked, we expanded our friendship. We have done many activities, including movies, a water park, and a trip to NYC for a show, and many, many lunches and dinners. We both love to eat!

There have also been many changes in our lives. We've both changed our jobs. And when we met, I lived with my parents in Mercer County, NJ. I moved to Bensalem with a roommate for a few years, and now have lived in Philadelphia for the last two years, by myself. Pat, too has had some housing changes – she lived with her parents at the start of our friendship, but over the last year, moved into an apartment on her own. This was one of her personal goals, to live independently and I am so proud of her and happy to see Pat reach this great accomplishment.

In addition to being good friends, Pat and I offer each other mentoring and support, and learn from each other. There have been some times where I've given Pat advice on handling situations, and I try to provide a patient, open ear if she has a problem. Pat has taught me to be more patient and understanding. She is also one of the most polite people I've ever met – she always, always says thank you, you're welcome. I really try to learn from her well-mannered example.

Bucks County Compeer has truly been a blessing to both of our lives. Throughout the past years, our changes, our growths, our accomplishments, Pat and I have each remained a constant presence for each other. We continued our friendship after the first required year was completed and I feel confident that we will remain friends throughout the years. What started for me as a simple interest in volunteering has blossomed into a very valuable friendship.

Art Auction to Benefit Compeer



Lancaster Amish by Kay Reist

Third Benefit Art Auction

Friday
May 8, 2009
7-9 p.m.

Mulberry Art Studios
19-21 Mulberry Street, Lancaster

Pieces from 30 local artists
will be sold.

Come. Bring friends and family.
Purchase a work of art and support
Compeer Lancaster.

Save the Date