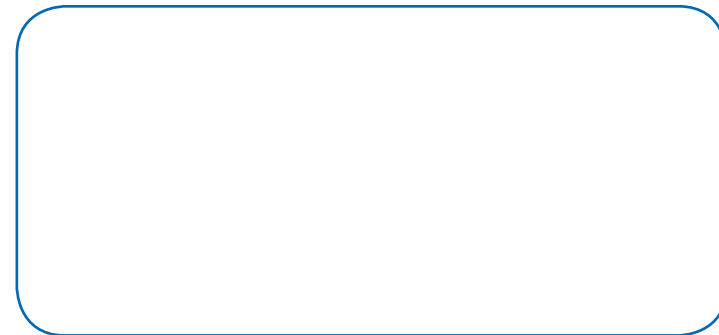


The Pennsylvania Compeer Coalition
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**Pennsylvania Compeer Coalition
 Affiliates 2008-2009**

- 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

**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)



Winter 2008

**ABOUT
 Compeer**

ARE YOU IN THE KNOW ABOUT COMPEER?

People are only complete when they have a true friend to understand them.


A friend who is there through good times and sorrows. A friend to stand by them throughout recovery's journey.

This time of year we think a lot about giving. Out come the wish lists, followed by the panicked rush to the malls.

But here is something to be considered for adding to the mix; the gift of COMPEER friendships! Through minimal effort, COMPEER volunteers provide a service that makes a big difference in the lives of many!

COMPEER is a "best practice" for mental health recovery.

To learn more, go to www.PARecovery.org, click on Statewide/Initiatives, then other OMHSAS Initiatives, then COMPEER.



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).

Love Park Victim Died Homeless, But Not Friendless

By Frank Diamond

Yvette Prince isn't smiling in the photos that accompanied the reports of her murder. That's what bothers some of the people who knew her, loved her, and watched her struggle for years with mental illness and homelessness.

Ms. Prince, 45, was allegedly murdered by another homeless woman, Darcel Baines, on Aug. 5 during an argument over a homeless man in Love Park. It's one of those stories where you glimpse the details, think 'that's too bad,' and continue on to the next section of the newspaper. It's as if the homeless were ghosts, as if not having a roof over your head means you do not leave any footprints in the world. In an era when those with mental illness are fair game for comedies such as 'Tropic Thunder,' it is too easy to not really appreciate someone like Ms. Prince.

The people at a program called Philadelphia Compeer, under the auspices of the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania, can't let what they consider to be the misconceptions about Ms. Prince linger. Compeer volunteers give

up at least four hours a month to present a truly precious service to anyone with mental problems. They become the person's friend.

"The last time I saw her we were in Love Park and we were talking and she did her own fingernails and I did mine and she walked in one direction and I went in the other," recalls Ernestine Burnett, a Compeer volunteer. "She did say 'love you' and that was the last time I saw her."

Yvette Prince was smiling then. It's the smile that the Compeer people would like everyone to remember.

"She had a beautiful smile," says Ms. Burnett. "She was like a princess."

Recalls Ruby Hill, the liaison at Compeer who brought Ms. Burnett and Ms. Prince together: "She had this smile that always got me. She had a glow."

Ms. Burnett, Ms. Hill and Sarah Nathan, the program manager for Philadelphia Compeer, tell a story of a woman who

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Compeer Lebanon Holiday Events	2	Different Voices	3
Pulling Taffy with Friends...	2	Bring the Compeer Model to Your County	4
MHA Employee of Year	3	Compeer Coalition Directory	4
"Loneliness Harms Health" Reaction	3		

Compeer Lebanon Holiday Events

In the spirit of Christmas, Compeer & friends of Lebanon County will be sponsoring the resident Christmas Party at the American House Personal Care Home on December 11th. There will be holiday food, music and fun along with Christmas gifts for all the residents.

We will be hosting our Compeer Members Christmas Party at the evening Coffee Klutch on December 16th. We are looking forward to celebrating the holidays with our Compeer Friends and Volunteers.

Upcoming on January 23 is our Volunteer Recruitment Tea at the Cornwall Manor Retirement Community.

Pulling Taffy with Friends

Volunteers, friendship matches and staff attended an old fashioned "Taffy Pull", sponsored by COMPEER in Butler PA on October 29, 2008. The art of pulling taffy was popular for many decades during the 1800's and early into 1900. It was a traditional Saturday evening social past time for families. Jupies Old Fashioned Sorghum Molasses and Peanut Butter Taffy Pull was a "once in a lifetime" chance for all clients, volunteers, and friends of Butler County's Compeer Program to experience pulling and stretching taffy candy by hand. This was relaxing and skillful therapy as each attendee stretched and pulled their individual canisters of taffy, then wrapped the taffy candy around an apple to take home. A candy apple to go!



Homeless, But Not Friendless continued from page 1

managed to enhance life even though she struggled with the mental illness that kept her homeless for long stretches. They want you to remember someone who loved doing puzzles and cooking. They want you to appreciate someone they describe, ironically, as a homebody - during those times when she actually had a home.

Ms. Prince was first interviewed by Compeer representatives at the Hall Mercer community mental health center on 8th Street in 2002. "She was quiet," recalls Ms. Hill. "It took her a while to start talking." Soon, though, thanks to mentors like Ernestine Burnett, Yvette Prince began to open up.

That's what Compeer is all about. "People who have a mental health diagnosis often are shunned by their family or they've had a lot of stressful experiences and maybe aren't very trusting," says Nathan. "They often live a very isolated existence."

Clients are referred to Compeer by psychiatrists, social workers, or doctors. "It can be a mentoring relationship or just boil down to something that grows into a real friendship," says Ms. Nathan.

"In our program a lot of good things have come from someone just being able to connect with someone," Ruby Hill says. "Just having somebody there is important. Just having someone to share true experiences. A psychiatrist is good. A doctor is good. But there's nothing better than having a real sincere friend. This is what they get from our program. It's about friendship."

"Just having someone there is important."

Adds Ms. Burnett: "I did have hope that things would get better for her."

Last week, when that hope came to a tragic end, the newspaper and television stories tied up all the loose ends and presented us with a narrative; an entire beginning, middle, and end in a headline. Homeless woman stabbed in Love Park.

The people at Compeer read the stories and looked at the photographs that accompa-

nied them and didn't see their friend. Not really. Not the woman whose companionship they'd come to truly cherish.

Sarah Nathan, Ruby Hill and Ernestine Burnett have been involved in social work long enough to not be surprised that they got as much out of their relationship with Yvette Prince as they'd put in. So they're doing what friends do. They're presenting us with the person they knew, the person whose smile could light up Love Park. The horrible end to Yvette Prince's life makes them even more determined that she should now rest in peace.

If you would like to be a Compeer volunteer, check out the Web site at <http://www.volunteersolutions.org/volunteer-way/org/10266791658.html> or call 215-751-1800, ext. 269. If you are in crisis, call the suicide/crisis intervention hotline at 215-686-4420, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

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York/Adams MHA Employee of the Year 2008



When I joined the Compeer Team in 2004 I met Joena, who was the part-time Compeer staff assistant. Within a short period of time, Joena began assuming more hours and responsibilities as they were offered, and in October of 2005, Joena became the Coordinator of Compeer service in York County.

Over the past four years, as I have watched this person interact with Compeer family members, volunteers, co-workers, and most importantly the participants, my respect for this individual has grown tremendously.

At the start of my employment with MHA, I learned the inside story of Compeer from this wonderful lady - the need to truly give of yourself for the sake of the growth of those in Compeer.

Joena has three small children, which requires a lot of juggling between baby-sitters and schools, a husband and her full-time job. Every day Joena comes into work with a smile on her face, ready to go. Sometimes I wonder where all her positive energy comes from.

Not one day goes by that this kind and generous individual does not do something out of the ordinary for her MHA team or the Compeer Program. There is not another person that I would rather work side-by-side with, plan activities with or take care of compeer participants with, than my co-worker, Joena Folk.

Debbie Dobbins
Compeer Director
MHA of York & Adams Counties

Reaction to article "Loneliness Harms Health"

(from Compeer volunteer Eric Larson's blog, <http://ericwrapcorner.wordpress.com/>)

Hey Web friends. I recently read an article called "Loneliness Harms Health" by Rick Nauert, PhD at <http://psychcentral.com/news/2008/09/05/loneliness-harms-health/2882.html>

I wanted to say that since the beginning of my recovery I have always found the issue of loneliness to be a key and interesting topic. I think the article explores an interesting phenomenon of societal structures breaking down and causing disconnection. Man I can really relate to this. My profound sense of loneliness at Penn State main campus my freshmen year in college always was a paradox to me. Here I am surrounded by thousands of people all pursuing education and I still feel disconnected and lonely. The move to Penn State had caused a dramatic change in my support system.

It wasn't until I found a different way of relating to people through my volunteer experience at an organization called Compeer that I learned how to build a support system. Compeer taught me to relate to the whole individual by matching me up in a friendship with another individual with mental health challenges. I think the last statement in the article sums up my experience best. "Lonely people feel a hunger." "The key is to realize that the solution lies not in being fed, but in cooking for and enjoying a meal with others." I have always said in my work as a facilitator that the greatest lesson I have learned about loneliness is that if you want support be a support to another.

Addendum by Rob Chisholm of Compeer Chester County - Eric Larson is employed as a WRAP Coordinator for The Institute for Recovery and Community Integration at the Mental Health Association of Southeastern PA. Eric speaks to groups across Pennsylvania, and in other states, saying he attributes finding his true path in life, as a peer supporter and recovery educator, to his transformational experiences as a Compeer volunteer. Other Compeer volunteers tell similar stories.

Different Voices & Common Experiences

Compeer of Monongalia County in West Virginia recently held an art exhibition entitled "Different Voices and Common Experiences." Works of art were contributed by artists who have been affected in some way by mental illness. Art was presented in a variety of mediums, including wood carving, collage, oil paintings and more.

This was the fourth year for the 3-week show at the Monongalia Arts Center. Over 100 people attended the opening reception, and over 300 visited the exhibition.

"We're trying to bring back a more realistic picture of what mental illness is," said Michelle Wakely, Compeer program coordinator. "Part of the reason for the exhibition is to show that having a diagnosis of a mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to be kept locked away."



Photo courtesy of Bob Gay/The Dominion Post