

Challenge Magazine

Vol 2 No. 4

Dedicated to the needs, feelings and desires of people with physical or mental disabilities and to people who care about them.

Cover Feature:
Cornelia De Lange Syndrome

Voyage of the Glaciers

Social Security Disability Benefits

Shaken Baby Syndrome

Clinical Trials

NAPD News

Book Review:
Handicapped in Disney World

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The Power of

A proven approach to distance, loneliness and isolation through the 'Compeer' connection.

by C.C. Birt

"Friendship is a very powerful thing" says Katey Breen, Coordinator, International Affiliation of Compeer Programs. Compeer, Inc. is an international not-for-profit organiza-

tion that matches caring, sensitive, and trained volunteers in one-on-one friendships with children and adults receiving mental health treatment. Breen says "the individuals we serve have experienced the isolation and loneliness of mental illness and volunteers fill that gap as an adjunct to therapy." She

says mental health professionals, clients, volunteers and the community all play a vital role in making these friendships successful.

Clients are referred to Compeer through therapists who provide initial consultation with the volunteer and backup support throughout the friendship. Compeer is regarded

as an adjunct to therapy with the volunteer filling the gap between treatment services and the absence of supportive family and friends.

Compeer was established in Rochester, NY in 1973. Today, there are 115 Compeer programs in 33 states, Canada and the Netherlands.

Florence Koenig is the Program Director for the Rochester office. She says "1 out of 5



Wendy Ludolf and Renee Watkins at the Annual Picnic.

Friendship

Rating Compeer

Compiled from Compeer's 1993 Annual Report

individuals suffer from some form of mental illness in their lifetime and 1 out of 4 families are affected with mental illness." Koenig says the unique thing about Compeer is that it really empowers clients to be an equal partner in their relationships

Katey Breen shares another success story. She says one member from the Smith family in Ohio began volunteering for Compeer, was so thrilled with the experience they told their grandmother about it.

She started volunteering, then a brother, then a sister. Today

nine members of the Smith family are dedicated to Compeer. Breen says when families volunteer "it not only helps the community and the population served, it provides a reuniting of family members." The program has also been instrumental in helping children by providing them with role models. Koenig says, "almost all of us in our lives have had one person, either a teacher, a parent, a clergyman or somebody who really affected our lives and gave us a standard to live



Halloween: Prisco and Bill Fink

with volunteers and in some cases gives them the motivation to become volunteers themselves.

That was certainly the case for Nancy. Koenig says she came to Compeer as part of the head injury program, had a wonderful volunteer who became a lifelong friend and after a few years became a volunteer herself.

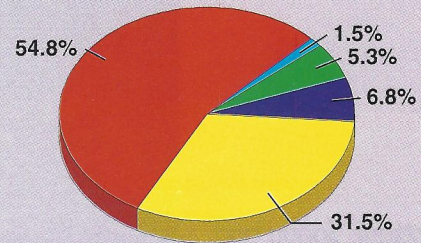
up to." She says "volunteers provide that for kids all the time."

Breen says a community typically shows an interest in the program, gives Compeer a call, submits a proposal and upon approval of that proposal pays a start up fee to get the program underway. That's where the hard part comes in. She recom-

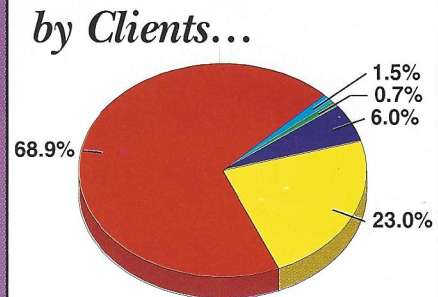
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Therapist

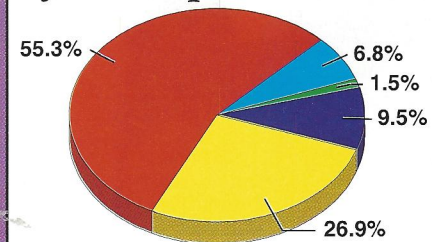
Satisfaction Level



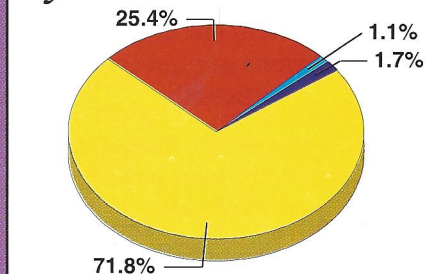
Helpfulness Rating of Volunteers by Clients...



by Therapists...



by Volunteers...



■ Very Helpful ■ Somewhat Helpful ■ No Answer
■ Helpful ■ Not Helpful

Right: Susan Bates and Marshall Knibbs



Bottom: Sandy and her sister at the Halloween party



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mends a minimum starting budget of \$20,000 a year. But there is help out there! Breen says "the majority of our programs get governmental funding." A small percentage of offices that are independent, receive private and philanthropic funding, foundation funding and agency sponsorships.

The Compeer program as you now know it has begun to branch out. As of August 1, 1994 Compeer began a new program called Compeer Inc., Deaf & Hard of Hearing, at its headquarters in Rochester, NY. Program Coordinator, Kathleen Moran says there's a "very strong need because there are no role models for the deaf & hard of hearing." She says a lot of people have

Getting In Touch...

If you are interested in getting involved with Compeer either as a client or as a volunteer, or if you are interested in establishing a Compeer office in your home town, call:

1-800-836-0475

and you will be put in touch with the office nearest you.

Currently, Compeer offices are located in the following states.

been isolated because of communication barriers. The Compeer philosophy remains the same but the new program allows for individuals with dual needs to be served. Moran says they hope to get the program up and running in other cities after outreach has been established in Rochester. ☺