



259 Monroe Square  
Rochester, NY 14607

**Media Contact:**  
Timothy Cook  
(585) 546-8280, ext. 234  
tcook@compeer.org

## **New Book About Compeer Details Mental Health Non-Profit's Three Decades of Innovation, Growth and Success**

*Edited by Compeer founder Bernice Skirboll; the book highlights success stories  
of children and adults in mental-health recovery*

ROCHESTER, N.Y., April 5, 2006 — The success story of Compeer Inc., which evolved from a one-person operation in Rochester, N.Y. into an international non-profit organization with nearly 100 locations, is the subject of a newly published book.

*“Compeer: Recovery Through the Healing Power of Friends”* was unveiled today during a news conference at the Barnes & Noble store in Pittsford, N.Y. Edited by Compeer founder Bernice Skirboll, the book details the success story of Compeer and features chapters from Compeer staff, volunteers, clients and the mental-health community.

Highlights include the key elements in Compeer’s success formula, including state-of-the-art volunteer training, unique partnerships with mental-health professionals and businesses, its unique growth strategy, dedicated and professional staff, and program monitoring and measurement.

“From the beginning, Compeer’s mission has been to help people in mental-health care live happier, more productive lives,” said Bernice W. Skirboll, Compeer founder and executive consultant. “This book details how we have achieved success for more than 30 years, through the perspectives of the children and adults we have served, our volunteers and mental-health professionals. My hope is that the book will inform, uplift and inspire people – from those in mental-health recovery, to leaders of other non-profit organizations, to those who are simply moved by heart-warming stories.”

Contributing authors offering clinical perspectives include John S. McIntyre, M.D., past president of the American Psychiatric Association, and professionals from the University of Rochester, such as J. Steven Lamberti, M.D., associate professor of Psychiatry; Richard M. Ryan, Ph.D., professor of Psychology; and Stephen Dvorin, M.D., associate clinical professor in Psychiatry.

“Compeer offers vital services that healthcare professionals cannot provide. Compeer volunteers are worth their weight in gold,” said Dr. Lamberti. “...Compeer can be a turning point on the road to recovery.”

The book includes real-life success stories, such as:

- Tammi and her Compeer friend, Debra Bonsignore. Tammi was shy and introverted. With the guidance and support of Debra, Tammi is pursuing her dream to teach young children. According to her father, William Koegler, “Compeer and Debra gave us a way to give Tammi that little extra boost she needed to soar. I’ve lost track of how long they have been together, but Tammi is now in college studying to work with pre-school children. She is healthy, confident, outgoing and simply a wonderful young woman.”

- Liz and her long-time Compeer friend Bonnie Phillips. Liz progressed from a school for emotionally disturbed children to earning a bachelor's degree from SUNY Geneseo last spring. "This has been an incredible 13-year journey for both of us. Liz has worked through tremendous fears, insecurities and loneliness. It is so thrilling now to see her opening herself to the world, to new friends and new experiences. The biggest surprise for me is how much our friendship has changed my life. I went into this relationship thinking about what I might be able to do for her. I never realized how much she would do for me."
- Compeer volunteer Ted Nixon. "...my mother's death left me spinning out of control, and, in 1989, I saw the end of my well-ordered professional and personal life. I was talking with a friend in 1989, and I asked him what I could do to get out of the depression I was in. He suggested helping another struggling person and gave me the name of Compeer. Tim is someone I would never have met without Compeer, and I would have been the less for it. I would have missed the enriching experience of knowing, helping and being helped by an unusual, courageous human being. It's hard to remember when Tim wasn't in my life. He's one of the family."

Published by the University of Rochester Press, the limited first printing of the book was made possible through the generous support of PAETEC Communications and PAETEC CEO Arunas Chesonis. "*Compeer: Recovery Through the Healing Power of Friends*" is available for \$14.95 from Compeer ([www.compeer.org](http://www.compeer.org)) and at the Barnes & Noble store in Pittsford. All sales proceeds will benefit Compeer's volunteer-based services.

#### **About Bernice Skirboll**

Bernice "Bunny" Skirboll, a Brighton, N.Y. resident, founded Compeer in Rochester, N.Y. in 1973, following a near-fatal automobile accident. Her long rehabilitation helped her realize the power of friendship, and she vowed to make a difference in other people's lives. Skirboll served as executive director until 2004, and she currently serves as an executive consultant – responsible for providing strategic counsel and for expanding the agency's resources.

Under her leadership, Compeer grew from a small program to an internationally recognized mental health agency. She holds a master's degree from the University of Rochester, and has received numerous national and local professional awards.