

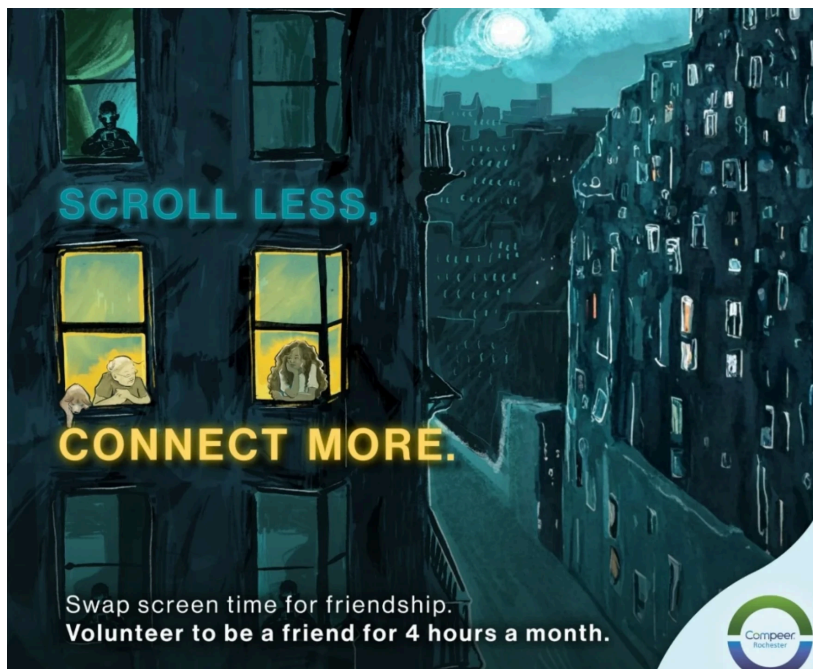
Compeer Rochester launches new campaign to end loneliness, improve mental health

WXXI News | By [Mikhaela Singleton](#)

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Provided Image / Compeer Rochester

The "Scroll Less, Connect More" campaign promotion works to drive more volunteers to Compeer Rochester in support of a person with a mental health diagnosis, according to the nonprofit's leadership.

A Rochester-area nonprofit dedicated to building connections for those with mental health struggles now has a new approach.

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Compeer Rochester just launched its "Scroll Less, Connect More" volunteer campaign. The group's research found American adults spend an average of 64 hours on screens per month.

The campaign asks Rochesterians to put their phones on pause for just four of those hours to make a new friend.

"Bringing that awareness that we are spending so much time on social media and that we are connecting less as a society has been an eye opener to our volunteers, and you know, by having this broader campaign and bringing the idea that, you know, we do have loneliness happening in our community still. It wasn't just a COVID issue," said Director of Programs Tracy LoTemple.

Compeer accepts referrals from mental health specialists who direct diagnosed adults to the nonprofit. From there, they are matched with volunteers who share their interests.

LoTemple says the waiting list is currently full of more than 200 people waiting for services. She says they need more volunteers and that the nonprofit is very intentional when making a match.

"We really work hard to find the perfect friendship to form, and 60% of our matches last longer than two years. We have people who have become friends and have stayed together for over 30 years," she said.

She also adds volunteers receive training to empathize and connect with a person struggling with a mental health diagnosis, as well as mitigating the stigma that often comes along with that.

"We do this little demo where we have volunteers write down five names of people whom you talk to every single week and are your connection person, and then we take those notes away from them. So maybe they're left with one or none in their hands. It's like, wow, what if you didn't have this person to talk to?" LoTemple explained.

"We kind of lead them to thinking from there that you can be this connection for somebody who maybe has nobody or just one or two people to talk to every week. So we really try to make it full circle for our volunteers, and that makes the bigger impact on our clients too."

LoTemple says the "Scroll Less, Connect More" campaign is already showing success as more volunteers have come in after seeing the flyers, social media posts, bus wraps, and other awareness materials around town.

She also says the ultimate goal is to have the standby pool of volunteers outnumber the current list of people waiting for help. She says they're working on the volunteer count ahead of Compeer Rochester's Walk to End Loneliness on Sunday, Nov. 1.

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Mikhaela Singleton is Morning Edition host and a multimedia journalist for WXXI News. She has spent more than a decade in media, previously working in television as the morning show host at WROC and reporting for multiple communities around the nation.

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