Congratulations to PEER Graduates!

Lackawanna County

Congratulations to the PEER graduates who graduated November 28, 2007 from Gino Merli Veteran’s Center. We welcome you and wish you great success with your project! These PEERs join an existing group of active PEERs and are the second group to graduate from this facility. Congratulations and Welcome!

Pictured are the new graduates with Gino Merli PEERs (Left to Right) Row 1: Lou Ross, Alonzo Nardella (graduate), Mark Warner (graduate), Tom Maley (graduate). Row 2: Robert Busch (graduate), John Brady, John Ravinskas (graduate), Gerald Williams (graduate). Row 3: Carolyn Tenaglia ROC, Cathy Romaniello, Lackawanna County Ombudsman, Commdant Carl Weinschenk, Sylvia Kolisinsky, PEER Trainer, and Senior Airman Christopher Kolosinsky, 48th Security Forces Squadron, USAF. Missing from photo was Alexander Karanik (graduate).

This Spring Edition is a special edition of the PEER Connection Newsletter that is devoted to the PEER Award Nominees 2008. Included in this edition is a summary of the award nominees and a ballot form. Your local PEER Coordinator will be working with you for the submission of your votes for the Annual PEER Award Celebration on May 7, 2008 in Harrisburg. Please give consideration to the nominees and submit your votes for this years winner no later than April 20, 2008. Thanks in advance for your participation!
Each individual in this PEER group could be nominated for the PEER Award in their own right.

**Bonnie Easton** was an extremely quiet, shy person who has come a long way in PEER. She attributes PEER with bringing her out of her shell. Since taking PEER training she has been elected President of Resident Council, she is in the PEER welcoming committee and has taken it upon herself to go the the receptionist to get new resident names when she saw new faces and staff had not given the PEERs any names. She calls me whenever a resident seems to have issues that aren’t getting resolved through the ‘ladder of resolution’. She has joined the Red Hat Society and the Garden Club since becoming a PEER. She helps the Activity Department with fundraisers. In fact, Bonnie is willing to help with anything, anytime she is asked!

**Bill Troup** was depressed that his therapy had ended and barely got out of bed when he was convinced to try PEER. Since PEER graduation, he formed his own exercise class with the help of the therapy department. For almost a year Bill led the other residents in exercises 2 evenings a week-one PEER’s solution to the end of his therapy! A friend of Bill’s niece saw the article about him in PEER Connection in a home in another county, told his niece and she called him-another way that PEER was able to bring some cheer into his life! Bill has joined the Blue Cap Men’s Club and was elected President of the Garden Club. He is now as active as he can be in all the activities and socials at Manor Care North.

**Bea Freeman** came up with the idea of the Manor Care North Starfish that the PEERs decorate and give out with their welcome packets. Bea is past president of Residents Council and current president of the Red Hat Society. She calls Bingo and although she has her own garden, she helps the garden club when she can. Bea always speaks up and often takes the lead in bringing issues to Resident Council or the administration of the home. Bea also welcomes new residents.
**Margaret Campbell** is constantly watching out for her roommate and others who can’t speak for themselves. She is extremely conscientious, never missing a PEER meeting or special event. She is a mainstay of the Garden Club and the Cooking Club, which makes things with the garden produce as well as other goodies. It is usually Margaret that does any preparation necessary prior to the cooking-cleaning vegetable and anything else that is needed. Margaret, although very quiet, has strong opinions and is willing to share them. She is a great person to have on your side! Margaret is also a member of the PEER Welcoming Committee. These are the original members of the Manor Care North PEER group, graduating from PEER Class at the Williamsport Home in August of 2006. They have become good friends and a very cohesive group. But even so, they are always recruiting and willing to welcome any new PEERs to their group.

Those that they have recruited to be trained in subsequent PEER classes are: 

**LaVern Wernett** attended PEER Class at Manor Care South, graduating in August of 2007. Vern is a quiet man, but is always willing to help others. He often pushes residents in wheel chairs to where they want to go. He creates hand made necklaces which he gives to new residents and is in the process of creating a coloring book with beautiful hand drawn pictures that can be reproduced for residents to paint or color. Vern is a member of the Garden Club and has just overcome his natural shyness to join the Welcoming Committee. 

**Ann Balzer** attended class with Vern but was unable to finish. Ever persistent, she was able to attend the next PEER class, which was at Muncy Valley Skilled Nursing Unit, and graduated in November of 2007. Although she could have attended just the last two classes, Ann attended the whole sessions to support another recruit, who has since gone home. Ann came on board with lots of good ideas. She suggested that we get small shopping bags and give new residents a bag of gifts of Manor Care promotional items, as well as the Helping Hands booklets. The bags are decorated with Bea’s starfish and ribbons and also contain a typed list of things that Ann wished she had been told as a new resident (how the menu sequence works, what alternatives are always available, how to access the telephone and several other things). Ann took the lead to get our Welcome Committee organized, up and running better than it ever has been. She keeps score for games and belongs to the Red Hat Society for which she wrote a theme song. We’ve requested that she work on a PEER song for us! Ann was the first PEER to volunteer to do the Resident Rights Presentation for the staff in-service training and did a fine job. She shared that she had NEVER spoken or read in front of people until she was asked to read the Starfish Story for PEER graduation. She said ‘something happened to me when I read that story’. She said she felt so relaxed, secure and comfortable doing it, that any fear she had of speaking to a group just disappeared!

As a group, every one of the Manor Care North PEERs is willing to take a turn at the in-service Resident Rights presentations. They are all friendly and welcoming to new residents. They are all active in Resident Council and always on the lookout for potential PEER recruits. They have formed a very cohesive group that still looks outward for new members and accepts and includes them. Each and every one of them stands ready to do whatever they can to be of help to others, even when it means trying something brand new! They are a group of wonderful, courageous survivors ever willing to share their strength and warmth with others.
PEER Award Nominee
Number Two
Luzerne County Kingston Commons

Nominated a group of PEERs from Kingston Commons, Luzerne County. They are William Strish, Dorothy McMillion, Barbara Grula, and Millie Ives, they were also joined by fellow residents Alice Gay, Elizabeth Scott, and Carol Joyce and are all active in Project Linus.

Project Linus is comprised of thousands of volunteers across the United States. Their mission is to provide love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children who are seriously ill, traumatized, or otherwise in need through gifts of new, handmade, washable blankets and afghans, lovingly created by volunteer “blanketeers.” The blankets may be distributed to children in hospitals, shelters, social agencies, or anywhere a child might be in need of a big hug.

The above residents come together every Monday evening and cut and tie blankets or knit afghans for a local church for the benefit of these children.

The “blanketeers” at Kingston Commons have donated 9 blankets to date and are still going strong. They began with a few residents and are still increasing their members. The materials for the project are donated by Kingston Commons Administration.

This project has offered PEERs and residents a rewarding and fun service opportunity and a sense of pride in their home. Project Linus offers residents a sense of purpose. They work with their PEERs, building new friendships and providing a wonderful service to children. The residents feel a sense of connection to the community by this projet. They feel useful and social.
A group of Schuylkill County PEERs has gone above and beyond the call in getting the issue of “Resident’s Rights” out to the staff of their homes.

Betty Kline of Seton Manor, Mary Mayernick of St. Catherine’s Long Term Care Center, Allan Vollmer of Trinity Mission, and Beth Wright of Broad Mountain Nursing & Rehabilitation Center all presented staff in-services in their homes. Utilizing the Power Point Presentation “Rights – A Resident’s Perspective”, these four PEERs delivered a powerful message to the people directly responsible for their care and services.

Their main message: Think of how you would like to be treated, it will be you some day.

The PEERs reminded staff members that they should be cheerful upon entering their rooms, as they (the residents) can “read” into the employees. Staff attitudes can make or break the day for the residents.

The in-services were very well received by all staff members and a few tears were shed during one presentation. In all, almost 200 employees heard from the PEERs on the importance of treating them with respect and dignity.

The in-services are on-going, and one of our PEER presenters was asked to give an encore presentation as part of the annual mandatory in-service schedule at her home.

Because of their ongoing quest to promote Resident’s Rights, I would like to nominate the Schuylkill County PEER Group of Betty Kline, Mary Mayernick, Allan Vollmer and Beth Wright for the 8th annual PEER Award.
The Sycamore Manor PEER group graduated in June 2007 with 5 members. Unfortunately Jim Ensinger passed away soon after graduation. The four remaining PEERs, Lottie Laidacker, Mille Shipman, Paul Lusk and John Brown have been very active from the beginning. They never forget that they are PEERs! When Sycamore Manor had a Talent Show, Lottie Laidacker decided to perform a reading of “Look at Me” for the other residents. Paul Lusk read “The Starfish Story”. They were VERY well-received.

For resident rights week, Lottie, Paul and Millie Shipman all agreed to participate with Lottie doing one presentation and Millie and Paul doing the presentation for second shift. John is non-verbal for the most part, but is always supportive of the group efforts. John is Paul’s roommate and overheard a make-up session of one of the PEER classes I was doing with Paul. He was soon joining in with thoughts and comments of his own. He asked if he could participate and we caught him up with make-ups and welcomed him to the group. He is very proud to be a PEER and comes up with some excellent comments and suggestions.

All of the Sycamore PEERs welcome new residents and include them in activities. These PEERs have recruited three new residents for the current PEER class and look forward to welcoming them to their group.

Even with some challenging health issues, the Sycamore PEER group does their best to participate in everything PEER—their monthly meetings within their home, the quarterly countywide meetings, statewide PEER planning meetings and Camp Hill PEER day.

Lottie Laidacker was invited to be a part of the PEER presentation at Enrichment Training and is looking forward to participating. This is an outstanding PEER group.
Lois Pepperman and Jane Mancini were nominated as a ‘team’ for the PEER Award by their fellow PEERs in Lycoming County. Lois and Jane do outstanding jobs as PEERs. They thoroughly understand the PEER/Ombudsman philosophy and always know the best way to help people. They help others by empowering them to solve their problems and get what they need.

Lois was a graduate of the original Lycoming County PEER class in August of 2006. For her first year as a PEER she educated staff every month in the Annual Continuing Education meetings. The Valley View staff said she did a great job of explaining PEER and resident rights issues without any notes to help her.

Jane, a more recent PEER graduate (August 2007) has been presenting the PEER resident rights presentation at the CE meetings for the last several months.

Lois and Jane greet new residents, keep track of their interests and sees to it that they are invited to any activities that they may enjoy. They both participate as welcoming committee members presenting new residents with the Valley View PEER Hand as well as Helping Hands booklets.

They are the backbone of our Valley View PEER group and welcome new PEERs and encourage everyone to participate.
# PEER Award Ballot Form 2008

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*Please vote for only one by placing an X in the box next to the candidate you wish to receive this years PEER award. Please submit your votes via fax or email to Kim Shetler ROC, at 570-784-4420 or ksroc@verizon.net*

*Votes must be received by April 20, 2008 to be counted!*
PEER Update from BSST

The PEER Group along with Carol’s assistance developed a Quality Assurance Survey Tool encompassing various areas of care (staff interaction, room cleanliness, social services, etc). The gentlemen in the PEER Group along with Carol and the Volunteer Ombudsman conducted one-on-one surveys with the residents in the facility. The findings of the survey were formally presented to the DarWay Quality Assurance Staff Committee by Terry Maynard (PEER Resident). DarWay will be working with the PEER Group to help rectify some of the issues that have been identified by residents. Due to distance and physical limitations of our local PEER Group, it was identified that the residents needed an avenue to be able to network with other PEERS in the Commonwealth, keep abreast of statewide PEER events/information, state Ombudsman Program and maintain contact with family. One of the identified concerns of the QA survey was involving family in residents care and residents being able to keep in touch with loved ones. Carol worked with our Executive Director, Bill Farley in securing a computer for the PEER Group. The AAA will be donating a computer to the local PEER Group. DarWay NF has agreed to pay costs for internet usage and equipment maintenance of the computer. Carol is working with the North Central PA Center for Independent Living (CIL) to secure adaptive devices for the computer to best accommodate our PEER Group’s needs.
Congratulations on this wonderful project, and keep us posted!

Jefferson County “Thanks a Mint”

The PEERs in Jefferson County have been busy making employees at Jefferson Manor and Laurelbrooke Landing feel special.

“YOUR WORTH A MINT” cards were made by Volunteer Ombudsmen from Jefferson County Area Agency on Aging and distributed by PEERs to all employees at these facilities. The cards were a Thank You from the residents to let the employees know that they appreciate what they do for them every day. Employees were greeted each shift at the time clock by a PEER to let them know that they make a difference in their lives.

Congratulations on such a worthwhile project to recognize the staffs of these facilities in which you reside!
**Next Issue: Summer 2008**

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**Upcoming Events**

**Upcoming PEER Graduations**
- Carbon County, March 5, 2008
- Lycoming County, April 3, 2008

**PEER Planning Meetings**
- March 26, 2008
  Maria Joseph Manor
  Danville, PA

**Upcoming Training**
- PEER Day, May 7, 2008

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Contact your local Ombudsman, ROC, or State Office to have your event listed in this newsletter.

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The Annual PEER Day Event will occur on May 7, 2008 at the Radisson Camp Hill. This will be a one day event for all PEERs who are able to attend. Please mark your calendars and don’t miss this wonderful celebration of the Magical Mission PEER! Hope to see you all there.

Please don’t forget to complete your PEER Ballots so that we can present this years award on May 7, 2008!

“Making a Difference in Long Term Care!”