



Advocacy | Education | Prevention

Lasting Friendship

Interview with MHA Volunteer Ashley Nolan

What drew you to volunteer with MHA in 2008?

As a psychology major at UNC Charlotte, a mental health internship with Mecklenburg County provided my first in-depth exposure to mental health stigma in society and how isolating it can be. After I graduated college and pursued a career in Human Resources, I really missed volunteering and advocating for individuals with mental health challenges. In 2008, I went online to look for volunteer opportunities and found the Compeer program with MHA. After I learned about Compeer and how they match you with a friend, I was in!!

What has your friendship with Tracey meant to you?

Tracey and I met in 2008 when we were matched in the Compeer program. It is crazy to think we have been friends for 15 years!!! My friendship with Tracey has evolved over the years as we both have as individuals. One thing that has *never* changed is how caring and devoted Tracey is to me and all her friends. Tracey has a huge heart and readily shares that with the people closest to her.

We have enjoyed being part of each other's lives and witnessing milestones and accomplishments, but also checking in with each other during COVID when we could not physically be able to see each other. I love and appreciate how aware Tracey is of her mental illness but that she does not let it stop her from things she is passionate about: spending time with her friends, painting pottery, writing in journals, sending holiday cards, writing short stories with her own illustrations, collecting cartoon memorabilia and so much more.



Tracey has shown me how to not let difficult circumstances prevent you from being happy and living your best life!!! - Ashley (L) with Tracey (R)

What made you decide to become an Ambassador for MHA?

I became an Ambassador to help spread the word that MHA is here to advocate and support people with mental health challenges. Also, I wanted to share my experience with Compeer to hopefully relieve some potential volunteers of any hesitations they may have about being part of Compeer. I recently joined MHA's Workplace Culture Committee to lend my experience in Human Resources to the organization. I am so proud to be a small part of this wonderful organization and witness the good they have done in our communities over the past 15 years!



Mental Wellness Starts With Friendship

[Compeer, Inc.](#) is Celebrating 50 Years—1973 to 2023

Learn more about [MHA's Compeer Program](#)