

NEWS

RINGWOOD EAST

Helping a friend in need

A FRIENDSHIP program matching volunteers and people with mental illness has just celebrated its 10th birthday but it still needs more volunteers.

Compeer is a St Vincent de Paul program that has set up 118 "companions" with volunteers for fun and friendship since 2003.

But the need for volunteers is still great, with 71 people on the waiting list.

Ringwood East's Mark, who has schizophrenia, depression and obsessive compulsive disorder, has been

meeting with his volunteer companion Praveen Reddy for three years.

"We are more friends than anything else," Mark said.

"We usually go for coffee or something like that and we sit and talk.

"It's provided me with an outlet and I find it's a privilege to be sharing his life."

Mr Reddy said he had gained a close friend through the program.

"The biggest thing for me was when you start the program, you think you're trying to fix something, but

you're not; you're just there to be a friend," he said.

"It's an easy program to be involved in, great support, great people and you get a lot out of it."

Compeer program manager Liz Cromb said volunteers spent about an hour a week with their companion, with activities either low cost or no cost as well as outings organised by Compeer.

"It means a lot to a person who may have lived in isolation for years," she said.

For more information

phone 9895 5886.

Leader - Maroondah

Tuesday, October 15, 2013

Page : 16

Section : MAR-News

Edition :

Region : Vic Suburban

Page : 2 of 2

Circulation : 47030

Area Of Clip : 220.65 sqcm

Clip ID : 8575228



Good mates Mark Toogood and Praveen Reddy met through the St Vincent de Paul Compeer friendship program.

Picture: PAUL LOUGHNAN