



Contact: Kelly Miskovski
Mental Health Association of Erie County, Inc.
716-886-1242 ex. 326
kmiskovski@eriemha.org

Compeer of Greater Buffalo and Mental Health Association of Erie County, Inc. to Host Buffalo Superhero 5K Race and Wellness Walk on June 9 in Delaware Park

Thurman Thomas and family to serve as honorary chairs with key sponsors ECMC, Rich Products and the Buffalo Bisons to support this annual 5K race and walk

BUFFALO, N.Y. , May 3, 2017 – The Buffalo Superhero 5K Race and Wellness Walk, the first and largest race/walk in Western New York dedicated to mental health awareness, will return once again at St. George’s Church in Delaware Park on Friday, June 9 at 6:30 p.m. The event will be hosted by Compeer of Greater Buffalo (Compeer) and the Mental Health Association of Erie County (MHA).

The Buffalo Superhero Race is a collaborative effort of providers, consumers, families, friends and caring community members dedicated to children who struggle with emotional challenges or who have experienced neglect and mental or physical abuse. Proceeds from this event will benefit the mentoring programs and services at Compeer and the MHA’s Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program.

This year, Buffalo Bills legend and Pro Football Hall-of-Famer Thurman Thomas, his wife Patti, and their daughter Annika, are honorary chairs of the event. The goal of the event and the missions of Compeer and the MHA hit close to home for the Thomas family as Annika struggles with anxiety and depression.

“Watching our daughter go through some difficult times has been very challenging, but she knows being silent is no way to help her family and peers understand what she is going through,” said Thurman.

“Annika has worked hard to achieve her goals and with the help of family and friends, she has overcome many obstacles,” said Patti. “To help others like our daughter, we know raising awareness and understanding of mental health issues in our community is extremely important, so we’re happy and excited to be the honorary chairs of this event.”

“Individuals, families and corporate teams will all converge on Delaware Park to unleash their own inner superhero again this year in what has become one of our most visible and popular annual events,” said Ken Houseknecht, Executive Director of the MHA.

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“While many Western New Yorkers and long-time Buffalo Bills fans look up to Thurman Thomas as the result of his many achievements on the playing field, and rightfully so, it’s Annika that is the true superhero, stepping forward to bravely tell her story and serve as a role model and example to thousands of other young people who struggle with emotional challenges,” said Houseknecht.

Through a partnership with The Superhero Foundation, Inc., this event is one of dozens across the nation that is Superhero themed. Organizers encourage participants to dress in their favorite superhero costumes to help call attention to the idea that while every child needs a hero, many children need superheroes.

“We’re grateful for our event sponsors such as Rich Products and the Buffalo Bisons, as well as our presenting sponsor, ECMC. These organizations are truly what makes Buffalo the City of Good Neighbors, and without them, this event would not be possible,” said Tim Boling, Executive Director of Compeer of Greater Buffalo. “We can’t wait for June 9, and we encourage all community members to attend this wonderful event.”

The Buffalo Bisons are also hosting a projected sellout Superhero Night at Coca-Cola Field on Saturday, August 19 at 6:05 p.m. A percentage of that night's ticket sales, 100 percent of donations collected on site, half of 50/50 ticket sales and 100 percent of each superhero cape sold at the game will be donated to MHA and Compeer.

The Buffalo Superhero Race will include a USA Track & Field-sanctioned and certified 5K race, as well as a 1.8-mile wellness walk. Everyone is invited to attend the event, which features a family-friendly after party with food, drinks, activities, entertainment, and live music from the local band *Playing with Monsters*.

For more information, please visit www.buffalosuperherorace.com. Registration is open and organizers are expecting more than 1500 runners/walkers to participate in this year’s race.

About Compeer of Greater Buffalo

Founded in 1985, Compeer of Greater Buffalo (Compeer) is a private, not-for-profit mental health agency, which utilizes an evidence-based model for mentoring programs. Its mission is to use the healing power of volunteer friends and mentors to improve the lives of children, adults, veterans and seniors who are striving for optimal mental health. For more information visit www.compeerbuffalo.org, and/or like Compeer of Greater Buffalo on Facebook.

About the Mental Health Association of Erie County, Inc.

For more than 50 years, the Mental Health Association (MHA) of Erie County, Inc. has promoted mental health and wellness in our community through education, public information, prevention programs, and training while supporting individuals and families living with mental illness through advocacy, treatment linkage, and outreach services.

The MHA provides numerous programs and services for children, adults, and families throughout Western New York. For more information on the MHA’s services you can visit our website www.eriemha.org or find us on Facebook.