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Goodwill workers qualify to help mentally ill clients

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— Nationally recognized training and certification for 14 Goodwill Industries of the Conemaugh Valley employees will help individuals with mental illness lead normal lives.

Goodwill's psychiatric rehabilitation and peer support staff completed the seven-day Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery course to become certified Wellness and Recovery Action Plan facilitators.

The course was financed with an \$18,000 grant from Lee Initiatives Inc.

“This program helps people in recovery reduce their symptoms, become more hopeful and have better health,” said Janice Aspey, Goodwill's director of community integration services.

Facilitators help those recovering from mental illness develop wellness action plans through hope, personal responsibility, education, self-advocacy and support.

“We teach them how to use this tool to help them in their recovery,” Aspey said.

Facilitators meet with Goodwill's clients in group programs and one-on-one counseling as part of the organization's overall mission to help individuals “achieve their fullest potential in the community through work services.”

Programs include housing assistance, job training and employment support services for those with disadvantages and disabilities, dislocated workers, youth and other job seekers.

Newly certified staff members are Aspey, Tricia Fisher, Courtney McDermott, Lindsey Raco, Melissa Shinholt, Jason Werner, Colleen Wolfhope, Matthew Gustkey, June Lowery, Kelly Lundgren, Jeannine Kadillac, Brian Woy, Barb Feather and Dana New-comer.

The WRAP project's goal is to improve mental health services in Cambria County.

Goodwill works with more than

100 people each year who have a diagnosed mental illness. Facilitators help clients to manage their symptoms and triggers and to take control of their daily lives. This will improve their functioning employment and job training, education, socialization and independent living.

Lee Initiatives has invested \$9 million received from UPMC in Pittsburgh to settle a lawsuit over the sale of former UPMC Lee Regional to crosstown rival Conemaugh Health System.