

GOC GAZETTE

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE
GAINESVILLE OPPORTUNITY CENTER



Mental Health Awareness Month

When we think of the month of May, we think of several things: Mother’s Day, Memorial Day Cookouts and college graduations. However, did you know that May is also Mental Health Awareness Month? What does that mean...mental health awareness month? As I was looking to answer this I reviewed some articles I had written previously and found an article from our November 2011 newsletter that I thought was appropriate, and helped to answer these questions. The article is in reference to the NAMI Stop Out Stigma Walk that took place in October 2011, but the issues are still with us. Below is that article.

After completing the NAMI *Stomp Out Stigma* Walk on Saturday October 22nd, and coming home my son asked where I was. When I told him, he asked what the walk was about. In answering him, I found myself thinking about stigma. What is stigma, why does it exist, and what can we at GOC, do to put an end to this?

So, first I thought I would define what stigma is. Webster’s Dictionary defines Stigma as a mark of shame or discredit. Why should having a mental illness be a cause of shame? So what is shame? Shame was defined as a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming or impropriety.

Is developing a mental illness something that an individual strives for or a goal for anyone? Is developing an illness something that people choose in their lives? Does anyone as a child say “When I grow up I want to have depression or schizophrenia”?

So why do people feel that a person living with a mental illness should be ashamed of them self and feel guilty about the effects of the illness? Should someone who has developed cancer feel ashamed and guilty about it? Are we ashamed of diabetes or high blood pressure? No, then why are we ashamed of mental illnesses?

While in Ireland working with a team to get clubhouses started there, I spoke with a gentleman about the clubhouse movement, what

we do and the recovery that happens here. His response to me was very genuine and honest; “What do we need clubhouses for? If you have a mental illness you should either go to the priest or the pub.”

This sentiment is echoed in our own society, by our actions and our words. I cannot count the number of times in the 20+ years that I have been working in this field that I have heard someone tell me that people living with a mental illness “Just need a good swift kick in the pants” or “They just need to snap out of it”. Would you say the same thing to someone with cancer...just snap out of it?

Mental illnesses are not a visible illness. You can see people talking to non-existent people, but you can’t hear the voices that they are hearing. You can see people drooling, but you can’t see that it is a side-effect of their medications. You can see people not answering your question, when you ask them one, but you can’t see the desire to answer the questions and the struggle to get the words out. We see the outward symptoms, not the inward ones. We judge by the outward symptoms and automatically assume the worst, rather than assume the best. We see the weakness, not the strength. We see the illness, rather than the person.

So what can GOC do? Well to start, our members continue to work. By doing this we highlight our strengths, our abilities, our best. When we speak at public events, we show that members are strong, viable and worthy. When we have the opportunity, we will vote, we will affect change through civic duty, and we will stand up and demand to be counted. When given the chance we will succeed, and through our success we will educate. We will work together to Stomp Out Stigma, and say no more. I am a person LIVING with a mental illness, not a mentally ill person!

-by Pam D.

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Inside This Issue:

Employment & Education	2
Activities Calendar and Birthdays	2
Calendar	3
Member Articles	3-4
New Member Interview	4

The Gainesville Opportunity Center’s Board of Directors

Bruce Stevens - President
Edward “Andy” Bernard - Vice President
Patricia Sokol –Treasurer
Barry Wagner –Secretary
Markus Dietrich
Sandy Callan
Joe Savastano

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1

OUR CALENDAR

MAY

13TH MOTHER'S DAY
28TH MEMORIAL DAY
16TH OPEN HOUSE
21ST-24TH PEER CONFERENCE

BIRTHDAYS

5TH ELIMAR C.	13TH MATHEW M.	20TH PAMELA S.
8TH GREG U.	16TH LEE B.	24TH MICHAEL G.
8TH HAROLD R.	17TH TERRY T.	29TH SANDARAC C.
12TH JILL K.	18TH MARCIA F.	29TH TONI I.

Happy Birthday Everyone!!!



Clubhouse Employment, Education and Volunteerism - *Our Members at Work*

Education

Member	Location	Degree
Mike Leyman	Santa Fe College	Welding
Deb O.	Santa Fe College	Business
Greg U.	BBN Bible Institute	Scripture Studies
Alexis H.	Santa Fe College	Welding
Sandy Callan	Argosy University	Psychology

Employment Quote of the Month

"A man who works with his hands is a laborer; a man who works with his hands and his brain is a craftsman; but a man who works with his hands and his brain and his heart is an artist"

-[Louis Nizer](#)

Volunteer Work

Place of Work	Position	Schedule	Hours	Member
Gainesville Pet Rescue	Dog Walker	Saturday	4	David Stevens

Supported and Independent Employment

Member	Position/Employer	Hrs/Week
Andy B.	Kitchen Asst./St. Francis H.S.	25
Andy B.	Dishwasher/Meridian	5
Sara O.	Peer Specialist/Meridian	16
Jane B.	Courtesy Clerk/Winn-Dixie	25
Sandy C	Peer Specialist/Meridian	20
Regis G.	Clinical Supervisor/Discount Counseling Group	3
Regis G.	Consultant/Boys and Girls Club	20
Frances S.	Peer Specialist/Meridian	16
Tommy A.	Stocker/Catholic Charities	4
David B.	Peer Specialist/Meridian	20
Alexis H	Peer to Peer Facilitator/NAMI	2
David J	Groundskeeper/Meridian	4

Congratulations to

Alexis for successfully facilitating the NAMI Peer to Peer class. The word on the street was that it was a wonderful program and participants found it incredibly valuable. Great job Alexis!

David, Ann and Catherine for successfully completing the NAMI Peer to Peer class.

- *Need a job?*
- *Don't know what you should do?*
- *Submitted applications but haven't gotten a job?*
- *We can help!*

Stop by Monday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday to see Pam or Paula or call them at 224-5523

When further funding becomes available we will be able to increase our staff to cover our work-ordered day program, which will support a strong Transitional Employment (TE) Program!

May

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 <i>Mother's Day</i>	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 <i>Peer Conference</i>	22 <i>Peer Conference</i>	23 <i>Peer Conference</i>	24 <i>Peer Conference</i>	25	26
27	28 <i>Memorial Day</i>	29	30	31		

Clubhouse Days: The Beginning



The clubhouse, for me, started in 2007, with Mike Demers. I found out about the club through Pam Demers, who was working at Meridian at the time and told me about this new program called a clubhouse. She told me her husband, Mike, was the Director, and was looking for members. I called Mike and came to a Clubhouse Without Walls meeting. We called ourselves "Clubhouse Without Walls" because we didn't have a home yet. We would meet once a week, on Wednesdays, at Mike and Pam's house. The initial group was 7 people (me, Andy, Mike S., David, Alexis, Regis, and Shirley). We would meet and talk about ways to promote the clubhouse in the community. We took trips to other clubhouses in Florida (Vincent House, Lighthouse, Sedona House and Club Success), we also went to Tallahassee for Mental Health Days and spoke to our area Senators and Representatives about the clubhouse and how it has helped us. We developed a GOC Logo, had t-shirts, pens, and participated in the NAMI Walk.

Mike was looking for money and a building every day. He was working to develop the Board of Directors too. In July 2008, we found our walls. We were able to sublease space from Catholic Charities, and it included a nice kitchenette area. The space was about a 20'x20' square foot room to work in and eat meals, so there was enough room to meet our needs and then some. We felt very blessed. We had a place to make lunch, and worked closely with the staff from Catholic Charities. The staff at Catholic Charities always loved the smell of the kitchen when we cooked meals. Tommy usually made the meals. They were delicious.

In 2008, Pam was hired as the Program Director and headed up employment. One of the first things that happened was she worked with Mike to get a TE as Paper Shredders at Catholic Charities. David and I got the jobs. We each worked a 2 hour shift. Catholic Charities had a very large room full of papers to be shredded. It was almost overwhelming, but Pam and Mike helped me and David and it was suddenly a lot easier. The staff

thought that it would take at least 6-months, David and I finished it in just over 2 months! Unfortunately, this meant that there was no more work for us and as a result our jobs ended and due to budget issues and loss of a grant, they couldn't hire us back.

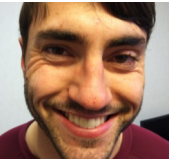
I learned a lot from other members too. Tommy taught me many things. He was always nice and he literally took the shirt off his back and gave it to me. He gave me a hat for almost every NFL team. He taught me to like every team. It was super exciting the first year. After the days went by we just continued to work. People would come and go. I made friends with most people at the old clubhouse location. I'm friends with everyone at the new location.

Today, I am at the club almost every day. We have a beautiful new location, and we are now open 4 days a week. I have some great friends that I have made at the clubhouse. We go to the movies, go bowling and even started a band. David, Manny and I started a band. We practice at David's parent's house, and have played at the open mike at Lillian's Music Store Bar. We have three original songs, but we mostly play a lot of covers. We are getting better though and we even played at the GOC Christmas party. We want to make a Christmas CD with Christmas songs, for next year too. I am also working at being accepted into the Welding Program at Santa Fe College. I took the TABE test about 2 weeks ago and did much better than I thought I would, but I still have some improvements to make. I will be working with the tutors there to get my Math scores up, and I need to get my Reading Scores up too. I know that I can do this, and I like the idea of being in school again.

I am having trouble with my thoughts. I am going to Church as well as a Bible study. I love having a family, and two living places. I love it when I accomplish work. The Director is helping me go back to school this summer. So, things at GOC rock, but I have to work harder. I hope we have a bunch of new members.

-by Mike L.

New Member Interview: Ryan Jones



Ryan's mom found out about the Gainesville Opportunity Center through the website. That is how Ryan heard about Gainesville Opportunity Center. Ryan wasn't doing anything before coming to the Gainesville Opportunity Center.

The best part of GOC that Ryan likes is interacting with other members

When Ryan is not at GOC, he enjoys working on computers and climbing trees.

When Ryan was 11 years old in 1998, he got the Lego Mindstorm micro controller-a small computer like a smart phone-and learned to program the micro controller. That is when he first started working on computers.

Ryan's strong characteristics of his personality are that he is a strong ENFP (Extroverted, Intuitive, Feeling, Perceptive).

When asked if Ryan would recommend GOC to other people he

answered, "It depends on their situation. To me GOC is a source of success and social interaction. It's a place where I can go and be accepted."

Some positive characteristics that Ryan brings to GOC is that he is good with people, he stops what he is doing, giving you undivided attention, and in the middle of a complex task answers your questions, and is awesome at multitasking.

Ryan's first job was working for UF's Nano Fabrication Facilities. Nano Fabrication Facilities is a production laboratory that produces custom-made objects. Ryan Trained the graduate students in machine shop operations.

Ryan gets to GOC each day in his truck he calls "Watson."

Ryan has two dogs, Pepito (a Bassalope), and Marley (an Australian Sheppard).

-by David S.

Jane and Andy— A new beginning



Andy and I met at Choices Apartments where I was living in 2004. In 2005 I started working at Winn-Dixie and was beginning to recover from my illness. I was very active at Choice Apartments, volunteering at the Red Cross, helping plan apartment parties, and working. Andy I were good friends, along with other people who lived in the complex as well. In 2007, I moved out of Choices into my own apartment, and I lost contact with Andy, and many of my other friends.

In late 2009 I was working at Winn-Dixie, and Andy came in to the store. We talked for a few minutes, and later that week I found his phone number. I really wanted to reconnect again; I missed my friends, so I called him. He wasn't home so I left a message, and he called me back. It turned out that he had been away with his brother fishing and was excited to get my call. We went out that weekend and he took me driving. I know that this sounds like a pick-up line but I wanted to practice driving. So our first "non-date" was a few hours of me practicing driving his car, since I was going to do the driving test. Unfortunately I didn't even get to take the driving test, for a variety of reasons.

Around the same time, Andy told me about the Gainesville Opportunity Center. He told me about all the work that they do there, and that they had fun so I thought I would come by and see. It turned out he was right! I started by helping put together the newsletters and typing articles for Mike Demers. While I was doing that Andy, Mike Leyman and I started making social plans to go to the movies, or just hanging out. We had fun, and were enjoying each other's company.

I always thought Andy was a sweetie pie, but never really had the guts to say or do anything about it. We continued to go out as friends with Mike Leyman. In January 2010, I invited Andy to go church with me. I was surprised when he accepted. He picked me up on that Sunday and we spent the day at church, and at my apartment talking, and getting to know each other better. Mike, Andy and I continued to go out, but Andy and I began to see each other in a "different light". Within two weeks Andy and I were dating.

One year later, shortly after meeting his family for the first time, we became engaged. With the help of many family members, church friends and my clubhouse family we planned our wedding. On January 7, 2012 we got married. Many of my G.O.C. friends came, as well our families.

We still come to the clubhouse as often as possible. I still work for Winn-Dixie, and Andy got a new job at St. Francis High School as Kitchen Assistant through GOC. He continues working at Meridian as Dishwasher and Cleaner Technician one day a week as well. Most recently we have worked with the Belk Charity Sale, a wonderful fundraiser for GOC, as well as other not-for-profit agencies: Belk opens its doors early twice a year for a ticketed only event. They have great sales and many things that aren't normally on sale are on sale. We raised almost \$200 for GOC. As far as Andy and I go, we are newlyweds who were joined together and are living happily ever after.

- by Jane B.