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GOC GAZETTE



Rebuilding lives
Removing stigma
Restoring dignity
Resource
for mental health recovery

Moving! Growing!

The GOC is moving to a new home; state funding awarded for 3 years.

The Gainesville Opportunity Center has a new home. We will be moving to 102 NE 10th Avenue, which is a half-block off Main Street on NE 10th Avenue. The GOC has also been awarded an additional \$50,000 for the next three years that will allow us to serve more members even more effectively. The principle reason for the move is we needed more space. The GOC will go from 900 square feet to almost 1,600 and we may add even more. The office building has additional space available if we are able to secure an additional \$2,000 a month or so in donations or other funding.

Among the highlights of the new space is a full kitchen. Burton's Appliances has donated a stove and refrigerator as part of that kitchen. Previously, The GOC has served lunch daily in a kitchenette with only a microwave oven and a skillet. This will allow us to plan for and prepare a greater array of healthy foods. We can now help our members learn additional vocational skills or help with life lessons for independent living.

GOC is busy packing up. We anticipate a move in date by December 1. Our additional funding will be used towards additional staff hours to work with members on social and vocational skills, along with our larger facility. This year alone, we have seen our daily average attendance almost double. We expect further growth to come.

Our larger facility will be filled with more computers and will host additional programs and equipment to enhance our members' training and experience. We will aim to do things like host healthy cooking classes or start a member-grown vegetable garden. If you wish to volunteer your skills and talents to help, please contact Pam or Brett at 352-224-5523.

You can help!

More space means we will need more things for our members. As the holidays approach, please keep the GOC in mind as you get new stuff. We can provide tax receipts for donations of supplies. Office chairs are our biggest need at the moment. Computer equipment (preferably no greater than two years old) is the second greatest need. We need, in the following order, flat panel monitors, workstations, DDR2 Memory, keyboards, mice, headphones, speakers. We can also use some conference tables, shelves, and filing cabinets. For kitchen equipment we need pots, pans, casserole dishes, and plates.

Florida Clubhouses Head to State Capitol to Advance Preventive Care

The Florida Clubhouse Coalition has big plans. At the November meeting, the Florida Clubhouses refocused goals and priorities going into 2016. The Florida Legislative Session is meeting in January next year instead of March. Preventive Mental Health is on the agenda and Florida Clubhouses are coming together to advance our cause. We are hoping to send representatives, paid for from the state dues, to Tallahassee to lobby for our efforts. GOC Program Director Brett Buell is the new Vice President, and likely will be going to the Session along with representatives from other Clubs.

There are key facts we need to communicate, such as that the cost for a member to spend a year in a Clubhouse can be less than that of spending two days in a hospital. The impact we can have with them working, volunteering, and supporting their peers is quite different than if they spent a couple days lying in a bed.

In preparation for that meeting we need to get busy. We need to make some printed materials about a common theme and hopefully a video. We are strategizing and networking to make the biggest impact we can. There is a lot at stake. It is crucial we come together.

The International Clubhouse Conference has come and gone. The meeting of the minds on the mind took place in Denver October 24-29 and the GOC was a proud participant. All in all, 123 clubs attended from 21 countries sending 600 members, staff, and board members to help erase the stigma of mental illness.

The human brain has 86-billion neurons that makes 100-trillion connections. If someone has a mental illness, there is a physiological cause.

The night we spent for enlightenment

The GOC hosted an intimate round table discussion on mental illness in early October. The event was highlighted by a leading authority on mental illness along with two people living in recovery, and the mother of teenager who is affected.

As part of our Clubhouse model, we focus on our members' strengths... not their illnesses. Having a Clubhouse like the GOC for people to come to for daily meaningful work can play a huge role in helping feel like a whole person.

On this night we enlightened everyone that it is possible.

Noteworthy points from the discussion:

Dr. Rajiv Tandon — “What does a person with mental illness want? It’s like asking what do I want? Or what does anyone want? The ability to feel, the ability to relate, your sense of self.”

“By definition, recovery is getting back something you have lost. Part of the challenge while being in recovery is what do you want to get back?”

Ryan J. (Peer) — “Belief and hope were necessities to achieving the recovery I’ve accomplished.”

Wesley E. (Peer) — “Where you find connections you find recovery. For so long I wasn’t connected to anything.”

Rahda S. (Family Member) — “You are the participant in your life. What do you want to do with it?”

Cheers to Peers

by Lloyd B

There is a growing movement in mental health facilities called peer support. It has been proven through other recovery programs and research that effective treatment of those receiving mental health services respond well to having someone else with shared experience guiding them through the often confusing treatment process. Having someone who has been there in your corner can be beneficial. Anyone who has ever had to deal with psychiatrists, therapists or case managers will tell you that it can sometimes feel like you are being reduced to a case file. Peer Specialists hope to help alleviate this feeling and help their peers find resources within their area, gain skills in an effort towards self-sufficiency, and stress the value of education about their diagnosis.

The week of October 5th was a long one for four GOC members and one staff. Lutheran Services Florida Health Systems held a 40 hour Peer Specialist training session for 18 people in and outside of Alachua County. Some were already working in some area of mental health services while others, like myself, were receiving training in hopes of obtaining a position in the future. The facilitators were Wesley Evans, Ombudsman for LSF, and Kristi Krug. Each had several years of experience as Certified Recovery Peer Specialists and now pass the information on through advocacy and training. Both were very professional and seemed genuinely dedicated to their goal of getting the information heard and understood. The material was laid out nicely and the facilitators did their best to keep the atmosphere light when possible. However, some of the topics discussed were of a serious nature.

Overall, the week was educational and fun. There was a lot of reading out loud and I’m sure I will have to refer back to the manual. We also did role plays and gained insight from veteran practitioners. NAMI Gainesville provided lunches on Monday and Friday as well as snacks and coffee throughout. The week ended with the presenting of certificates and cake. Those already working as peers gained valuable information to take back with them. Those seeking a position in the future now know what the job entails and can perform effectively. I believe it to have been a positive experience and I’m sure that I’m not the only one who would say so.

Join the GOC on Wednesday December 2nd and Wednesday December 9th for holiday crafting with Ouida. On the 2nd we will be doing holiday cards, perfect for friends and family at this time of year and on the 9th we will be making Christmas Ornaments. The supplies will be provided for you, so all you need to bring is your cheery holiday spirit. Have a festive season with all of us here at the GOC!



Peer advocacy is the wave of the future for mental health. Both the government and private insurers have realized the need and the value for lower cost interactive programs to high cost crisis services.

The GOC provides our members with a safe place to come and be a part of something important. Members work on vocational and social skills while helping the GOC run and providing support to themselves and others.