

February 2021

GOC GAZETTE



Gainesville Opportunity Center

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GOC, Alachua County Launch Transitional Employment

In a strategic partnership with Alachua County, The Gainesville Opportunity Center is expanding our Transitional Employment (TE) program. The GOC is a mental Health Clubhouse, and TE is at the heart and soul of that model. TE is a unique program of support where GOC staff trains for a position and works in that position. Then, GOC staff picks a GOC Member and trains that Member to work the position. It allows Members who have often been unemployed for several years to ease their way back into the workplace while surrounded by people they know and who support them.

Valerie Sanders will be our newest Transitional Employee. Valerie last worked in 2018. She has been coming to the GOC as a volunteer Member since that time and has helped us run our daily program in numerous ways. She often writes for the newsletter, and works on our data entry and reception.

“I was scared to re-enter the workforce,” Valerie said. “I am so grateful to the GOC and Alachua County for this opportunity. It is making a huge difference in my life.”



Under our partnership with Alachua County, Valerie is an employee of the county, not the GOC. She pays taxes, just like everybody else. She has to be at work at a certain time and perform certain duties, just like everybody else.. However, if she struggles, GOC staff will work with her until she is able to perform on her own. If she cannot go into work, GOC staff will go and work her shift. So her employer is guaranteed a job well done, and Valerie gets the support she needs.

The GOC is proud to offer positions like these, and is proud institutions like Alachua County recognize the need for services like ours. We're helping people help themselves. That is what the GOC is all about.

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The GOC Garden Grows



On one fine Saturday in January, several groups from Gainesville came together to make our community a better place. We built a garden at the Gainesville Opportunity Center that will lead to new jobs, tasks, and responsibilities designed to instill personal growth for people living with chronic mental illness.

Side by side with GOC staff and Members, people from the Gainesville Rotary Club and the Jasmine Circle Garden Club showed up in force to help design and build a butterfly and vegetable garden right here at the GOC .

Getting our Members back into the community is what the Gainesville Opportunity Center is all about. Living with chronic mental illness often leads to lack of activity and a disconnect from family, friends, and the community as a whole. That disconnect often leads to one's illness getting worse, not better, and the cost to the individual, their families, and the community increase. Hospitalizations and other involuntary incarcerations cost a lot of money and don't provide the long term support people need.

Supporting Members as they take those next steps back into the community is vital to our Members' recoveries. Providing meaningful volunteer work opportunities like in a butterfly garden or a vegetable garden lead to increased activity levels and confidence. Having community support is tremendous. It shows our Members they are an important part of the world we live in and that the work they do is tremendously important. Having community members interact with the GOC teaches everyone that we are more alike than we are different, and we all need to work together for a better community.

Thank you also go out to UF IFAS and the Santa Fe Horticulture program for their material donations to our project. to help us with this endeavor. While Rotary provided the majority of the labor, The Jasmine Circle Garden Club donated \$700 toward the project. UF IFAS donated \$380 worth of soil, and Grow Hub donated a number of plants. It is great to see the GOC as a growing part part of the community.



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Garden Pictures



- Rotary Volunteers**
- Tony Barr
 - Courtney Evans
 - Chip Howe
 - Buddy Irby
 - Patrick irby
 - Leza Mueller
 - Greg Young
 - TJ Pyche
 - Ethan Reinhart
 - Lynda Reinhart
 - Greg Young
- Jasmine Circle Volunteers**
- Bruce Cavey
 - Greg Young

\$700 Donation from Jasmine Circle Garden Club

Tony Barr (below) not only cut some threatening branches, but he came back and took some nuisance trees down as well.



Other hard workers include Jon Graham (upper center) Chip Howe (upper right) Leza Mueller (right) and Joanna Broades (below.)



Special thanks to Courtney Evans (far right) for starting this project. Her Facebook fundraiser for the GOC garnered the awareness of her fiancé's TJ Pyche's (right) Rotary Club. Greg Young from Rotary is also in a Garden Club, and the interest grew and grew. Thank you everyone!!!!!!

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Unit Update:

Employment

We launched a Supported Employment position with Liberty Tax service on Tower Road. They are hiring GOC Members as sign wavers.



Thank you so much to Michael Turner and Rose Mary Marabuto for making this happen. Here you see Jerry working and waving!

Culinary

This month in Culinary we purchased new cookware and plates. We also welcomed a new member, Akeem Johnson. We are also discussing new lighting for the dining area. We hope to call in a lighting expert for an appraisal.



Fundraising



Joanna is writing thank you notes to all of our generous donors.

Did you know UF Employees can donate through payroll deduction?

Please visit <https://ufcc.ufl.edu/> to sign up. Others can donate by clicking on this link.

[Donate](#)

Office

Following Clubhouse Standards, we are reaching out to Members who haven't attended recently. We made 99 calls and reached 52 Members in January. Members have been giving tours to prospective Members and guests, which is another task and skill designed to build confidence.



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Month in Pictures



Above: GOC Members and Staff at the computer for a daily Zoom meeting. Below: Maggie is with GOC Member Melissa who is a new homeowner!!!



Above: GOC hosts a coat and blanket drive for the local homeless shelter, Grace Marketplace.

Left: Claudia Tuck, Alachua County Director of Community Support Services visits the GOC. She understands the value of Clubhouse services and is happy to see the GOC growing and thriving.

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Life with Meaning

by David Stevens



Hello! My name is David Stevens. I live with mental illness. I won't tell you my exact diagnosis. One of the main symptoms I manage is having a lot of anxiety. This makes it difficult for me to do things because my mind is telling my body that there is always danger. I could just be standing in line at a store and my mind might tell my body that if I don't hurry up then something bad will happen. I do manage my anxiety with medication and meditation. In fact, I usually meditate several times a day.

I have many skills that would make me a good employee. I write for the GOC Newsletter every month. Before COVID, I worked in the GOC office unit.

GOC is a place where I can go during the day where I can do work and where people understand me. It gives me something meaningful to do during the day, a place to make and see friends, and just live! If I need to meditate, even in the middle of a meeting, the people at GOC understand, and it is

no big deal. To me, being accepted for who I am matters. I thank the GOC for letting me be me.

Spotlight: Jimbo on His Own

by David Stevens

Meet Jimbo! After years of living with his sister as a dependent, Jimbo McCook is now living on his own.

Since coming to the GOC, Jimbo has learned to cook and clean. His sister moved out and he lived by himself for several months. Beginning in mid 2020, Jimbo lived independently. Jimbo said, "GOC has helped me live a better life by helping me live independently." In December 2020, Jimbo's niece moved in. But now it is more of a roommate situation than living as a dependent.

Jimbo says that living independently is important for him because he has experienced new things (like cooking and cleaning his house by himself.) What living independently represents to Jimbo that he can make it on his own!

Jimbo says, "GOC has helped me to learn to cook better, clean better, and also live independently. GOC has given Jimbo recipes like stir-fry, mashed potatoes, and baked chicken, and helped him to learn basic living skills. Jimbo stressed how the GOC has "helped me to use computers, and work in the garden."

Jimbo wants to eventually move to Gainesville, and get a part-time job working at a funeral home, That is if his employer can "work with" him. But, for right now, Jimbo is working at the GOC where he also likes to socialize with his friends!"



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Monthly Calendar and Events

February 6	GOC Open 10a-2p for art
February 6	GOC Event at Liberty Tax at Main Street
February 20	GOC Open Saturday for Art

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Weekly Meetings

Monday 2:00 p.m.-	Programming
Wednesday 2:00 p.m.-	Culinary, Wellness, Garden
Thursday 2:00 p.m.-	Website
Thursday 3:00 p.m.-	Newsletter
Friday 3:00 p.m.-	Adobe/Media

Daily Events and Meetings

8:30am	Culinary Unit Arrives
9:00am	GOC Opens; Breakfast is served.
10:00 am	General Membership Meeting
10:30 am	Work Day Commences
12:45 pm	Wellness Walk
1:30 pm	Office Unit Meeting
5:00 pm	Clubhouse Closes

Birthdays

Asia Perry	February 12
Kenny Winston	February 16
Paula Horning	February 17
CJ Wagoner	February 20



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