

March 2023

GOC GAZETTE



Gainesville Opportunity Center

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Vol. 5. Issue 3

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Advocacy and Innovation: It Started with Tara by Deidra Simon

The GOC is known for advocating for those with mental illness and innovating new types of support that help our Members stay out of crisis centers, hospitals, and incarceration. A fundamental belief of our organization is that people living with chronic mental illness can and do lead independent, meaningful, and fulfilling lives. We are here to break stigma and open doors. We help people do things for themselves. This started with a group of forward thinking people that included Dr. Taralyn De Wese-Mitchell. We honored her during Black History Month with a luncheon here at the GOC.

Affectionately known as Dr. Tara, she is a community leader who has created access for persons with mental illness for years. She continues making a difference in the lives of her community every day.

On February 13, 2022, Dr. Tara visited the GOC for lunch. Members and staff interviewed her about her contributions to the Clubhouse movement. Dr. Tara shared with Members and staff how, over fifteen years ago, she connected with fellow advocates and leaders in the mental health field to pursue the idea of creating a Clubhouse. Dr. Tara was instrumental in securing the first funding dollars, which allowed the board to hire GOC's first executive director, Mike Demers. Dr. Tara was also instrumental in establishing the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program in Gainesville, Florida, which pairs law enforcement officers with mental health professionals who provide direct services to persons with mental illness during a crisis. To this day, the GOC staff and Members have a strong relationship with the city and county CIT Co-responder teams, who care so much about the well-being and safety of our Members.

During Dr. Tara's 35-year career, she has served in various mental health and law enforcement positions. She is the Continuity of Care Director at the state forensic mental health treatment facility in Gainesville, Florida. When asked what she enjoys most about being a board member of the GOC, she shared that when releasing persons from the facility, she always refers them to Clubhouses for recovery support. Dr. Tara takes pride in referring individuals to Clubhouses for services. She believes in our mission and its ability to help others find community, support, and empowerment while on their mental health journey to recovery.

Dr. Tara, thank you for being a part of Black History and GOC's history. You have paved the way for people of every background to lead better lives.



Dr. Tara Mitchell was with DCF when the GOC was founded. She was a driving force behind starting the support system that became the GOC.

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GOC Advocates at Capitol

Along with our visits from the County Commissioners this month, we made a very important trip to Tallahassee. The Florida Department of Children and Families made Mental Health Clubhouse a statewide funding authority. We met with high level officials at DCF. We also met with key legislators to get the support we need. We started this initiative about 6 years ago. Since our first Tallahassee trip, we have seen a growth in Clubhouses. The GOC is now fully accredited as a result of this advocacy.



We traveled to Tallahassee this month to meet with key lawmakers on the committee that decides our budget. Development Director Brett Buell is pictured with Sen. Jennifer Bradley and Rep. Sam Garrison.

Innovative Partnership Employs our Members

Gator Dining on University of Florida campus feeds thousands of people every day. Did you know that GOC Members are helping to make that happen? Valerie, Scott, and Bill all work there through our relationship with Chartwells K12 (who runs Gator Dining.) As part of our Supported Employment efforts, we maintain a relationship with our Members and the employer to help everyone work together.

Everything takes place in the Reitz Student Union on the UF campus. Scott circles hundreds of tables in the Reitz Student Union. Bill works at 352-Burger. He spends time in the kitchen making food, time at the register, and helping keep the place clean. Valerie handles trash cans that are bigger than she is. Bill said he is grateful for GOC's support as we helped him with employment. Bill now has stable housing and a job. Scott was unemployed for 9 years before going back to work. The GOC helped him iron out his schedule and helped him transfer from one company to another when Chartwells took over the dining hall.



Valerie, Scott, and Bill all work at the Reitz Student Union via Gator Dining and Chartwells K12. It is part of our supported employment program.

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Member Spotlight: Joe Van Jenkins

by David Stevens

Meet Joe Van Jenkins! Joe Van tried out the GOC in 2016 after completing a program at Meridian Behavioral Healthcare. The GOC is not time limited. Once you are a Member, you are always a Member. Joe Van liked what he experienced: a place that supported him where he could learn social and job skills. It is a place to practice those skills during his journey in life; a place where Joe Van discovered that “there are people like me out there who have a mental illness as well.”

Before coming to the GOC, Joe Van spent most of his time by himself in his parents’ apartment. The GOC has helped Joe Van become productive and work with others. As a result, he feels good about himself and has found plenty of friends.

Joe Van took an early interest in our kitchen responsibilities, helping us make meals for other Members. He has participated in cooking and meal planning. The experience helped Joe Van get his first job ever- through our Transitional Employment program. He worked at Culver’s for two years. He started out as a lobby attendant and was later promoted to cashier. He was a productive and trusted member of the Culver’s team.

Since leaving Culver’s, he is now working in his desired field of personal fitness. Joe Van’s new job is at a local gym called YouFit. He started doing janitorial work and has since been promoted. He has a key to the building, opens up at 4 am, and works the reception desk. Joe Van’s goals are to go school, become a Certified Personal Trainer (CPT), and find a place of his own to live. His is working on his computer skills at the GOC by performing data entry. He will take classes at Santa Fe College this year. Joe Van needs to get his GED and complete other training to meet this goal.



Before coming to the GOC, Joe Van had never worked. He worked at Culver’s for two years and was promoted to cashier.



The GOC has been a great asset to Joe Van, as he continues to utilize what he gains from coming here. Without the GOC, Joe Van’s life would be very different. He is around more people now, and he is working toward his dream job. Joe Van says, “The GOC is a great place. You will get a lot of experience from it—and it is a place to recover.”

Joe Van is now working in his desired field of personal fitness. The GOC is helping him with his work and educational goals so he can achieve his dreams.

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Updates

Car Wash

The Gainesville Opportunity Center is hosting a car wash and cookout on Saturday March 18 from 10 am to 2pm at our location at 1210 NW 14th Ave. Cost is \$10 for wash and \$5 for lunch.

Your awareness and support will help us help others. Please share this event with a friend. We hope you can attend.



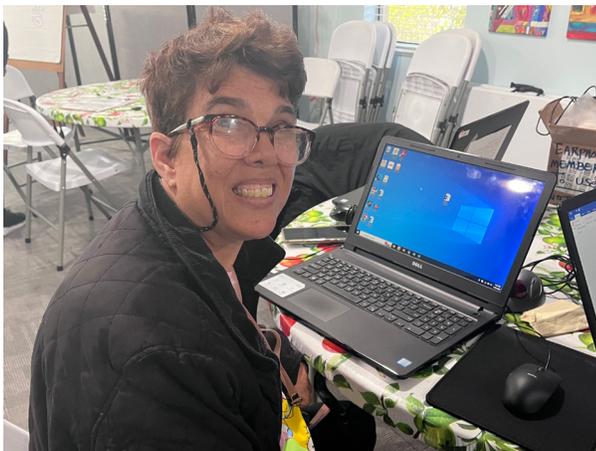
Kitchen Start Date

Rotary will begin construction on our kitchen on April 27. Thank you to Rotarian Dalton Baker, of D.R. Baker Construction, for leading and managing the project. Thank you to Rotarian Bryan Nazworth of Quality Plumbing for donating significant labor and materials.



Office

GOC has a new database, named Flourish. It will allow us to better track all the much needed supports we are providing to our Members. Not only will it track Member data, but it will also provide new software for our Members to learn to use. Flourish was specially designed to fit the needs of Clubhouses.



GOC Staff

The GOC is continuing to grow! We just added Paul LeBlanc to our full-time staff. He had previously served as our part-time driver.

Paul first heard about the GOC from a close friend living with mental illness. He says he sees the tremendous difference the GOC is making in people's lives and is excited to be part of it.

Maggie Hannon's last day at the GOC was March 3. She served as Program Director since 2019. She had an immeasurable impact on our growth. Thank you, Maggie!



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Monthly Calendar and Events

March 18, Car Wash and Cookout at the GOC
 March 24, Birthday Party
 March 24, Art Walk
 March 25 & 26, GOC Thornebrook Art Festival
 March 28, Art For All at UF HealthStreet

Newsletter Credits:

Brett Buell
 Producer / Writer/
 Layout/Photos

Rob Ellis
 Photographer

Reid Schreiber
 Editor/Layout

Deidra Simon
 Writer

David Stevens
 Writer/
 Photographer

David Turull
 Layout/Consultant

Monday 2:00 pm- House
 Tuesday 2:00 pm- Culinary, Wellness, Garden
 Wednesday 2:00 pm- Website
 Wednesday 3:00 pm- Newsletter
 Thursday 1:30 pm- Computer Workshop
 Thursday 2:00 pm- Adobe/Media
 Thursday 2:30 pm- Wellness



Daily Events and Meetings

8:30 am Clubhouse Opens
 9:00 am Breakfast starts
 9:30 am General Membership Meeting
 9:45 am Unit Meetings
 10:00 am Work Day Commences in Office,
 Culinary, Media and Garden
 12:00 pm Lunch
 1:00 pm Afternoon Meeting
 4:30 pm Clubhouse Closes

Birthdays

March 2 William McMullen
 March 3 Jacqueline Dunbar
 March 6 Cristina Quiroga
 March 12 Amanda Castle
 March 17 Phillip Lillie
 March 23 Jimbo McCook
 March 29 Dominic Orsini
 March 30 Jonathan Handley
 March 30 Tarrica Nelson-Gent

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Month in Pictures



Working together towards a common goal is what helps our Members move forward.



Members also work independently and take initiative when a job needs to be done.



Gardens take patience. Hard work pays off over time.



Members work on office tasks like our Daily Newsletter, which goes out to all of our Members.



What happens when you work together, make friends, and accomplish goals? You smile. The GOC is full of smiles.



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Click here to donate with a bank card through the Community Foundation Philanthropy Hub. You can even make your gift recurring.

THE

AMAZING GIVE

April 20, 2023

8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The Amazing Give is coming up soon. We hope you will support us.



Check with your employer for pre-tax donations. The University of Florida and The United Way allow you to choose the GOC for donations.



United Way
of North Central Florida



Our Amazon Wishlist has things we need. Check back from time to time as we update it.

Please Don't forget us in your will.