

June 2023

GOC GAZETTE



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Bike Day Grows

by Reid Schreiber



Executive Director Deidra Simon kicks off the ride.

GOC Gazette readers see the GOC becoming bigger and better every month. Our 2nd Annual Bike Day was another example of our continued growth. We had more riders, more sponsors, and more people come out just to enjoy the day. We had 70 riders in all, up from 25 last year.

GOC Board members Mercy and Manny Quiroga organized the event. “We wanted a fun event for families and community members to participate in, help get the word out about the GOC, and help eliminate the stigma for those living with mental illness,” Mercy says. We had great weather, our sponsors were generous with their checkbooks and their time, and so many people came out for a worthwhile cause.

There were many volunteers from our community who made the event great. Treating serious mental illness is a community effort, and several of our partners came out to help raise awareness about how we can all make a difference in someone’s life.

Please turn to pages 7&8 to see some great pictures of everyone who attended.

TV20 was there to report on our success.

Riders could choose from 3 distances designed for beginner, intermediate, and advanced difficulty levels. For those who didn’t ride, they joined the Gainesville Garden Club for a walk around Depot Park. Afterwards, we had a party with music by the Medicine Show, food trucks, and drinks in a wonderful garden setting at First Magnitude Brewery. From sponsors and individuals who registered, we raised \$7600 dollars. We look forward to the growth of this annual event. We will continue improving the lives of individuals living with mental illness. With the necessary support, there are no limitations. The GOC is an important component in creating success stories after individuals have gained the confidence to believe their dreams can be achieved. Thank you so much to everyone who participated in Bike Day!



GOC GAZETTE

Team GOC Bocce Wins Gold at Special Olympics State Games!



The GOC won the Special Olympics regional competition in Bocce in early April. Joanna Brouades, Akeem Johnson, Karen Lovely, and Lasheka Roberts were our unified team representing the northeast region at the ESPN Wide World of Sports complex in Orlando, Florida! Our team has three athletes with intellectual disabilities: Joanna Brouades, Akeem Johnson, and Lasheka Roberts. We also have one unified partner, Karen Lovely. A unified partner plays alongside the athletes while providing the support they need to meet their challenges.

At the state games, our team defeated Hillsboro County, a long-time winner in the sport, to win the gold medal. Two of our athletes, Akeem Johnson and Lasheka Roberts, also won silver medals after making it to the gold medal matches in their divisions. One of the ways that Special Olympics helps our Members succeed is by providing a safe space to participate in events

with large crowds and stressful situations, both skills that they need to re-enter the workforce.



It feels good to belong.

Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Program Provides Vision and Dental Care to GOC Members

The GOC Members participating in the State of Florida Special Olympics games had the opportunity to receive a complete vision screening by optometrists in the Orlando area. Joanna Brouades and Akeem Johnson both received care that resulted in glasses. We hope this will allow them to work better during the work-ordered day.

GOC Members also received dental care and screening. Lasheka Roberts and Karen Lovely received a free fluoride treatment, and Bluetooth-enabled toothbrush. When paired with their smartphone, the toothbrush can time their brushing and alert them to any spots in their mouth they may have missed during brushing. It can even message them if they forget to brush!

The people we help typically have less access to basic health care. Linking Members to key services is a big part of what we do.



GOC GAZETTE

Kitchen Construction Continues

Our kitchen construction is continuing. There is so much going on. The construction team has removed a wall, cut trenches in our concrete floors, rewired some significant outlets, created new plumbing, and so much more.

No detail has been too small.

The construction manager, Dalton Baker of DR Construction, even noticed the base concrete floor that had a sloping area that amounted to a difference of a fraction of a centimeter. Crews filled in the difference and leveled it to make sure the floors would be laid to perfection. Floors provided by CarpetsPlus Colortile flooring are being installed as we speak. Quality Plumbing is providing significant plumbing work.

While the Rotary Foundation of Gainesville is donating \$60,000 for the project, we would not be able to build to the scope we needed without individual Rotarians who have stepped in to make additional donations of time, materials and expertise. Rotary prides itself on “Service above Self.” Not only does the organization hold itself to this standard, individual Rotarians live by this model as well. We would not be able to complete this project without the contributions of the four Rotary Clubs that make up the Rotary Foundation of Gainesville.

Construction is expected to be completed by early to mid July.



The construction team cut trenches in the floor to install a commercial drain and grease trap. This will make mopping and spills much easier to deal with.

<https://goclubhouse>.



The kitchen wall had been an exterior support wall. You won't be able to see that as the construction progresses.

GOC GAZETTE

Alachua County brings back Transitional Employment Opportunities for GOC Members

by Paul LeBlanc

Transitional Employment is the cornerstone of the Clubhouse model. TE positions are out in the community, at local employers. GOC staff learn the position and then train GOC Members. They provide a low-risk opportunity for both the Member and the employer. If a Member cannot come to work, the GOC guarantees that one of our staff will go and work their shift, free of charge.

Many people with chronic mental illness suffer stigma and struggle to find employers that will hire them. Our TE program allows adults with mental illness to prove themselves and add employment to their resumes.

Due to an issue with the state pension system, Alachua County was forced to terminate the program in Fall 2022. However, County leaders felt the program was so important they worked to make these positions the exception to the rules and brought back this exciting opportunity exclusively for GOC Members.

There are two TE positions with Alachua County: a janitorial position managed by Kaitlyn Roberts, currently held by Lori Jones, and a mail room position managed by Mia Chisolm, presently held by Terrica Nelson-Gent.

The mail room position at the Alachua County Administration building involves taking inter-office mail between several buildings in downtown Gainesville. One of the challenges of this job is that it requires that the employee walk up to a mile and a half per day. The position serves many offices, including the Equal Opportunity Office; Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL; Code Administration; and Court Services. The employee learns a route that includes over a dozen stops and builds relationships with the office employees. They also count money and perform other basic office tasks during bad weather or low mail volume.

The janitorial position is located in the State's Attorney building. Selection for this position includes passing a level-two background check and fingerprinting. One of the challenges of this position is the repetitive motion required. The position itself involves cleaning three lobby areas. The employee wipes down chairs, windows, and doors, sweeps and mops floors and stairs, and occasionally dusts the pictures and placards.



(Left) GOC Generalist Mia Chisolm is showing CJ Wagoner a potential job. CJ has never had a tax-paying job.

(Right) Terrica Nelson-Gent is currently working in our County TE position. She is showing CJ what she does. Our Members gain strength and confidence from helping each other succeed.



GOC GAZETTE

Updates

Our Saving Grace

Thank you, Grace Presbyterian Church. They are hosting us until our construction is complete. We are utilizing their kitchen, meeting area and offices in order to run the day to day operation of our program.



Office

Even though we are working outside our regular facilities, there is work that needs to be done. Our Members are helping.

With laptops and an Internet connection, we are able to complete everything needed to run our workday.



Culinary

The GOC was on hand along with several community partners when the Alachua County Commission officially declared May as mental Health Awareness month. We are thankful to have such strong partners including The Alachua County Crisis Center, Meridian Behavioral Health, NAMI of Gainesville, and more. We are all in this together.



New Again

Just a few months ago, we introduced you to our new driver, Paul LeBlanc. Now Paul is a full time staff generalist. So we need to introduce you to our new driver Daniel Smith.

Paul recently finished a Master's degree. Daniel has a history of social work and driving instruction. What great additions to our team!



GOC GAZETTE

Monthly Calendar and Events

June 10th Social Saturday
June 12th Cypress and Grove
June 26th UF Health

Newsletter Credits:

Brett Buell
Producer / Writer/
Layout/Photos

Rob Ellis
Photographer

Paul LeBlanc
Photographer/
Writer/Editor

Reid Schreiber
Writer/Editor/
Layout

Weekly Meetings

Monday 2:00 pm- House
Tuesday 2:00 pm- Culinary
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

June 7th Jane Bernard
June 12th Kim Sugar
June 19th Marie Fishman

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Sponsors and Supporters



DONATE

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



United Way
of North Central Florida



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



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.

GOC GAZETTE

Bike Day 2023 Pictures



We had over 70 riders.



Joanne Edde, Leanne Hibbitts, Steven McCormick, Rosie Russo, Mercy Quiroga, and Mary Wisnieski.



Bruce, Brian, Joan, and David Stevens have been involved with the GOC since we were founded.

