

September 2023

GOC GAZETTE



Gainesville Opportunity Center

(352) 224-5523

1210 NW 14th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32601

www.goclubhouse.org

Vol. 5. Issue 9

Gainesville.opportunity.ctr@gmail.com

Back to Normal

by Reid Schreiber

With the construction of our Rotary kitchen complete, we are now enjoying our improved space at the GOC. Members are busy doing the work that is part of operating our Mental Health Clubhouse. A commercial kitchen will help individuals living with mental illness build confidence in a setting similar to employment at a restaurant. While we greatly appreciate being able to temporarily operate out of Grace Presbyterian Church during the construction, we are very happy to return home to the GOC. Our garden can get the attention it needs, and our office unit is fully functional. We're grateful for Grace Presbyterian for allowing us to use their space during the transition, but there is nothing like being at home again.



Our kitchen was not just remodeled. Our food prep area, the cafe where we serve breakfast and snacks, and the dining room all had makeovers as well. We are so excited about all the improvements! We want to demonstrate our appreciation for those in our community who are building lives by supporting our program. As part of recovery, the GOC provides some of the tools for overcoming mental illness which individuals need to return to employment. Our work day is a model of what a job would look like so our Members can feel ready to obtain paid positions. We are busy helping individuals develop a sense of purpose which is badly needed for overcoming their illnesses. Thanks to everyone who believes in the work we do!



GOC GAZETTE

Member Spotlight: Pat Bateman

by David Stevens and GOC Staff

Meet Pat Bateman! She joined the GOC on the recommendation of her therapist back around Thanksgiving of 2018. Being a part of the GOC community has been instrumental in Pat's personal growth and mental health journey. Pat has found friendships here and participation in our program has helped her feel productive.

While attending our program, Members are encouraged to participate in any and all jobs that help our organization function. Pat finds each day at the GOC to be a new learning experience.

Pat helps us with important tasks in nearly every area of our operation. Pat puts her strong organization skills to use in our closets and office spaces. She fills out receipts for donors and writes thank you letters to them. She helps with other documentation and shreds papers. She cleans and even sorts our recycling. Pat also works in our garden.



Pat helps the GOC with community advocacy and awareness when she isn't working at Publix.

Pat's enthusiastic involvement reflects her belief that the GOC is an excellent place for individuals with mental health diagnoses to meet new people, learn new skills, and engage in purposeful activities. Her ultimate goal is to lead a comfortable and productive life.

For the reasons above, Pat is also involved in GOC community advocacy. You can often find her at a GOC table at important community events. She tells other potential Members, the general public, and even other providers why the GOC is important to her. She even attends Rotary meetings with staff, where she assists in greeting guests, signing them in, and setting up meeting spaces.



Pat is coming up on her one year anniversary at Publix.

Notably, the GOC has supported Pat's efforts to return to work. Pat has been employed at Publix since June 2022, where she bags groceries, retrieves shopping carts, and provides excellent customer service. Pat says she has made many friends here and looks forward to interacting with them at the GOC and elsewhere.

On top of that, Pat has enjoyed social activities and even learning new art techniques.

All in all, Pat says the GOC has made a big difference in her life. And Pat has made a big difference in the GOC's operation and the lives of many others. Way to go, Pat!

GOC GAZETTE

Updates

Wellness

Due to a recent spike in Covid cases, we are re-instituting our masking policy. We ask all Members, staff, and visitors to wear masks while inside the building.



Office



We purchased three new computers and large screen monitors in order to give Members more access to data entry, graphic design, and other important work related responsibilities in our program. The large screens make the computers more accessible than our old laptops.

Culinary

We now have a three sink compartment, just like restaurants. We use the same types of cleaners to wash, rinse, and sanitize. This enhances our health standards at the GOC, allows our Members to work in an environment similar to the food industry, and helps Members have the confidence needed to achieve employment.



Advocacy

The GOC participated in three significant community awareness events this month and met with top leaders at the state level. And you know who was right there with us? GOC Members. Our Members are out there telling their stories and advocating for themselves and others who are living with mental illness.

We think that is pretty special.



GOC GAZETTE

State Leaders Visit GOC

Eyes continue to focus on the Gainesville Opportunity Center. State Senator Jennifer Bradley and the CEO of the Florida Association of Managing Entities Natalie Kelly visited our program in August. Both are leaders who are tasked with finding innovative and cost effective solutions to help people who have difficulties at times helping themselves. Read on to find out more regarding how the GOC fits into important statewide initiatives.

Many of you are aware that the State of Florida Department of Children and Families supports people who have difficulties living independently and performing certain daily tasks. Some services are provided directly by DCF, and other services flow through non-profits or other government agencies. What many of you might not know is that DCF partners with seven private regional managing entities to disburse some of this funding. The GOC receives state funding from DCF through our managing entity, Lutheran Services of Florida. LSF has people spread throughout our region who are evaluating the needs of the people in every community. They fund areas ranging from medication and treatment to employment and housing.

Over the years, people have begun to realize that providing support services often costs less than crisis services. And if those supports keep people out of crisis (hospitals and jails,) it helps make people's lives better while saving taxpayers money.

As people have become more aware of the need of people living with mental illness, crisis spending has gone up. That is something that has been greatly needed. What is also needed is more support through programs that help people feel productive, find stable housing, and gain employment. All of these help people stay out of crisis. To address this, DCF initiated a Recovery Oriented System of Care approach to the populations we serve. Mental Health Clubhouses, like the GOC are evidence based programs with a track record of helping people live more independent, productive and meaningful lives.

Senator Bradley is on a key committee that funds DCF.

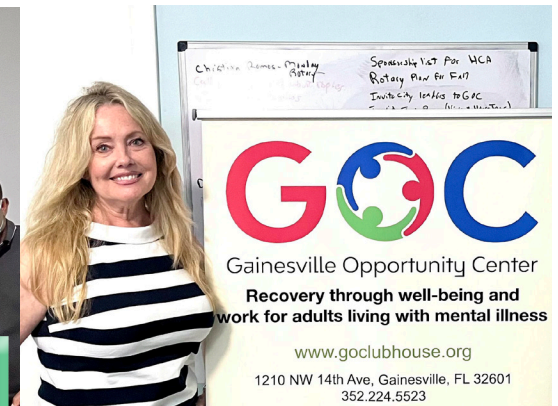
Natalie Kelly helps the Managing Entities work together and speak with a unified voice.

We are fortunate we have so many great people in touch with the communities we serve.

We thank them for their leadership and their interest in us as we continue to grow and help more people live the lives they deserve.



Senator Jennifer Bradley (third from left) met with GOC Members and staff. Several members shared how GOC has changed their lives.



Natalie Kelly

GOC GAZETTE

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.



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.



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.

GOC GAZETTE

Walmart Event

It was great to see everyone out in the community. The GOC was part of Caregiver Days this month at Walmart. GOC staff and Members spent most of the day on a Saturday and Sunday making people aware of our services. We saw some old friends and met some new ones while advocating for individuals living with mental illness. We let people know how we might be able to help someone in their lives. We were stationed with our community partner, NAMI Gainesville. Thank you for including us! We hope we can be part of the solution.



DOC Community Summit

Members have the right to participate in all aspects of the Clubhouse, including advocacy. Lasheka and Akeem represented the GOC at the Florida Department of Corrections' F.A.C.E. I.T. public event. This new program is designed to help individuals succeed by emphasizing rehabilitation. The DOC has learned over the years that people who are released on parole or probation often violate because of ignorance of the rules or because of their struggles to meet basic needs. By providing an atmosphere where people can get support, they are more likely to make better choices.

Incarceration in the state system costs almost \$30,00 per year, and many of the people incarcerated have disabilities that make it difficult for them to care for themselves. But with the right support, we can make people's lives better and save taxpayers money.



The Department of Corrections is another important community partner. Together, we help people get new opportunities and reduce re-offenders.



GOC GAZETTE

Message from the Executive Director

Greetings! It is hard to believe we are already in September! Fall is exciting as we look forward to cooler temperatures, pumpkin-flavored foods, and lots of Football! As the GOC gears up for this fun season, we are continuing the work of inclusion for persons living with mental illness, and we welcome the community to engage with us by getting involved in the following opportunities:

Request a tour. Schedule a time to visit the GOC to learn more about how we help persons with mental illness. Tours are provided weekly on Wednesdays. Call and schedule yours today!

Attend the Fall Festival. Mark your calendars for November 3rd! There will be food, activities, raffle prizes, and plenty of time to socialize with the GOC community!

Consider donating. The GOC will be part of the 2023 Florida Campaign for Charities (UFCC). If you are a UF employee, you can participate by enrolling in the campaign and choosing the Gainesville Opportunity Center. Not an employee, no problem! The GOC appreciates donations to help us improve our clubhouse and increase our services.

Thank you for your continued support of our community, and have a happy Fall!

Deidra Simon



Deidra Simon has served as Executive Director of the GOC since March 2022.

Supporting the GOC

If you are looking for ways to support the GOC, here is how you might help:

Fall Festival Nov 3: We will be hosting our third annual Fall Festival Open House on November 3. Come learn about our program, get a tour, and meet our Members. One of the best ways for you to become enthusiastic is to meet us and see first-hand the difference we are making in people's lives. The event will be 11 am to 5 pm on the first Friday of November.

Annual Campaign: We accept donations at any time. Some people even make their gifts automated and recurring. You can also designate our organization to receive pre-tax donations from your paycheck if you are a UF employee, or if your business is part of the United Way.

One Time and Recurring Donations:

<https://www.thephilanthropyhub.org/organizations/gainesville-opportunity-center>

UF Employees: <https://ufcc.ufl.edu/>

United Way Workplace Campaign: Check with your employer to see if they participate.

End of year letters: Those of you who have donated in the past will receive a letter around Thanksgiving reminding you that you can make a donation to us that may be tax-deductible for you. Or, if you have to take a distribution from your IRA, we can receive that as a donation. Please contact Brett Buell at the GOC if you wish to contribute.

GOC GAZETTE

Month in Pictures



GOC's Marie is with Marianne V., who spent 27 years in prison. She is out, working, and living independently. It is never too late to make good choices and turn your life around.

Arvind Sooknanan (kneeling) visited the GOC. Arvind is a Member of Fountain House, the first-ever Clubhouse!



More of our Community partners at an event to bring awareness to drug overdose



We are always happy to see Sean Seigel!

GOC GAZETTE

Monthly Calendar and Events

September 2nd Social Saturday
September 4th Labor Day Celebration
September 20th Rotary Luncheon
September 26th Art for All at UF HealthStreet
September 27th Employment Dinner
September 29th Birthday Party

Newsletter Credits:

Brett Buell
Jordan Castle
Rob Ellis
Marie Fishman
Paul LeBlanc
Reid Schreiber
David Stevens

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 GOC Work Day Commences
12:00 pm Lunch
1:00 pm Afternoon Meeting
4:30 pm Clubhouse Closes

Birthdays

September 5th-Karen McKay
September 14th-David Turull
September 16th-Joel Andreasen