



Gainesville Opportunity Center

GAZETTE

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**Joevan
Jenkins
Keeps Moving
Up and
Forward**



**Partnership
with Grace
Marketplace
Strengthens**



**Spooky
Food,
Fun, and
Fellowship
at the GOC!**

FALL FESTIVAL

Thank you to everyone in our community who came to the GOC's Third Annual Fall Festival! It was our first open house event since the completion of our Rotary Kitchen. Members provided tours of the house for both new and old visitors.

For those who came to the GOC for the first time, it was an opportunity to see Members and staff working side-by-side to run the event.

There were many smiles. It was not hard to see how much happiness can be present at a Clubhouse. We cooked lunches on our grill, had a cake for the celebration, and held a raffle.

All the socializing while enjoying the yard at the GOC was greatly worthwhile.

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

M *By: David Stevens*
Meet Joevan Jenkins!

Joevan graduated from the Forensics Program at Meridian. Joevan's therapist recommended that he try out the GOC because he needed activities to help him build confidence and self-esteem. Joevan has been coming here since 2017.

The GOC has helped Joevan by giving him a place to socialize. Joevan feels relaxed at the GOC because there are people like him here, and that helps him to feel comfortable to be himself, to not feel like he has to pretend to be something that he is not. The GOC is like a second home for Joevan. There are Members and staff here who are like family and guide him in the right direction.

At the GOC, you will find Joevan in the culinary unit setting tables, prepping for lunch, cooking, and serving lunch. In the Office Unit, you will find Joevan entering data into the computer, and working on the newsletter. These tasks that Joevan performs help him to focus, build work and social skills, give him confidence, and help him feel self worth by letting him know that he can do what he sets his mind to.

Joevan says, "The GOC is a good place to go to, a good environment. It's an accepting place to be." Joevan keeps coming back to the GOC to do volunteer work and to socialize.

Joevan was recently promoted to be a Personal Trainer at YouFit. The GOC helped Joevan with his job at YouFit



Pictured: Joevan Jenkins

by helping him build confidence. As a Personal Trainer, Joevan will continue his previous responsibilities with reception, and maintenance, with the added task of helping his clients with their workouts.

Joevan's first, and previous job, was at Culver's for Transitional Employment and Supported Employment. The GOC helped Joevan with his job at Culver's by finding the job, and asked Joevan if he would like to work there.

By working at Culver's, Joevan gained the confidence he needed to work at his

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Joevan Jenkins



Pictured from left to right: Grenesia Reynolds, Lasheka Roberts, Akeem Johnson, Joevan Jenkins



Joevan's muscles came in handy as he passed for a werewolf at our Halloween celebration!

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current job at YouFit. Joevan's goals are to make being a Personal Trainer into a good career, to live on his own, keep his living place clean, and to stay stable with his medications.

The GOC has also helped Joevan with his education by helping him learn how to type on the computer and showed him how to follow recipes.

Because of the GOC, Joevan is utilizing his full potential by using the skills he has learned, and by working!

“The GOC is an accepting place to be.”



Joevan participates in and leads many activities in the Clubhouse. He cooks and serves lunch, helps keep the Clubhouse clean, does data entry, and works on the daily newsletter. We are so proud of Joevan!

FALL FESTIVAL WAS A SUCCESS

By: Reid Schreiber

We all came together to show support for those in recovery from mental illness. No one needs to feel excluded from a community, and the GOC helps fight the isolation that often is a part of the lives of those struggling.

We all showed that the GOC is an important part of Gainesville. We are making sure we're not a well-kept secret because lives are transformed by our program. When there is a safe place for individuals living with mental illness to come that is not treatment-oriented, there is no reason to feel self-conscious about having a diagnosis.

Although a psychiatric diagnosis is needed to become a Member, it is not a focus at the GOC. Instead, we work together running a nonprofit organization.

Everyone here has a vital role, and Members quickly learn how much they are needed for important work. Dignity is reclaimed by seeing how much you are valued. Once someone becomes actively engaged at a Mental Health Clubhouse, the symptoms of mental illness diminish. There is a decreased need for Members to use crisis services or have contact with law enforcement.

That is why we want the Sheriff's Office and Police Departments to know we are here.

The new Sheriff Emery Gainey came to check out the GOC during our Fall Festival, along with a strong showing from our law enforcement community. Currently, there are six co-responder teams between the City of Gainesville



GOC Generalist Paul C. LeBlanc with Members: Joanna Brouades, Lovely, Kim Sugar, Sierra Reynolds, and Wendie Selene.

and Alachua County. Each team has a licensed clinician from Meridian Behavioral Healthcare. Every single team made it to our event, whether they were working or it was their day off. We are proud of the dedication our law enforcement community has for helping people who live with mental illness.

Other notable attendees included Chief Antoine Sheppard with High Springs Police Department, Gainesville City Commissioner Bryan Eastman, Alachua County Commissioner Marihelen Wheeler, and City Gainesville Community Health Director Brandy Stone. Meridian COO Lauren Cohn also attended.

FALL FESTIVAL WAS A SUCCESS



Caridad Ferreiro, Lasheka Roberts, Akeem Johnson, Karen

The burgers and hot dogs were delicious. Students from the Alpha Epsilon Delta Honor Society, at the University of Florida, volunteered with our Jordan Castle and Rob Ellis on the grill.

We cannot forget to mention that the GOC was not the only Clubhouse at Fall Festival 2023. The Executive Director, Leda Perez, and Members from Ora Clubhouse in Marion County visited us for our event. Thank you to all of our sponsors and everyone who supports our cause! We are an essential organization in our community, so it was great to see all of our supporters. We look forward to seeing you again next fall!



Kathleen and Nancy Ryan have shown tremendous support to our program over the years.



Alina took photographs during the Fall Festival. Members participate in all aspects of the Clubhouse.

WORKING WITH GRACE



Caridad Ferreiro is looking into independent housing. She is getting a job in our Transitional Employment (TE) program. She has dreams of a bright future, but not that long ago Cari was homeless. With nowhere safe to stay, she turned to Grace Marketplace.

Grace got her off the streets, but homelessness was not Cari's only problem. "Back in those days, I did everything you were not supposed to do," Cari says. "I was addicted to drugs and alcohol". Cari was referred to Bridge House at Meridan, and she spent 38 days in their intensive program. She learned sobriety. She also participated in Meridian's Psychosocial Rehabilitation Program (PSR), and got temporary housing at Joyce House.

Carrie was featured on the cover of Grace Marketplace's five-year report.

was referred to the GOC. At the GOC, Cari leads meetings and works in the culinary and office units. She has a laugh and smile that infects everyone around her. She helps with the attendance that is used for our billing, answers the phone at reception, and helps to create the daily newsletter.

Cari is also pursuing her GED through Santa Fe College's displaced homemaker program. "I love to talk to people. I want to get my GED and then find a school to learn to cut hair," Cari says. Working together, the GOC, Grace Marketplace, and other community partners have helped Cari learn the tools to lift herself up.

Once Cari had a stable place to live and the tools she needed to stay sober, she



From Left: Brett Buell, Development Director; Deidra Simon, Executive Director; Members: Lasheka Roberts, Akeem Johnson, Kim Sugar; Gail Childs, Board President; and Jon DeCarmine, Executive Director of Grace Marketplace.

GOC GETS RESULTS.

**For Florida
clubhouse
Members that
attend for at
least a year:**

98%

achieved fewer
(or no) psychiatric
hospitalizations

97%

report fewer
interactions with
law enforcement

89%

report improved
quality of life

***DONATE NOW
TO HELP PEOPLE
FIND A COMMUNITY
LEARN NEW SKILLS
GAIN CONFIDENCE
GET BACK TO WORK***

**Point your smartphone's
camera at this code to
donate!**



FALL FESTIVAL GUESTS



GOC Board Chair Gail Childs and Board Member Mercy Quiroga with Sheriff Emery Gainey and Chief of Staff John Moorehouse.



Founding Members Alexis Henderson and David Stevens along with Joan Stevens.



Gina Peebles, with Alachua County, is with GOC Member Terrica Nelson-Gent who was employed in our partnership program.



UF Students from Alpha Epsilon Delta Honor Society helped with our grill and parking. Thank you, AED!

FALL FESTIVAL GUESTS



Our Co-responder teams respond to calls involving mental illness. Victroia Blass of Meridian, Ofc. Bill Gough of Gainesville Police and and Dep. Dan Maynard of Alachua Sheriff's office routinely work with GOC.



Mia ran our photo booth with Members. Rob worked on the cookout.



Gainesville Opportunity Center

Third annual
FALL FESTIVAL

Is brought to you by:

Autumn Gold Sponsors:



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Fall Fun Sponsor:



City Commissioner Bryan Eastman is with GOC Member Valerie Sanders and City of Gainesville Community Health Director Brandy Stone.