



Gainesville Opportunity Center

# GAZETTE

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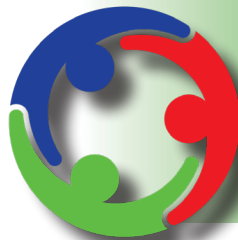
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*City Commissioner, Chief of Police of Santa Fe College, and Rotarian Ed Book shares the impact the GOC has had on our Members and in our community.*



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## Florida Clubhouses Unite

The Florida Mental Health Clubhouses, known collectively as The Florida Clubhouse Coalition, came together for a special event here in Gainesville. We held our third-ever statewide Florida Clubhouse Coalition Conference right here in Gainesville at the historic Hippodrome Theater. 18 mental health Clubhouses like the GOC came from as far as Miami to participate.

We met to talk about the difference we are making in people's lives. Clubhouses give our Members community and social support and enable empowerment and inclusion. Our Members build confidence and stamina that allow them to make important steps forward in their lives.

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# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

**M** *By: David Stevens*

Meet Sierra Reynolds! Sierra started coming to the GOC around 2019 because of stress and mental health issues. She wanted a place to go to get out of the house. One of Sierra's family members had been going to the GOC. They told Sierra that it might help her if she tried out the GOC. Sierra tried us, and has been with us ever since!

The GOC has been a good experience for Sierra. She has learned from people with both similar and different mental health issues. She said the GOC has "helped me stay out of trouble and keep my head on straight." The GOC has helped Sierra in her recovery because it gives her a sense of belonging.

At the GOC, you will find Sierra in the office unit working on PowerPoint Presentations, the daily newsletter, and attendance. In the culinary unit, you will find Sierra helping with lunch prep, cooking lunch, and wiping down tables. Sierra has also presented at our employment dinner, our monthly celebration for employed Members. Sierra says: "The activities that I do at the GOC help me gain confidence and independence." These activities have also helped Sierra learn how to cook, build a work ethic, get a job, stay consistent in what she does, and complete the current project that she is working on.

Speaking of jobs... Sierra has just started working at her first job ever! She started working at Culver's on November 7th through the Transitional Employment program at the GOC! Sierra says that working at Culver's "feels good!" At

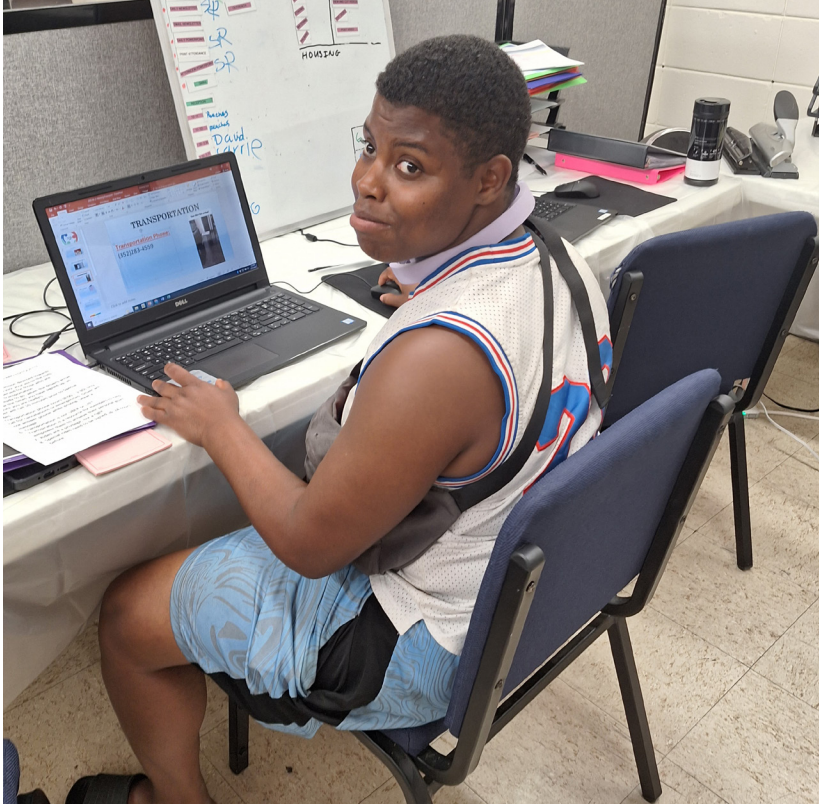


*Sierra Reynolds is starting her first job ever as part of the GOC Transitional Employment program.*

Culver's, she wipes down tables, sweeps floors, stocks condiments and bathroom tissue, takes out the trash, and delivers food orders to customers both inside and outside of the building.

Sierra says that the GOC is a calm place that helps you gain employment and helps people with mental health issues. She says that if you attend consistently, you can achieve your goals. Sierra's goals are to get a driver's license, continue to be employed, to live on her own, and learn how to budget and save her money.

# Sierra Reynolds



*Pictured: Sierra Reynolds*



Sierra Reynolds participates in our Wellness program. This year she participated in bowling at the Special Olympics. She is pictured here with Karen Lovely.

Sierra attends the GOC three times a week on her days off at work. She keeps coming back to the GOC because she benefits by accomplishing tasks here. The GOC has helped to keep Sierra out of crisis. The GOC helps Sierra stay stabilized and on her medication.

Participating consistently in the GOC work day has helped her with responsibility and accountability—the tasks she performs here are important, and Sierra takes that seriously. We are proud of what Sierra has accomplished at the Clubhouse and look forward to helping her meet more of her goals in the future!



Sierra helps spread the word about what we do at the GOC through community outreach. She is pictured here alongside development director Brett Buell and board president Gail Childs at the University of Florida Campaign for Charities event.

# Florida Clubhouses Unite

**W**e marked a significant milestone for the Clubhouse community in Florida as the third-ever Florida Clubhouse Conference took place, hosted for the first time right here in Gainesville. The event saw representation from 19 Clubhouses across the state, fostering collaboration, sharing of best practices, and a celebration of the incredible journeys of recovery.

The conference, hosted at the historic Hippodrome Theatre, brought together not only Clubhouses but also distinguished guests from various organizations, including Clubhouse International (ICCD), Florida Association of Managing Entities (FAME), Lutheran Services Florida, Central Florida Cares, City of Gainesville, Santa Fe College, and Gainesville Fire Rescue, among others. The diverse participation underscored the broad support and engagement in the mental health community, emphasizing a collective commitment to promoting recovery and well-being.

Throughout the conference, attendees had the opportunity to share and learn about best practices that have proven successful in Clubhouses across the state. Members played a central role, sharing their inspiring recovery stories, highlighting the transformative impact of Clubhouse programs on their lives. The exchange of experiences and insights contributed to a rich tapestry of knowledge, fostering a sense of unity and purpose among all participants.

The historic Hippodrome Theatre served as a symbolic venue for this momentous occasion, embodying the spirit of collaboration and growth within the



*Pictured: Dr. Christine Cauffield, CEO of LSF one of seven managing entities that fund mental health clubhouses in Florida, along with Natalie Kelly CEO of Florida Association of Managing Entities.*

Florida Clubhouse network. The conference not only provided a platform for learning but also served as a testament to the collective strength and resilience of the Clubhouse movement in the state.

Post-conference, the spirit of unity continued as Members, staff, and colleagues gathered for a celebratory event at the Gainesville Opportunity Center (GOC). Attendees expressed that the atmosphere at the GOC, much like any Clubhouse, exuded a sense of home and family. This sentiment underscores a common theme heard from those who experience Clubhouses -- A Clubhouse feels like a community.

# Florida Clubhouses Unite



*Amber Weber from Clubhouse International presents at the FCC Coalition Conference.*

For those curious to witness the Clubhouse environment firsthand, we extend an invitation to visit the GOC or any Clubhouse in your local area. We believe visitors would not only be inspired but might just discover that unmistakable feeling of being at home in the welcoming embrace of a Clubhouse community.

As the Florida Clubhouse Conference 2023 comes to a close, the echoes of shared experiences, collaborative learning, and a sense of home reverberate, leaving an indelible mark on the collective journey toward mental health recovery in the Sunshine State.



Brett Buell introduces City Commissioner Ed Book, who has been involved with the GOC for many years. He has seen the difference Clubhouse makes in people's lives.



Gainesville Fire Rescue's Krista Ott explains how the Paramedics partner with the GOC to provide better care.

# *Impressions from the Conference*



*GOC Member and Board Member Reid Schreiber speaks at the FCC Conference on November 30th.*

## **GOC Colleagues share their takeaways from the FCC Conference:**

Physical health is important to mental health. It's all related. Working out is an important part of how we stay healthy overall. –**Alina Harschbarger.**

I was impressed by Brett, how he was able to bring such a large event together. I was inspired to try to do something like this in the future. I want to be capable of something big like this. – **GOC Member**

I hope that other Clubhouses heard what Ed Book had to say about having a CIT program. It is important for people who have mental illness to feel safe when they interact with law enforcement, and a Clubhouse being a part of the training process for the officers helps this happen. – **Joana Broaudes**

I was impressed with how other Clubhouses send off Members on the first day of their Transitional Employment. They run down their hallway just like a sports star. What a great send off! – **Susan Thomas**

Clubhouses in Florida are moving towards their dreams of providing safe, affordable, consistent housing for Members, and I was excited to see how many different ways that this can be accomplished. We hope that the GOC can continue to move towards their goal of helping Members to reach their housing goals. – **Cristina Quiroga**

Having the Clubhouse Standards explained by Clubhouse International really helped me to understand how they relate to the work day. – **Karen Lovely**

The aim of this conference was to improve the lives of Members, not only here at the GOC, but at Clubhouses statewide. The fact that so many Clubhouses traveled from across the state shows how dedicated Florida Clubhouses are to meeting that goal. – **Brett Buell**

A sentiment shared by many at the conference was that there really was nothing like having all of the Florida Clubhouses in one place. So when we brought conference participants back to the GOC, it's no surprise that our Members and staff felt enormous pride. It was like welcoming family into your new house for the first time, especially after our kitchen remodel. Giving tours to colleagues from other clubhouses was very special. They got to see another version of what they do each day from a different perspective.

# Clubhouse International Guides GOC Employment

The GOC is passionate about getting people back to work. So when we had the opportunity to sit down with Clubhouse International's Employment Program Officer, we jumped at the chance. After the FCC Conference on December 1, GOC colleagues met with Amber Weber about expanding and enhancing our supported employment program.

We talked about how to grow and better support Transitional Employment, and how to better document how we serve members. Better documentation means more support for our Members.

LSF, our auspice agency, and Clubhouse International were both impressed with what we do at the GOC and offered suggestions about what we can improve.



*Amber Weber from Clubhouse International along with Paul Tarnowski from Lutheran Services chat with Paul LeBlanc and Joanna Brouades about best practices for supported employment.*

We will take those suggestions seriously. It is great to know we have the resources, expertise, and support of our community partners.

**From Executive Director Deidra Simon**

## ***Thank You for our Conference***



*Deidra Simon,  
Executive Director*

Words truly fall short in expressing the magnitude of joy and enrichment brought by the laughter, the learning experience, the warmth of each hug, and the variety of food shared at our conference. The GOC is privileged to have hosted such an incredible group of individuals. Each of you has contributed immensely to the event's success and our collective growth.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Brett, William, Carolyn, Miranda, and Karis for their invaluable contributions. A special acknowledgement goes to all the presenters who enlightened us with their knowledge and insights. A profound thank you is due to the Members who courageously shared their personal stories, enriching us all with their experiences and perspectives.

Our appreciation extends to Amber Weber from Clubhouse International, who journeyed from Utah to be with us. Her presence added a significant layer to our event's success. To every participant who made personal sacrifices to attend, your commitment and dedication have not gone unnoticed.

The event has left our hearts filled with gratitude, a renewed sense of community, and the clear understanding that we are not alone. The path ahead is filled with challenges, but with the spirit and unity demonstrated, we are more than ready to tackle them. Thank you, everyone, for making this event unforgettable and for being the best part of this journey!

# FCC CONFERENCE: STRONGER TOGETHER



Leda from Ora's Clubhouse and Kailyn from GOC welcome everyone to the conference.



Natalie Kelly, CEO of The Managing Entities of Florida.



GOC Member Reid spoke on how the GOC has helped him move forward.



Paul Tarnowski of LSF with Jason Saffeis and Coleen Cantin of Central Florida Behavioral Health Network.



# FLORIDA CLUBHOUSES VISIT GOC



The whole crew from the Vincent House. Vincent House was the first Clubhouse in Florida.



Jennifer Mullins with ACTS Clubhouse with Gail Childs and Brett Buell from GOC.



William, Dalia, and Joanne from Academy at Glengary.



Miranda Mills from CLub Success with Amber Weber from Clubhouse International and Jennifer Mullins.

# **GO C GETS RESULTS.**

Gainesville Opportunity Center

**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!**

