

New Year, New Goals

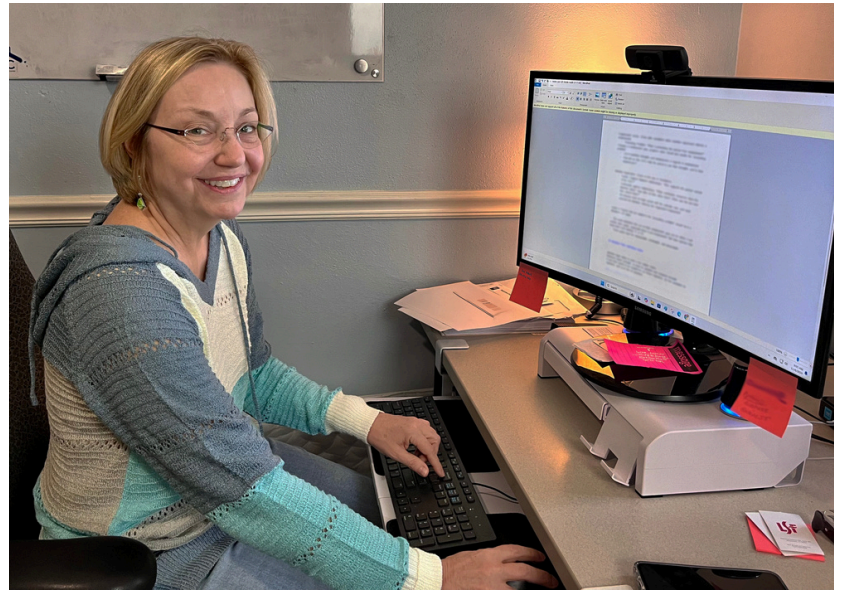
It's a new year and that means it is time to set new goals. With our new Executive Director, Margie Foster, now three months into her role, we would like to look at what's ahead for the GOC and how you might be involved in helping us.

In 2025 we intend to:

- 1) Increase Membership.**
- 2) Strengthen community partnerships with providers and businesses.**
- 3) Strengthen our sustainability to make sure we are here for the long haul.**

The GOC doesn't just change lives—we save the community money, too. Programs like ours reduce hospitalizations, homelessness, and interactions with law enforcement, providing real solutions for people living with mental illness.

As we look ahead, we invite you to partner with us. Whether you're interested in hiring a Member, supporting our mission, or helping someone find their way to the GOC, we'd love to hear from you.



Margie Foster works on the Clubhouse International assessment ahead of working on it with Members to ensure that we are following all 37 of the Clubhouse International Standards.

Together, let's make this year our most impactful yet.

To learn more, visit us at goclubhouse.org, follow us on Facebook, or stop by for a tour at 1210 NW 14th Avenue in Gainesville. Let's make a difference—together.

Expanding Our Membership

*New Year, New Goals:
Growing the Gainesville Opportunity Center and Our Impact*

Expanding our Membership strengthens our community as a whole. Each person who joins the GOC becomes part of a team that works together, supports one another, and fosters a sense of belonging.

As more individuals engage with the GOC, they become healthier, more productive members of society, reducing the strain on public resources like hospitals and the justice system.

At the same time, they contribute to the local economy and help break the stigma surrounding mental illness. Increasing our Membership means not just transforming individual lives but also

creating a safer, more compassionate, and more inclusive Gainesville for everyone.

Increasing Membership will help more individuals whose lives have been disrupted by mental illness and create a lasting positive impact on our community.

People who participate in an organization like the GOC are less likely to be hospitalized for their illness, less likely to have interactions with law enforcement, and far less likely to be incarcerated. At the same time, they are more likely to find meaningful employment and regain stability in their lives.



Every month we do a Member appreciation breakfast. The Members take responsibility by coming in at 7 am to help.



Members also reach out to others that we have not seen recently. Ultimately, our goal is to get Members back out into the community so we attend major social events together.

Building Stronger Partnerships

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For many of our Members, employment can feel out of reach. That's why partnerships with local businesses are so vital. These collaborations create jobs, change lives, and benefit employers looking for hardworking and determined team members. This year, we're focused on growing these relationships and showing local employers the value our Members bring to the workplace.



Alachua County Fire Rescue brought their Mobile Integrated Healthcare team to visit the GOC. We had a sit-down discussion with our staff and Members. They also stayed for lunch. By taking the time to see what we are all about and how we help people, they can make the referrals for people who match our program.



This year, we plan to meet with referring agencies and visit places where we might be able to get referrals so we can expand our ability to offer employment opportunities to our Members. Brett and Margie are meeting with Meridian CEO Lauren Cohn. Meridian is GOC's largest referring agency.



Greg Young and Dalton Baker learned about the GOC through Rotary. Greg is very active in the community. Dalton owns his own construction company. Both Greg and Dalton have contributed to the GOC through donation of service.

Raising Awareness and Support

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Brett and Margie are with Dr. Kathleen Ryan and attorney Rebecca Wood. Kathleen is an Ambassador who brought her friend in to see what we do. Through these partnerships, we may acquire donors or businesses that can employ our Members and help raise awareness of our impact to the community.

The work we do at the GOC changes lives, but we can't do it alone. Through our new Ambassador Program, our friends help with donors and businesses in Gainesville and beyond. Our Ambassadors will spread the word about our mission and help us build the resources we need to keep making a difference—for individuals and for our community as a whole.

Often, our funding is earmarked for specific things. If we get a grant for a fence, we have to buy a fence. If the fence costs less than the money we are awarded, we often would have to give that money back. If it costs more than the grant, we have to make up the difference. Other entities fund our program activities but do not allow the money to supplement the cost of a fence, or a roof, or an air conditioner, or other things we may need. As an Ambassador, you can help make sure we are sustainable by connecting us with more people who can help.

When people come see us, we'll often hear things like:

“Wow, I have never seen anything like this.”

“If my loved one with mental illness had a place like this, their life would have turned out different.”

“Words can't describe the family-like supportive community atmosphere here. You have to see it.”

We need **you**, Ambassadors, to visit us, to tell people about us, and to bring people here. If you are interested in becoming a GOC Ambassador, email Brett Buell, at brett@goclubhouse.org

Deck the Halls of the GOC!

GOC Members and staff gathered on a Social Saturday to decorate the Clubhouse in anticipation of the Christmas Day brunch. Working together resulted in a cheery holiday atmosphere!



Susan Call and Pat Bateman work on decorating the GOC sign.



GOC is looking festive!



Kyana Williams and Jordan Castle start the Christmas tree decorating.



It's the little things that matter.



GOC Christmas Celebration

One of the major goals of our program is to help our Members break isolation and get out into the community. That's why we are open every holiday.

Christmas at the GOC is more than a handout. With our support, Members take responsibility for helping plan and put on

the event. The confidence Members gain in our environment truly helps them move forward in their lives.

Being together. Feeling needed. It is important for everyone. That is why GOC is here.



GOC Members and staff gathered together on Christmas Day for brunch.



GOC Christmas Celebration

For some, the holidays can intensify feelings of isolation, loneliness, and disconnection, especially if they are without close family or friends to celebrate with. By opening our doors, the GOC ensured that no Member had to face the day alone and could instead find community, connection, and meaningful engagement.

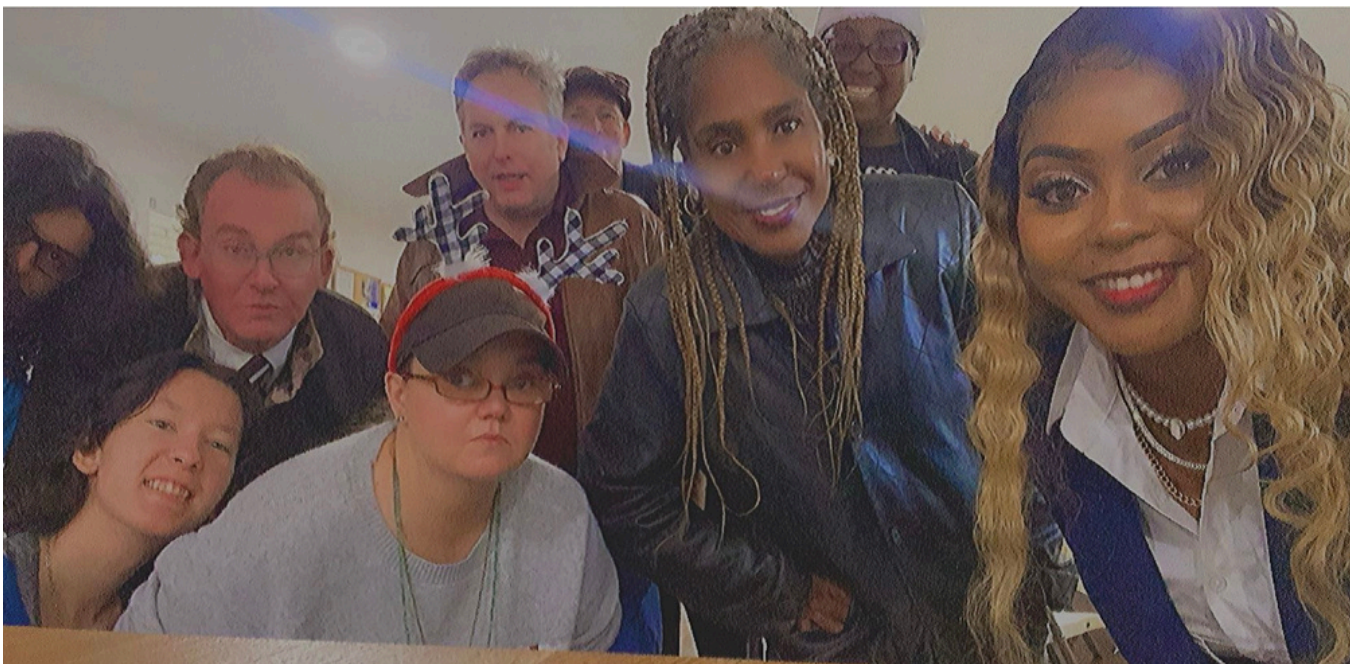
Being open on Christmas Day reflects the GOC's commitment to supporting our Members

year-round, not just during typical workdays.

It was an opportunity to share the holiday spirit in a way that fosters inclusion, understanding, and belonging—core values of our Clubhouse community. Whether it was sharing a meal, participating in holiday activities, or simply being surrounded by friendly faces, the GOC created an atmosphere of warmth and togetherness, helping Members feel valued and connected during a time when it matters most.



The GOC was open on Christmas Day to provide a safe, supportive, and welcoming space for our Members during a time that can be challenging for many individuals living with mental illness.



NUTCRACKER

One of the goals of our program is to get our Members participating in the same kinds of activities everyone else does, changing their mindset to think, "I am just like everyone else." This breaks the stigma.

On Saturday December 21, and Sunday December 22, a group of Members and staff had the opportunity to attend *The Nutcracker* ballet at the Phillips Center for the Performing Arts.



Linda Rocha, of Keller-Williams Realty, donated *The Nutcracker* tickets for us and made it possible for our Members to sit in the holiday crowd. The performance was not only a magnificent show, we enjoyed this gift together. Members might not normally have the chance to attend a performance in the community in which they live. However, the holidays have proved to be very merry for the Gainesville Opportunity Center. We give thanks to our friends and community during this festive season!



Forward Focus



Our first ever Ambassador Dinner is almost here. This special fundraising event is a chance to celebrate our GOC Ambassadors and the vital role they play in connecting us to the community.

GOC Ambassadors help link the GOC with donors, local businesses that can sponsor us, and employers for our Members. For this event, we're asking Ambassadors to bring a friend or colleague who is interested in supporting our mission to help adults living with chronic mental illness.

To RSVP, email Brett Buell at [**brett@goclubhouse.org**](mailto:brett@goclubhouse.org)

See you there!

[Donate Here](#)



Our Ambassador Dinner will feature a Gilligan's Island theme. Members and staff will perform as characters illustrating how our Clubhouse works so much like Gilligan's Island. We are all diverse, we come from every walk of life, and we all need each other in order to function.

If you are interested in attending an Ambassador (fundraising) dinner and show, please contact Brett.

If you wish to donate, here are our links:



Our Standards in Motion

Standard #2:

The Clubhouse has control over its acceptance of new members. Membership is open to anyone with a history of mental illness, unless that person poses a significant and current threat to the general safety of the Clubhouse community.



Wanting to be here is key to our program's success.



We give choice back to our Members, which is something that can be taken from them in clinical settings.

At the Gainesville Opportunity Center (GOC), Membership is voluntary and mutually agreed upon. This means no one can be forced to come here—not by others, and not by circumstances. Members choose to be here because they want to, not because someone else decided for them.

For people living with serious mental illness, choice is often taken away during their illness. At the GOC, we give that choice back. Members decide if they want to join, how they want to participate, and what they want to contribute. This empowers them to take control of their recovery and rebuild their confidence.

At the same time, the GOC ensures that Membership is a good fit. Members must be ready to engage with others and participate in meaningful work. This balance keeps our community supportive, respectful, and thriving. Choice is the foundation of everything we do, and it's how we help Members regain independence, dignity, and hope.

In order to empower our Members to make their own choices, we have to be able to choose who comes here. No individual can be forced to come, and we will not allow others to force Members into our program.