



Gainesville Opportunity Center

GAZETTE

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Bringing the Best Back to Gainesville: What We Learned at the Clubhouse International Conference

GOC Executive Director, Margie Foster, and Director of Business Development, Brett Buell, attended the Clubhouse International Conference alongside 700 participants from 15 countries. Their mission: learn from other Clubhouses and bring home the best ideas to make GOC even stronger.

They attended sessions on building inclusive workdays, creating deeper Member engagement, and forming community partnerships. One takeaway was clear—recovery is most powerful when Members are included in all work at the Clubhouse. That's what the GOC is all about.

One young speaker from Kansas said, "I believed I could never be like anyone else. But Clubhouse proved me wrong." That message hit home. It's the same transformation we aim for with every Member who walks through our doors.

Thanks to the conference, we'll expand the work-ordered day with new, inclusive tasks that open more doors for Members. We're also about to launch a Membership Drive, and Members will take the lead in outreach—sharing the Clubhouse message across Gainesville. We're proud to be part of a global movement. Come visit and see it for yourself!

We caught up with our accreditation team, Paige Huff from Utah and Leasa Holton from Michigan. We spent an hour with them during the conference going over innovative changes we are making.



Brett Buell and Margie Foster are with Clubhouse International COO Jack Yatsko



GOC Launches Membership Drive to Build a Stronger Community

At the Gainesville Opportunity Center, we believe healthy, inclusive communities are built when everyone has a chance to belong—including adults living with mental illness. That's why we're launching a new Membership Drive to welcome more people into our Clubhouse.

This summer, Executive Director, Margie Foster, and Director of Business Development, Brett Buell, will be teaming up with our Members to visit hospitals, medical clinics, churches, law enforcement agencies, and nonprofits across Alachua County. We're spreading the word about the GOC—where recovery happens through work, relationships, and purpose.

The GOC helps adults living with mental illness who are ready to rejoin the community. Our Members participate in meaningful work, grow their confidence, and gain support to find jobs. We don't charge insurance or individuals—we simply ask them to show up and participate at their own pace.

If you think you know someone who could benefit from our services, please contact us. We'd love to meet them. Whether you're a provider, a family member, or a neighbor, you can help connect someone to a place where they'll be accepted and supported. Together, we can create a community where people with mental illnesses have promising futures.

Call (352) 224-5523 or email us at info@goclubhouse.org to learn more.



Our Members are the most valuable part of the Clubhouse. We have additional capacity, so our Membership Drive will be essential for building our program.



Standards in Motion

Standard #1: “Membership is voluntary and without time limits.”

As GOC expands its reach through our Membership Drive this summer, we’re guided by more than outreach goals—we’re grounded in the principles that define a true Clubhouse. One of the most important is Standard #1, which says that Membership is voluntary and without time limits.

As we meet with clinics, community partners, and families across Alachua County, we’re not just inviting people into a program. We’re inviting them into a place where they’ll be seen, heard, and accepted—sometimes for the first time.

But Clubhouse is about participation. It’s not a drop-in center or a crisis service. We are not equipped to serve individuals in active crisis. What we are equipped to do is help people who are ready to engage—at their own pace—in meaningful work and real community.

That’s what makes GOC different. That’s why Standard #1 isn’t just a policy—it’s a promise.



We work closely with our community partners so our Members get the help they need at every stage of their journeys. Gainesville Fire Rescue invited us out to their monthly Healthy Afternoons event where we built awareness and recruited potential new Members.

Making Our Newsletter More Inclusive—With a Little Help from AI

At the Gainesville Opportunity Center, we're always looking for ways to make sure every Member has a chance to participate in meaningful work. That's why we've started using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help write and shape our newsletter.

Here's how it works: once a writing prompt is designed, Members simply fill in the blanks with their own experiences and ideas. The AI then helps turn those answers into a clear, interesting story. This makes writing more accessible—especially for those who might struggle with spelling, grammar, or organizing ideas.

Writing about recovery, community, and the Clubhouse model can be challenging. With AI, we're able to make these concepts easier to understand without losing their meaning. It helps Members tell stories that are both personal and powerful.

Most importantly, AI helps us stick to what matters most: making sure every Member has a voice. With this tool, more Members can proudly say, "I helped write this." Because at the GOC, everyone belongs—and everyone contributes.



Many adults living with serious mental illness find that their technology skills have fallen behind. At the GOC, we're changing that. By introducing AI into our newsletter process, we're teaching Members how to use prompts that simplify writing, build confidence, and tell their stories.

DONATE



The GOC needs updated equipment—like the latest iPhones—so our Members can take photos and videos to help tell our story. It's more than just marketing; it's a chance for Members to build real skills and stay connected to today's technology. If you can, please donate today and help us keep our Clubhouse moving forward.

Month In Pictures



At Skate Station, Trey drove a go-kart for the first time. As he experienced, Social Saturday is a time to push limits and do things you never thought would be possible. Thank you to Skate Station Funworks for providing free passes to our members and staff!



Susan helps with advocacy at community events.

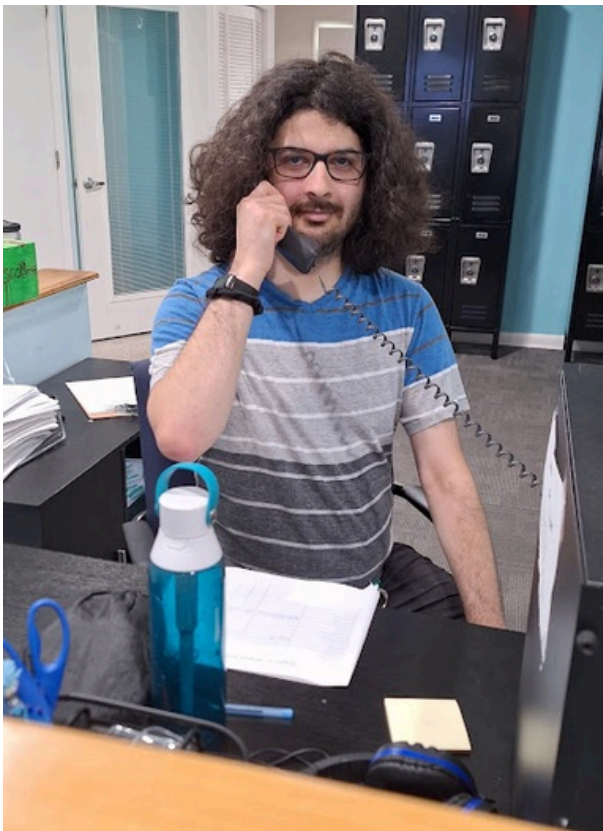


Kyana, Karina, and Susan love working in the culinary unit. Without the help of our Members, lunch would not be prepared and served.

Month In Pictures



Our Members not only benefit from a good meal, they take responsibility to plan, prepare, serve and clean up afterwards.



Jacob enjoys working at the reception desk. Jacob makes sure everyone we greet feels welcomed.



The Rotary Club of Greater Gainesville recently paid to have the leaves blown off of our roof. Thank you to Associates Realty for coordinating this effort and to Custom Roofing and Coatings for doing a great job!