



Gainesville Opportunity Center

GAZETTE

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GOC Outreach: Changing Lives

The GOC's outreach campaign continues to grow as Executive Director Margie Foster and Director of Business Development Brett Buell, along with several Members, visited hospitals, clinics, nonprofits, and even walked into emergency rooms and urgent care centers. These visits aren't just about spreading awareness—they're about creating real connections that support recovery.

One powerful moment came when Member Susan Call spoke with emergency room managers. She shared that, when she's at the GOC, she feels good about herself—and when she feels good, the urge to self-injure fades. That kind of impact isn't clinical—it's human. It is what happens when someone belongs.

Brett, Margie, and Members also met with senior VA leaders to explore how the GOC can support veterans living with serious mental illness. These conversations reflect a growing truth: recovery takes more than treatment—it takes purpose and community.

Participation at the GOC often leads to fewer crises and stronger lives. That doesn't just help individuals—it makes our whole community stronger.



*Margie and Dominic at Trinity UMC
with Rev. Marisa Gertz*



*Brett and Susan T. at the VA. The GOC is
here to serve the Veteran Community*

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...



We are grateful for partners like Meridian who connect people to us. Joining the GOC is a voluntary choice that only the Member can make.

People are invited to become Members when they are ready to take part in our community of work and support.

We believe recovery works best when it's chosen, not forced—and everyone who joins is welcomed with dignity and respect.

At the Gainesville Opportunity Center, we believe in welcoming people—not just as participants in a program, but as full Members of a community. Clubhouse Standard #2 guarantees that. Members come because they want to be here, and they stay as long as it helps them grow.

The GOC, therefore, has control over our acceptance of new Members. No agency, court or person can force someone to come here.

This summer, as part of our outreach campaign, we're visiting hospitals, clinics, nonprofits, churches, and other partners throughout Alachua County. We're not just handing out brochures, we're offering people a chance to belong—sometimes for the first time.

The Clubhouse model is about inclusion through participation. It's about showing up, helping out, and being part of something bigger. Our program isn't designed for people in crisis, but for those ready to take a step forward. We're building a community of people who work side by side and lift each other up.

Sheriff Visits the GOC

Sheriff Chad Scott and Captain Chris Sims visited the GOC for the purpose of raising awareness and building stronger connections with our community. Visits like this help promote inclusion, reduce stigma, and create partnerships that support recovery.

When local leaders engage directly with members of the recovery community, it helps build mutual respect and trust—key ingredients in any strong support system. We're grateful for their time and their willingness to learn about the work we do at the Gainesville Opportunity Center.



It's important for community leaders to know the GOC is here—helping people stay independent and avoid crisis. When people know about the GOC, lives change.



Akeem tells Sheriff Scott that before the GOC, he couldn't see a future for himself. Now, with support and purpose, he's staying on track—and finding hope for what's next.

GPD Co-Responders Visit

Sergeant Shelley Postle, Officer Sarah Reeves, and Clinician Allison Mendoza from the Gainesville Police Department and Meridian Healthcare co-responder team visited the GOC. This unique team pairs law enforcement with mental health professionals to respond with care, compassion, and connection. Many of our Members first learn about the GOC through this team, and their visits help strengthen the bridge between community safety and recovery support.

The City of Gainesville, the GOC and the co-responder teams are partly funded by Lutheran Services Florida and the Florida Department of Children and Families. We are all working together to build a better community.



(Left) Elisha meets with Gainesville Police officers to build trust and understanding around mental illness. At the GOC, we create a space for connection and change.

(Below) Co-Responders are specially trained law enforcement officers who ride along with a licensed therapist or social worker to calls involving mental health concerns. This ensures people in crisis get the help they need.



New Whiteboards



At the GOC, participation is a key part of recovery—and that means making sure every Member knows how they can contribute. With help from our recent Clubhouse accreditation visit, we realized our old whiteboards weren't clear enough. They suggested we be more specific so Members could take greater ownership of the work that keeps our Clubhouse running.

We listened.

Now, with new whiteboards in the Office and Culinary Units, tasks are clearly listed so Members can see exactly what needs to be done. Dominic is one of the many Members making great use of the updated system. Each day, he checks the board, signs up for tasks, and finds meaningful ways to contribute. He doesn't wait to be asked—he steps in, takes responsibility, and helps others stay on track.

This is what the Clubhouse model looks like in motion: Members and staff working together as equals, taking ownership of the work, and supporting each other's recovery. Clear tools and shared responsibility help everyone feel more included, more capable, and more connected.

At the GOC, small changes—like better whiteboards—lead to big steps forward.



The new whiteboards help members to know what needs to be done so our Members can choose what they want to help with. Choice is a big part of our program.

Thank You Donors!



We were grateful to welcome donor Leslie Daniels, her daughter Sirena, and board member Mercy Quiroga for lunch and great conversation. Leslie's creative charity work on TikTok raised money for the GOC—support that helps us continue offering purpose, community, and connection to adults living with mental illness.



We were honored to welcome longtime supporter Nancy Ryan, who brings her annual gift in person to see the impact it makes. She spent time connecting with Members and hearing how the GOC is helping them move forward.

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.

Juneteenth



Freedom and Independence: The Spirit of Juneteenth

At the Gainesville Opportunity Center, we believe that no one should have to spend a holiday alone. That's why we stay open and celebrate them together—including Juneteenth. Holidays can be difficult for many people living with mental illness, especially when they feel isolated or disconnected. The GOC is here to change that.

Juneteenth reminds us how powerful freedom and belonging truly are. At the GOC, we recognize that recovery is about more than just feeling better—it's about feeling seen, valued, and being a part of something bigger. Our doors stay open on every holiday to create space where Members can feel supported, included, and part of a caring community.

We shared a meal, reflected on what Juneteenth means to each of us, and spent the day together in a way that was both joyful and meaningful. At the GOC, showing up for each other is part of what we do every day—and especially on days that matter.

We're not just honoring history—we're building a better future, together.

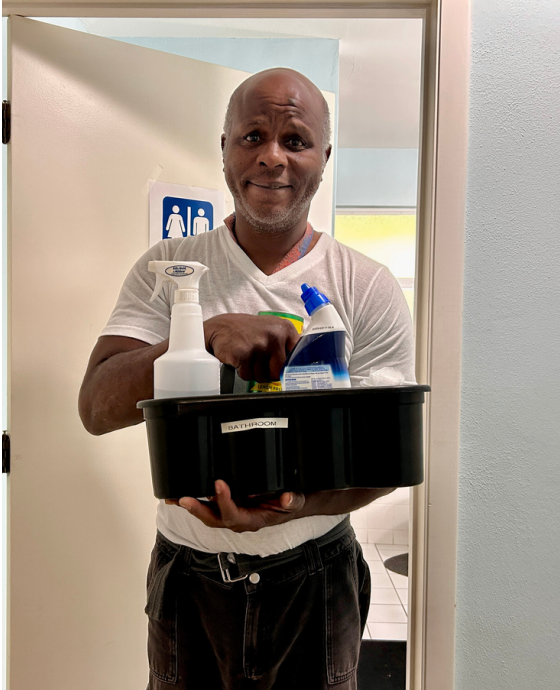
Month In Pictures



Alina helps keep our kitchen running smoothly. At the GOC, meaningful work like this builds confidence and community.



Here's James helping with yardwork to keep the GOC looking its best. Contributing to our space builds pride, routine, and a strong sense of community.



Walter keeps our Clubhouse clean and welcoming. At the GOC, Members take pride in caring for the space we share together.



Jacob helps staff our reception desk. At the GOC, Members take on real responsibilities that build confidence and job skills.