Accredited!

We are proud to announce the Gainesville Opportunity Center has received three year unconditional accreditation through Clubhouse International. This demonstrates that we are running our organization effectively and impacting lives the way we are intending.

The Gainesville Opportunity Center is a non-profit that helps adults living with persistent mental illness rejoin the community and find jobs.

We follow a recovery through work model where Members come and participate in our work day. They work side by side with our staff and other Members in order to build confidence. They see others with mental illness succeeding while they prove to themselves they can, too. From there, the GOC helps Members find jobs. Then, we give them continued support while working.

The Clubhouse Model is a recognized and effective program of psychosocial rehabilitation. The Gainesville Opportunity Center receives funding from the Florida Department of Children and Families through the Managing Entity, Lutheran Health Systems of Florida.

Clubhouse International consists of a network of more than 300 Clubhouse programs in over 30 countries on six continents. Clubhouses provide members with opportunities for friendship, training, education, employment and other community-based supports.

There are currently 14 Clubhouse programs in Florida. That may sound like a lot, but there are 67 counties in our state. This means there are more areas in Florida without our type of support than with it. We are proud to be helping our Members in the Gainesville area lead more meaningful and independent lives.

On November 12th, GOC celebrated our growth and independence as the only free-standing mental health clubhouse in our area. One year ago we cut the ribbon to celebrate our new building. It’s been a big year with new jobs, new vans, and more community support and awareness.

Having our own building has allowed us to grow in many ways. For example, there are new opportunities for Members to work to maintain our facility and to care for the yard and garden. This includes using the leaf-blower to clear our sidewalks and parking lot and growing vegetables that we use in our culinary unit.

This year started several transitional employment and supported employment jobs with Alachua County. This gave the opportunity for more Members to work while receiving support from the GOC. “It’s nice to work and know that I have the support of the GOC,” said Member Susan Thomas. Susan worked two different jobs with Alachua County this year. She handed out masks to people entering the County Administration Building, and performed janitorial duties in the State Attorney’s office.

We acquired two new vans which allow us to give Members rides to and from the GOC. Since many of our Members are below poverty level, transportation is one of the biggest obstacles to them receiving services. The vans have also allowed us to have activities outside the GOC such as Social Saturdays, nature hikes, an outing to a local restaurant, and tabling at community events. This gives members the opportunity to have a greater connectedness with the community and each other.

People dropped by all day from 11am to 6pm. The festival included several raffles, an anniversary cake, a cookout and games in the parking lot.

The celebratory festival showed how much community support the GOC has. We had people from the United Way, UF Health, LifeSouth, NAMI, Rotary, Sen. Keith Perry’s office, and many more community partners. Along with our growth, the community support we receive is something we are all very proud of.

Want to see who attended our event? Turn to the next page to see photos.
Fall Festival Attendees

Tony Barr and Ed Book from Rotary.

Carol Lewis and Dr. Regina Bussing from UF Health, psychiatry.

GOC Board Member Shoab Rana with Consuelo, David Kreider, Board Member Cyndi Garvan and Kevin Keating.

GOC Board Members Manny and Mercy Quiroga with Greg Young from Rotary.

Left: Keenan Vernon, Abigail Raile and GiGi Hernandez from Senator Keith Perry’s office.

Right: Pat Thomas and her granddaughter, Sailor.

Jason Cason from First Federal Bank and Rotary.

GOC Member Susan Thomas with Rahkiah Brown and Amber Miller (Rotary) from the United Way.
Meet Scott! Scott currently has a home, but didn’t always have one. After working as a Certified Nursing Assistant for twenty-nine years, Scott lost his home and his job. This loss of housing came after a number of circumstances related to mental illness happened including Scott’s father passing away, Scott losing his car and job, substance use and feeling depressed. After losing his job, Scott didn’t have anywhere to go so he lived in the pavilion at Grace Marketplace, a local homeless shelter for two months. After his time expired in indoor housing, Scott moved to Dignity Village, just outside Grace Marketplace, where people who are homeless could live in tents. He lived in a tent for three and a half years.

Living without a permanent home was difficult. There were lots of problems such as physical violence, theft and living in a community with lots of people using drugs and alcohol to cope with their situations. He said that leaving his tent to work a job meant his personal belongings would often get stolen by the time he returned. While homeless, Scott often called 911 for medical and security related reasons. He says seeing an ambulance arrive at the Dignity Village tent city happened almost daily.

That being said, Scott had positive experiences as well. He found comradery and emotional support with others living in Dignity Village. He said as tough as it was for him, it may have been even harder on others. He managed to draw inspiration from seeing other people in the homeless community overcome enormous challenges. Scott adopted the phrase, “Don’t worry, be happy,” as a mantra to help him get through tough times.

Scott came to the GOC at the recommendation of his therapist and the invitation of GOC staff who volunteered at Grace Marketplace. He says that having a place to use computers and a place to be around others has given him strength. The GOC also helped him gain employment again. He is working with Aramark food service on the University of Florida campus.

Scott’s goals include getting a handle on substance use, and keeping his current job. Scott says, “I’m trying to be a better person—this job is helping me to do that.” He also says working is helping him with his depression.

Scott keeps coming back to the GOC to “Try to give back because GOC has given me so much.” Scott feels proud to be a part of GOC as a Member and feels comfortable here. Scott has had good experiences at GOC interacting with other Members, getting a job and the social activities. Scott says he is much better off because of the GOC.
### Wellness

We changed our Wellness Walk time to 12:30pm, immediately following lunch. Studies show if you walk right after a meal, it burns energy that your body might otherwise store as fat.

It's hard to carry groceries on a bus. Lack of transportation is one more obstacle toward getting an affordable and healthy meal. Not eating right leads to additional health problems that make it even harder to live a happy and meaningful life.

So once a week, the GOC takes Members grocery shopping and then takes them home. This is just one more service that we provide that helps our Members live better lives.

### Culinary

The GOC prepared and served a bountiful dinner on Thanksgiving Day. We picked Members up because buses don't run on Thanksgiving. Often, our Members are alone on Thanksgiving. Being together and achieving social connectedness is important to people's well being. We're happy to be able to provide a place for people to be part of a community.

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### Transportation

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### Social

We meet two Saturdays a month for social activities. This month we went to Brown's Country Buffet in Alachua. It was quite a treat. 17 Members signed up and went to the event. It was something everyone looked forward to for about a month.

At the social, Members all paid for their own meals. It is part of being independent. We are here to help our Members do things that everyone else gets to do. It is all part of living life.
The GOC will be the primary recipient of Rotary Wild Game feast Funds this year. We plan to use the money to upgrade our kitchen to commercial quality.

https://www.rotarygainesville.org/wild-game-feast/

Want to help? Below are various ways that you can help us help others.

--- Click to go to the United Way Campaign Website

If you work for a business that’s part of the United Way, you can donate pre-tax through your employer. The United Way has a sign up period near the end of the calendar year. Think GOC!!!!!

When you shop on Amazon, think of GOC!

Any and all help is appreciated. Simply search for us on Amazon or click the images to the left and to the right. (Wishlist-> https://tinyurl.com/yum48cu3)

Please use our email info@goclubhouse.org as the recipient.
## Monthly Calendar and Events

### December
- **December 4** - Social Saturday 10am-2pm  
  - Wellness Hour 2-3pm  
  (Wellness is open to Members and peers in the community)
- **December 18** - Social Saturday
- **December 24** - Christmas Holiday Celebration
- **December 29** - Employment Dinner 5pm.
- **January 1** - Social Saturday and holiday celebration

### Weekly Meetings
- **Monday 2:00 p.m.** - Programming
- **Tuesday 2:00 p.m.** - Culinary, Wellness, Garden
- **Wednesday 2:00 p.m.** - Website
- **Wednesday 3:00 p.m.** - Newsletter
- **Thursday 2:00 p.m.** - Adobe/Media

### Daily Events and Meetings
- 8:30am Culinary Unit arrives to start Breakfast
- 9:00am Clubhouse Opens, Breakfast is served.
- 9:30am Wellness Walk
- 10:00 am General Membership Meeting
- 10:30 am Work Day commences in Office, Culinary, Media and Garden
- 1:30 pm Office Unit Meeting
- 2:00pm Work Day Continues
- 5:00 pm Clubhouse Closes

### Birthdays
- December 9 - Nathan Ray
- December 18 - Scott Hesch
GOC Members help each other with a smile.

Cristina, Sean, Amanda, and Susan enjoy Social Saturday at Brown’s Country Buffet.

Along with our own Fall Festival, GOC members participated in the Gainesville Art Show.

(Below) Officers from our area participate in Crisis Intervention Training quarterly at the GOC.

GOC Member John Smith went to Orlando for the Special Olympics.

GOC Members thank you for reading this and supporting us.