

THE ADVOCATE

GUARDIAN AD LITEM, FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
PALM BEACH COUNTY



YOU
MAKE
A
DIFFERENCE

Volume 100 – issue 2
June 2011

Editor – Ellen Kranzler
Photographer – Diana Reese

CALENDAR CORNER
[mark your calendar]
July 26, 2011

Vita Nova Independent Living – (IL)
Demystifying DCF;
& Family Drug Court

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“THREE LITTLE WORDS” BY Ashley Rhodes-Courter.

Ashley spent 10 of the first 12 years of her life in the foster care system. Her last home was her fourteenth placement. The book “[THREE LITTLE WORDS](#)”, is a memoir of her “journey through a troubled childhood- one where she often felt abandoned, neglected and trapped in a failing foster care system”. But through this journey she met many different people. In this voyage, between South Carolina and Florida, Ashley had **73** child welfare Administrators; **44** child welfare case workers; **19** foster parents ; **23** attorneys; **17** psychologists , psychiatrists, and therapists; **5** Guardian ad Litem staff; **4** Judges; **4** court personnel; **3** abuse register workers; **2** primary case workers and **1** GUARDIAN AD LITEM. There were a total of **195** people in Ashley’s life, but only **2** unpaid volunteers, that made the greatest difference. One was the GAL **Mary Miller**. You can be the Mary Miller in a child’s life today.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

NOTES & QUOTES FROM THE CD: **[CIRCUIT DIRECTOR: CICELY ROBERTS]**

Wow, I’m in awe that it has been over 9 months since my 1st day as Circuit Director for the GALP-15th Circuit. Although there have been multiple challenges, I feel blessed every day to serve in this position. I am overwhelmed with the multitude of resources and the dedication that exists in South Florida’s child welfare system. I count it such a privilege to administer a program of the finest volunteers & staff in this state. As a GAL Volunteer, you are the most consistent people in a child’s life. Our GALS go above and beyond for Palm Beach County’s abused, abandoned and neglected children. The State of Florida is rich with a spirit of altruism because of you. Also, our dedicated non-profit board Speak Up! For Kids excels in supporting our GAL Program and we truly appreciate you.

My motto “WITHOUT YOU, THERE WOULD BE NO US.”

Cicely Roberts



LATEST FROM THE
ASISTANT DIRECTOR
LIZ LIEBER



**SPEAK UP! FOR
KIDS**

Dear Volunteers,

We would like to thank all of you who participated in the first two in-service training sessions that we have so far hosted. As part of our renewed efforts to provide you with continuing training and educational opportunities, we have scheduled several additional choices for the remainder of calendar year 2011. Below is a list of all trainings, which have been or will be offered this year; including the training for new GAL volunteers:

- January 7 and 14 – Educational Surrogate Training
- February 4,5,11,12, - New GAL training
- February 24 – Community Services (FAPA; Missing & Exploited Children; [Best Foot Forward])
- March 18,19,25,26 – New GAL training
- March 29 – Family-Centered Practice (CFC training series)
- April 1 – Family-Centered Practice (CFC training series)
- May 20 – Educational Surrogate Training
- May 24,25 – Knowing who you are (Statewide GAL Program –diversity training)
- ✚ June 17,18,24,25 – New GAL training
- ✚ July 8 – Trauma Informed Care (CFC training series)
- ✚ July 15 -(tentative) Legal Up Date
- ✚ July 26 – Vita Nova Independent Living (IL); Demystifying DCF; & Family Drug Court
- ✚ August 12,13,19.20 – New GAL training
- ✚ September 27 – Workforce Development; Agency For Persons with Disabilities (APD); Vocational Rehabilitation
- ✚ October 25 – Children's Medical Services (CMS) and medical foster care; Economic Services and DCF
- ✚ October 21,23,28,29 – New GAL training
- ✚ December 19 – (tentative) Legal Up Date

These opportunities are provided to expand your knowledge and enjoyment of your GAL experience.

Liz

Fellow Volunteers,

Did you know that along with raising funds to support the GAL Program, Speak Up! For Kids raises funds to meet the emergency needs of the children our Guardians serve. Just recently, we provided requested funding for high chairs, cribs, clothing, and school supplies and in one instance we helped a family with their utility bill. Even though there are organizations that provide these services as with their primary mission, Speak Up! For Kids may be able to help when you find yourself confronted with a time sensitive emergency. Should you find the need for funds for these children, please send your request to the Circuit Director. If approved, the Circuit Director will send your request to Speak Up! For Kids for funding or reimbursement.

Thank you,

**SPEAK UP! FOR KIDS
OF PALM BEACH COUNTY**



FREE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN.

The University of Florida/Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension has developed an educational series for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. The free workshops embrace the many challenges faced by grandparents as well as their grandchildren. Topics include legal issues, guiding behaviors and discipline, computers, resources, support, managing stress and more. The classes are offered from 10 am to noon on the following dates:

June 8 & 22; July 13 & 27; Aug 10 & 24; Sept 21 & 28; Oct 12 & 26.

Participants may attend as many classes as they like. Classes will be held at the Cooperative Extension Service, 599 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach. For more information. Call 233-1174



SUPERVISORS TELL ALL!

CASE COORDINATORS for the 15TH CIRCUIT

Your supervisors/case coordinators would like to remind you about some of the basic responsibilities that are very important to the job of a Guardian ad Litem:

- Visitation logs need to be submitted every month, and should include your activities and information for that month.
- JR reports need to be completed and sent to your supervisor at least 2 weeks prior to the JR date.
- Contact with parents is important. Document all efforts to get in touch with or visit with parents.
- Remember you are an advocate for the child, not a mentor. Your responsibility is to report to the court in their behalf, not to become their best friend.
- Keep an open mind, don't pre-judge, and always allow for cultural, ethnic and life style differences.
- If a motion, hearing, and/or trial are set, you are expected to attend. If it is not possible for you to attend, notify your supervisor as early as possible.
- **Help is needed to cover cases during the summer, for our snow bird GALs. If you can cover a case temporarily, please let your supervisor know.**

Thank you for all you do, your supervisors.

OUR STAFF IN THE WITNESS BOX CHERYL BAYLOR

OKAY FOLKS -

We are about to begin the adoption ceremony for this adorable child JUSTIN THOMAS. "Do you Cheryl and Stephen agree to adopt, care for and give a 'forever' home to Justin Thomas?" Thus began the afternoon ceremony on April 8, 2011. This was Cheryl and Stephen's second adoption. Their first was a beautiful little girl, Sarah Bryn, better known as Bryn, adopted on July 13, 2006. We know Cheryl as a wonderful administrator and supervisor, but her life is so much more. In '99 she started in the system as a single foster parent in the Ft Lauderdale and Miami area, where she cared for over 25 children. Before that she volunteered in 2 shelters for abused and neglected children, acted as a Big Sister, helped set up a woman's shelter and started her long tenure as a Sunday school teacher. A graduate of Dartmouth, with a MBA from Darden Business School at UVA. She has done many different things in the business world, usually marketing and data related. When she is not being a GAL Supervisor, she is occupied with Bryn and Justin. Cheryl knows directly how important it is to have a GAL on your case. Her first child, Bryn, had a GAL and the adoption took 1 ½ years to complete. Justin did not have a Guardian ad Litem and it took more than 4 years to come to fruition



YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Justin's Adoption - April 8, 2011



LEGAL ON LINE:

KRISTEN SOLOMON, ESQ.
Supervising Attorney

Why is it important to file reports and send in monthly logs?



The Guardian ad Litem Program is required to file reports to the court during several key points during the course of the case itself. JR's are very important hearings as many issues are discussed: placement, visitation, services and case plan tasks. Florida Statutes require a written report to be filed by not only the DCF and Families (otherwise known as the JRSSR) but requires the GAL to file a written report, the JR, as well. Both of these reports are mandated to be filed at least **72** hours prior to the hearing. Why 72 hours? Because all parties to the case including the GALP are entitled to "Notice". When you as the GAL or DCM make recommendations for things such as services, change in visitation and/or changes in permanency goals, all the parties are entitled to "Notice" so that they can adequately prepare for the hearing. If proper notice is not provided, a party can object to the recommendation. By failing to provide proper notice, issues such as permanency and services could be delayed. In regards to monthly visitation reports, please remember to send them once you have filled them out. They need to be completed right after your visit so that key issues are not forgotten or left out of the report. It is important to send them in for two main reasons: so our staff can address your concerns in a timely manner and so that we can ensure that every child is being seen monthly. If you do not submit your report for several months, the Program is not able to advise you in your advocacy for the child. I have often seen visit reports that contain issues such as medical appointments not being followed up on, observations of bruises, or even statements made by a child of abuse. These are very important observations that need to be addressed immediately in order to ensure the child's safety. Please do not wait to send these in, call your supervisor. As you know, one of the things you agree to do when you sign up to be a GAL is to visit the child at least every 30 days. This visit is mandatory and you do not get to decide which months you will visit and which ones you will not. In order to make sure that the children we serve are safe and that their needs are being met, we must visit. Documentation is needed in order to back up your testimony of your visits. Have you ever heard the statement- If it is not in writing it didn't happen? The same idea applies here, If you have not sent in your visit log, I have to assume you haven't seen the child.

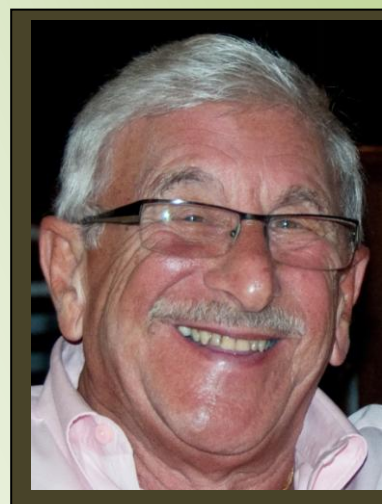
REMEMBER: reports for court are due at least **10** business days prior to the scheduled hearing and your visit reports need to be sent in as soon as possible after your visit but at least by the end of each month.

Thank You, Kristen.

PORTRAIT OF A GUARDIAN AD LITEM

LAWRENCE GELLER

[LARRY]



Larry moved to Florida about 10 years ago and retired from the position of Executive V.P. of the J. Baker Shoe Co. He loves to play golf, swim, and walk and use to play tennis and bike, (but the years catch up with us all). You can always find Larry in front of a Patriot game or Red Sox game, once in a while [if there is nothing else] watching the Miami Heat. Larry and Sandy, his beautiful wife, of 29 years, love to travel and have traveled a good part of this world. As it turned out, he met Lou Scher (fellow GAL) on one of their trips to Greece. After 2 years of retirement both Lou and Larry were bored and looking for something to get involved with. Together they found the Guardian ad Litem Program and have been a team ever since. Larry and Lou are like Batman and Robin, or Abbott and Costello, always together and totally committed to working with the GAL Program. Just working very hard for his kids wasn't enough for Larry, and helped develop, and sits on the board of, the non-profit organization Speak Up! For Kids. When Larry makes a commitment he does it all the way. You can always count on him to be there for the Program and the kids. The 15th Circuit Guardian ad Litem Program has benefited in many ways from having Larry as a GAL.

Thank you Larry – YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



STEVE BERGER



**GUARDIAN AD LITEM ANNUAL RECOGNITION
LUNCHEON – MAY 20, 2011**

THE SECOND ANNUAL – “YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE AWARD”

The second annual “You Make a Difference Award” was presented at the GAL luncheon on 5/20/11. [Presentation made by Cicely Roberts, C.D.]

Although a relative newcomer to the GAL Program, Steve has demonstrated the concern, diligence, perseverance, collaborative spirit and willingness to listen of a seasoned Guardian. His enthusiasm for the Program’s mission was evident during initial training, and when he accepted his first case that involved four (4) children, ages 9 months to 15 years in three (3) different placements, he hit the ground running. So much so that his attorney and case coordinator had difficulty keeping up

with the information uncovered in his investigations and communication with various case managers, teachers, therapists, caregivers, etc. Despite the complexity of the case – due largely to the children’s needs, the parent’s needs, multiple moves and inevitable delays and interruptions in service delivery and educational progress – Steve was never discouraged and instead sought out practical solutions for this family. If he didn’t know the answer, he asked. If he didn’t get an answer, he asked again. If he could help in any way, big or small, he did, from replacing broken eyeglasses for one sibling, to retrieving a favorite toy for another, to advocating for educational services for another, to broadening another’s horizons and strengthening her self-esteem by enrolling her in Girl Scouts. All the while, Steve kept detailed notes, visited the children monthly, wrote reports, attended hearings, and maintained contact with all parties even though he was called out of state frequently due to pressing family matters. Steve went “above and beyond” over and over again, to help this family and to keep the children not just safe, but well cared for while away from home (and each other). He worked tirelessly in conjunction with the case manager and other parties to promote permanency, which was achieved in a remarkably short period of time given the many obstacles. This was undoubtedly made possible because of Steve’s efforts, together with a dedicated case manager and others. It is this kind of teamwork which brings the best outcomes for our children, and which Steve has exemplified in his work as a volunteer advocate.

Our –“YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE AWARD – Recipient – STEVE BERGER.

Jim Sackett
WPTV – News
Emcee

Paulette Burdick
Palm Beach City
Commissioner

Cicely Roberts
Circuit Director
15th Circuit

Ken Thomas
Speak Up!
For Kids



**Palm Beach
City
Commission**

PROCLAIMED

MAY 20, 2011

**GUARDIAN
AD LITEM
DAY**

OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKER



JACOB

Jacob is a young man about to age out of the system. He spoke to us and gave some insights into the problems of growing up in the foster care system.

"Good afternoon, my name is Jacob. First, I would like to thank you all for inviting me here today and giving me the opportunity to tell about my experience with foster care and the GAL Program. I came into care on August 5, 2008, and it was supposed to have been for only about 2 weeks. It is now May of 2011 and I am still in care today. So I will give you the shortened version or you will be here for lunch tomorrow. Being taken away from my parents is by far the hardest thing that has happened to me in my life. I was placed in a home with my 2 sisters and my little brother. We were told that it was just for a week or 2 and that we would be going back to our parents. We were assigned to our first GAL. She would check in with us on a weekly basis, a couple of times she brought over things so that we could make our own ice cream Sundaes and just talk. I was then 15 years old and was put into the 7th grade because I had missed so much school. I was really angry about everything and began to act out....a bit. I basically quit going to school, started getting transferred to different schools for lack of attendance, jumped out of bus windows at 40 miles an hour and things like that. With my behaviors the way they were, my then Guardian suggested that I go to the Eagle Academy. She was very much a straight shooter and told me how things were, she didn't sugar coat things. At that time I really didn't like her much, but she was able to pull some strings and in less than 30 days I was at the Eagle Academy. Alone, without my brother and sisters, I spent 6 months there and graduated! While I was at the Academy for one reason or another, my GAL was no longer my GAL. I got a new GAL, Ellen Kranzler. She is the best. She came out to visit me all the time, made sure that my sisters and brother came out and saw me on weekends and even made sure that I got my ring when I graduated. The stone on the ring fell out, and she even had that fixed for me. After graduation I was placed in a shelter where I felt very uneasy and out of place. I called Ellen, I trusted her and felt as if she was the only person that cared. She rushed to the shelter and saw what was going on and stayed with me till I was relocated to a better place. I bounced around to quite a few more places and after more than a year I wound up back at the same foster home that I started at, with my sisters and brother. While a lot of people have doubted me and don't really believe in me, my Guardian has always been there Through the best and worst of it she has kept me strong and on the right track, and the belief that I can do anything I set my mind to. After years of persistence Ellen was able to get my sisters and brother out of foster care and to my Aunt and Uncle in New York, and she has even been there to visit them since they moved. They are very happy and doing great, I talk with them often. On July 14th, 2011 I will turn 18, you know what that means. But, I stayed here to continue working on getting my High School diploma and to go to College. I have a job at Publix and have been there for almost a year now. I have been working on my independent living program and plan to stay where I am now. I would like to thank you all for what you do. You do make a difference. A special thank you to Ellen Kranzler. She is one of a kind and will be in my life forever. Thank you for allowing me to tell you a little bit of my story and how all of you have helped me with a very difficult time in my life and how you have made it easier."

THANK YOU ALL - JACOB.

WANTED!

A few concerned GALs that would be interested in working with Family Drug Court. Drug court is held every Wednesday afternoon. It is a little different in that all the participants work as a team, everyone is there to help support the client and the children. We are there to help them work through the system, help maintain their stretch for goals, and then are very proud when they complete the program. If you are interested in more information or would like to become involved, please call/or email Lee Turco - 355-1167 / elinor.turco@gal.fl.gov .

THE ADVOCATE

GUARDIAN AD LITEM FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

PALM BEACH COUNTY COURTHOUSE

205 DIXIE HIGHWAY

WEST PALM BEACH, FL 33401

561-355-2773

FAX: 561-355-2717

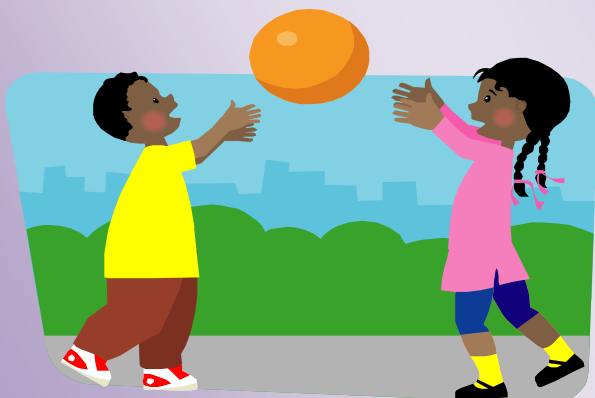
WEBSITE: www.galpcb.org

Executive Director - Cicely Roberts

Assistant Director - Liz Lieber

Supervising Attorney -

Kristen Solomon



Status Check:

Administrative staff:

Lucinda 355-6220
Kara 355-1849
Arelis 355-2775
Cheri 992-1108
(Belle Glade)

Having trouble getting through to your supervisor, don't get frustrated, just dial "O" for help.

STAFF OF THE 15TH CIRCUIT:

Legal Staff:

Division:

Judge Baker- Kevin Walsh 330-1752
Judge Alvarez -Stacey Carter 355-6223
Kristen Solomon 355-1148
Judge Kroll - Rayanne Babich 355-1163
Nicole Jackson 355-1124
Judge Martin- Justice Choate 355-6225
Lisa Larmond 355-6083
Judge Bailey- Anne Tomasello 992-1108

CASE COORDINATORS :

SOUTH COUNTY:

Telephones:

JS - Judge Baker- 330-1752

Denise Davis
Kelwyn Williams

WEST PALM BEACH: 355-2773

JK - Judge Alvarez

Kayleen Cavanaugh 355-6742
Ken Gotlib 355-6221

JL - Judge Kroll

Bill O'Connor 355-3726
Tina Smart 355-6161
Lee (Elinor)Turco 355-1167

JO Judge Martin-

Brad Austwick 355-6628
Cheryl Baylor 355-1826
Sharanda Edward 355-6160

BELLE GLADE: 996-4894

BG - Judge Bailey

Maria Montesinos

CASE COORDINATOR:

Katie Rodriguez 355-1943

WE WELCOME

2 NEW CASE
COORDINATORS
TO THE
15TH CIRCUIT:

Denise Davis

has joined the South
County Office
and

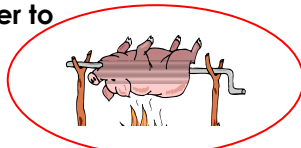
Tina (Christina) Smart

is now a member of
the West Palm Beach
staff.

MULTICULTURAL CORNER – featuring the Cuban Culture.

Feliz Noche Buena!! Happy Christmas Eve, an ultimate holiday in the Cuban tradition. It is not only the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, but an opportunity to unite with one's family. Noche Buena is spent telling funny stories, eating all day, and I can't forget playing dominoes. Typically what brings my family together is feasting! The day begins by popping a whole 90 pound pig in "La Caja China", a special box designed to roast any meat to perfection. As the aroma of pork drifts in the air and the anticipation to indulge oneself with the simmering black beans, rice, yucca, fried plantains, tamales and tomato salad builds up we distract ourselves with continuous dancing and partying. Family is indispensable and there is truly no other occasion which can compare to Noche Buena. It is one of the few days in the year when everyone drops whatever they are doing, their worries as well, and come together to celebrate life!

Submitted by Frances Haedo – GAL Intern.



We have added this corner because our GAL Program is part of a truly culturally diverse community.

If you would like to contribute a memory, a family tradition or story of your own to this corner, please submit it to Ellen Kranzler at bibliophile6452@comcast.net - 704-4161.

RETIREMENT:

JUDY HOROWITZ

Supervisor/Case Coordinator from South County has decided to retire (once again). This is not the first time Judy has retired. Judy and her husband had moved south after Judy retired from being a probation officer. She stayed retired for about a year and became bored. Needing something to do, she volunteered as a GAL and was quickly hired as a part-time supervisor, then full time. Now she is retiring once again, but this time it is to become a full time grandma. But she is staying on as a volunteer GAL once more. We're happy that we are not losing Judy altogether. And we wish her the best of luck and fun at being a grandma.

