

Guardian ad Litem Newsletter

1 9 T H C I R C U I T G U A R D I A N A D L I T E M P R O G R A M

UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 25th Guardian ad Litem Day in Tallahassee
- March 28th Vero Beach Starbucks Recruitment Coffee
- March 31st Pre-Service Training begins
- April 1st Okeechobee Staffing Day
- April 2nd Recruitment Open House
- April 6th Swearing In
- April 6th Volunteer Appreciation Lunch
- April 6th Starbucks Saint Lucie Recruitment Coffee
- April 6th Starbucks Martin County Recruitment Coffees
- April 8th Indian River County Volunteer Meeting
- April 10th Office closed for Good Friday

A NEW YEAR—TOUGH TIMES FOR ALL

As we come toward the end of the first quarter of the New Year, we have to stop and look at where we are today, right now.

We are a Guardian ad Litem Program 249 volunteers strong. We give 910 children a voice in the court. We advocate every day for what is right and accept nothing less for our children than we would accept for our own.

Many of our angels have been called home and they now can rest their wings. They watch over us and give us strength when we think we just can't fight this system any longer. We continue to rise to the fight and

fight we do! We also welcomed many new angels to our family and we draw strength from their determination and enthusiasm.

As our economy suffers and budgets get smaller and needs becomes greater, I sit and reflect on our mission and sometimes wonder - are we doing what needs to be done for our children and can we say we have pushed it to the end? However, as in any business, organization or company, I can say we have room for improvement. But as I look over the last 3 years as the Circuit Director, I can't help but smile and most importantly feel an overwhelming sense of pride and accomplishment that we

are continuing to evolve and improve as advocates for our children. We are the one true voice of the child and we will not be silenced.

I want each and every volunteer, associate volunteer and staff member to know that I am honored to stand with you and to call myself a Guardian ad Litem.

Thank you for your time, your patience and your dedication to our children. As we advocate to change their lives, we don't always stop to realize how they change ours. Thanks you again for all you do.

Elizabeth Mackenzie

Circuit Director

THANK YOU!

To **Agnes Haas** for covering the front desk, To **Judy Robidoux** for her tireless recruitment and extraordinary research efforts for kids placed out of state, to **Debra Butler** for her enthusiasm and willingness to help us find new resources, to **Doris Plym** for her support of the Guardian Angel Gift Drive, to **Theresa Williams** for helping in the office, to

Robin Chesser for 203 hours of office work last year, as well as her excellent work on her cases and assisting in court, To **Sue Werlin**, **Lisa Emig**, and **Sandra Burkhart** for mentoring new volunteers, To **Scott Sade** for purchasing the bed for a child in need, and to **Barbara McCallister** for developing such a good relationship with such severely abused children.

Thanks to the Indian River County Volunteers for all your hard work and dedication to our children and the GAL program. You all give hope and encouragement to those children in need. Your work is profoundly appreciated.

Patricia White

From the desk of

PATTRA F. DODD

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank the following volunteers for their support and assistance with our recruitment efforts. The GALs listed below, not only represent children, but are members of the GALP Meet and Greet Team, Mentor Team and Recruitment Committee: Judy Robidoux, Judith Shiver, Sharon Buck, Sue Werlin, Dick Starita, LuAnn Giovannelli, Robin Chesser,

Karen Brazauskas, David Eisenberg, Renate Garceau, Steve and Julie Hurley, Darlene Gleaves, Sandra Burkhart, Nancy Meier, Patricia Cooney, Win Swan, Doris Plym.

The Meet and Greet Team arrive here at our office each month on the last day of training, to meet the newly trained volunteers and welcome them to the Program. Additionally, they answer any questions

and/or concerns our new GALs may have. The GALP Recruitment Committee meets every 3rd Wednesday of the month at our office in SLC at 2:00 p.m. We brainstorm new recruitment ideas and arrange coverage for scheduled events. Our success and goal of 100% representation of all abused children in the 19th Circuit depends on successful recruitment of volunteers and thanks to our volunteers, we are on

our way. The first county we will have 100% representation by volunteers will be Indian River County, **WHAT AN ACCOMPLISHMENT!**

We continue to be successful, because of you the 19th Judicial Circuit Volunteer Guardians ad Litem!

Thank you,

Pattra

**GOOD NEWS!**

In 2008 we had two new arrivals to celebrate here at the office. Gregory Kastoriano, son of Case Coordinator Marina Kastoriano was born on August 7, 2008, and Davyn Davis son of Program Attorney Tristan Borden was born on December 22, 2008. We have also had some marriages to celebrate. Former Case Coordinator Monica Webb was married to Theodore Powers on September 6, 2008, and they are now expecting their first child. Our second wedding to announce is a first for our program. When we said our staff loves our

volunteers one of us meant it a little more than the rest of us. Case Coordinator Debra Baxter married volunteer William Wichterman on December 19, 2008.

If you have any good news you would like us to print in our next newsletter please e-mail it to Jennifer.Manis@gal.fl.gov

**TREAT IN A TRUNK**

On October 31, 2008, the 19th Circuit Guardian ad Litem Program held the Treat in a Trunk public awareness event. Staff and volunteers dressed up in costumes, decorated the trunks of their vehicles, and handed candy out to our community's children. Our local firefighters brought a fire engine, Trinity Lutheran Church, and the Saint Lucie County Sheriff's office provided some candy, and a local Frozen Treats distributor provided frozen treats. If you would like to assist with Treat in a Trunk 2009, please contact Pattra at 772-871-7225.

**GUARDIANS AD LITEM NOW FORMING**

If you are interested in riding motorcycles as a group please email Volunteer Rich Vassar: Vassar555@bellsouth.net and copy Pattra Dodd at Pattra.Dodd@gal.fl.gov. Richard volunteered to assist us in forming this informal group. We would like to get this riding group up and riding together by summer. Who knows, leather jackets for the winter: GALs RULE, I mean ride.

GUARDIAN ANGEL GIFT DRIVE



This year's Guardian Angel Gift Drive was an outstanding success. At least 700 children were provided gifts. Laptops, I-pods, hundreds of dollars in gift cards, clothing and toys. Many people are responsible for this amazing success story. Some are pictured here. Starting in the upper left hand corner and moving clockwise, the Lighthouse International Church sponsored 25 children, the Port Saint Lucie Woman's Club provided a check for \$150, Doris Plym, Michelle Jarvis, Victoria Allen and the student's of Saint Edward's sponsored over 200 children, and Steinmart of Saint Lucie West found sponsors for 25 children. There are too many wonderful people who had a hand in this project to mention in this article, but rest assured you are remembered in the glowing smiles this past Christmas morning.



If you would like to assist with the Guardian Angel Gift drive for 2009 please contact Debbie Butler, president of Guardians for New Futures at 772-359-2824.

SWEARING IN

President Barack Obama was not the only one taking an oath this January. On January 12, 2009, 32 new volunteer Guardians ad Litem were sworn in by chief Judge William Roby. Judge Roby was very generous with his praise of the Guardian ad Litem volunteers and how important their insight was for him when he was a dependency judge. After the

ceremony a cake and coffee reception was held at the GALP office, and certificates were distributed. The Next ceremony is scheduled for April 6th. If you would like to help welcome our new volunteers at the reception please

RSVP by calling 772-785-5804.



**BOOK REVIEW
THREE LITTLE WORDS**

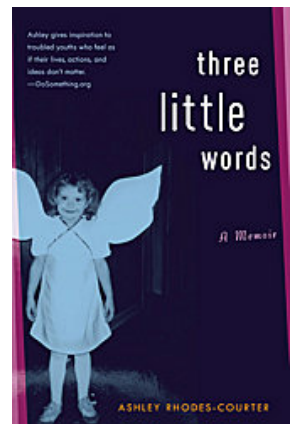
Why read "Three Little Words" by Ashley Rhodes-Courter? It is based on the true story of a young girl named Ashley, who was in the foster care system for more than 10 years. She recounts her own real life experiences. The book had quite an impact on me as I read what a child feels and goes through; the frustra-

tions, the fears and the not knowing. She tells of how having a Guardian ad Litem, always there for her, helped her and how this volunteer was one of the key persons in her life who truly made a difference. You can see how essential a Guardian ad Litem is in a child's life. **I highly recommend that all staff and volunteers read**

this book. Ashley's story is very inspiring and it will definitely motivate you to continue fighting for the children who deserve a chance in life.

We have two copies in the library.

By Celia Garcia



**19TH CIRCUIT
GUARDIAN AD LITEM
PROGRAM**

584 NW University Blvd., Suite 600
Port Saint Lucie, FL 34986

Phone: 772-785-5804

Fax: 772-785-5869

E-mail: Jennifer.Manis@gal.fl.gov

EMPLOYEE PROFILE – BRYAN HOERBELT

Bryan Hoerbelt was born in Tampa, Florida. He graduated from Florida State University with a Bachelors degree in Classics in 1995. In 1996 he volunteered with the Covenant House , a homeless shelter for teens, in Houston, Texas. He graduated from the University of Massachusetts in 1999 with a Masters degree in Public Health. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry from the University of South Florida in 2002. While attending USF Bryan worked for the family business, Tri-City Optical. He also volunteered as a Guardian ad Litem for Hillsborough County

in 2002. Bryan earned his Juris Doctor from Tulane University in 2006. While in the process of obtaining his law degree during the summer of 2005, he interned with the Unified Family Court program in the 6th Judicial Circuit. In the summer of 2006 he interned as a staff attorney for the 13th Circuit. Bryan worked for a patent firm for a short time before coming to work here at the 19th Circuit Guardian ad Litem Program, as a Program Attorney, in October of 2008. He has appeared in court for all four

counties. Bryan also is currently a volunteer with Hospice. Bryan is also a member of MENSA.

Bryan is very knowledgeable and passionate about serving the best interest of children, and we welcome him to the GALP family.

