

117 YEARS  
GUARDIAN  
AD LITEM  
1892-2009



# The Register

Twelfth Judicial Circuit

Spring 2009

## Save the Date!

This year's Volunteer (and staff) Appreciation Luncheon will be held at the Polo Grill in Lakewood Ranch on **April 20**.

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## The More the Merrier

This year's annual GAL volunteer and staff Appreciation Luncheon hosted by the Children's Guardian Fund will be held on Monday, April 20, 2009 from 11:30 to 1:30 at the Polo Grill, 10670 Boardwalk Loop, Lakewood Ranch. Guests who are not GAL staff or volunteers are asked to pay \$25.

Please RSVP to your supervisor or to:  
Judithwatson.cgf@gmail.com or  
941-861-4841.

There will be awards and a program—all in recognition of the wonderful work you do! This event is one of the high points of the Children's Guardian Fund's year, and we hope to see you all there.

## Upcoming Training Events

### **April 6:**

**In-service**, 4:30–6, Fruitville Library, Jennifer Layton: Termination of Parental Rights

### **April 14:**

**In-service**, 1–3, Braden River Library

### **April 16:**

**In-service**, 4:30–6, St. Thomas More Church

### **April 22, 23, 24, 25, 29 and May 1:**

**Entry Level Training**, 5:30–8:30 & 9–4, St. Thomas More Church

### **May 12:**

**In-service**, 9:30–noon, Fruitville Library, Dr. Habif: ADHD & BiPolar

### **May 21:**

**In-service**, 4:30–6, St. Thomas More Church

### **May 27, 28 and June 3, 4:**

**Entry Level Training**, 9–4, Manatee Community College, LWR Branch

**Important! Please RSVP by email to Pam Hindman at [pam.hindman@gal.fl.gov](mailto:pam.hindman@gal.fl.gov) if you are planning to attend an event.**

## Children's Guardian Fund—Summer

### Judy Sharple President

It's almost that time of year again when, in the immortal words of Alice Cooper, "School's out – for summer!" The Children's Guardian Fund will again provide financial assistance to enable children in dependency to attend a summer camp program.

If each GAL will ascertain if summer camp would be appropriate for "their children," the Children's Guardian Fund will welcome your fund requests. The GAL supervisors may provide referrals for different camps, and the local paper, which annually publishes camp opportunities in the area, is another resource.

The parameters:

1. The GAL will complete the CGF fund request form for the summer camp request, receive approval from the GAL supervisor, and then forward the request to their case manager for a POS to be sent through the chain of command. This camp should not include the summer period of daycare.

2. The CGF will share 50 percent of the total cost of the summer camp up to a *maximum of \$300*, one camp request per child. The rest of the funding will be the re-

sponsibility of the SCC. (This policy is the same as last year.)

Additionally, at the end of the camp session, the Children's Guardian Fund would greatly appreciate receiving a few sentences from the child or GAL as to how the child benefited from the camp experience. These comments are helpful to the CGF board members in their ongoing fundraising efforts, and also in the accounting of the grants/donations the CGF receives.

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**"...the CGF will again provide financial assistance to enable children in dependency to attend a summer camp program."**

*Volunteer Supervisor Monica Moore reviews a case with GAL volunteer Winston Cooke.*



## Some True Stories behind Grant Applications

The grant application process can be a strange and unpredictable world unto itself. Some tidbits:

- Some have a very specific focus: Manatee Community Foundation funds Manatee County programs. In the past they have provided funding for 20 Manatee children to attend summer camp. It happens that we had 19 requests.
- The unexpected: the phone rang one day, and the Sarasota Sheriff's department said they had decided to give us several thousand dollars that had been confiscated. One of the sergeants recommended us, but we may never know how that came about—or exactly where the money came from.
- The Women's Club of Sarasota has added us to their list of philanthropic charities, thanks to one of our GALs. Other guardians have filled in however many

forms it took to have Bank of America and Washington Mutual match their volunteer hours with a check. Another found a way for us to receive a donation from Coldwell Banker.

- All-Star Children's Foundation is the award winner for length of application. It provides significant funding for six agencies in Sarasota, all in the business of making this a safer, happier place for our children. It is inspiring to hear how hard we are all working to end the cycle of abuse.

- The Rotary Club of Lakewood Ranch received 62 grant applications this year, requesting a total of more than \$534,000. All they had to give away was \$88,000. Imagine the process of deciding where it should go. Our program received \$8,000 for "direct support for children in the Guardian ad Litem Program." Clearly, we're

doing something right, both in the program and in the writing about it.

- The Matching Challenge grant in December required no application at all—and brought in the highest amount of money, keeping us from falling behind our budgeted goals. We are determined that the economy will not reduce our funding of the children in dependency.

If any of you know of any business, corporate or foundation funding sources, public or private, who might be interested in supporting us, please contact Judith Watson at Children's Guardian Fund, [judithwatson.cgf@gmail.com](mailto:judithwatson.cgf@gmail.com), or 861-4841. At this point, we would certainly welcome a sponsor or sponsors for the Appreciation Luncheon.



*Judith Watson of the Children's Guardian Fund holds a check from the Sarasota Sheriff's Office.*

## Pam's Panoramic Pearls

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**“One hundred percent of the children in the Twelfth Circuit are currently being represented and ninety percent of them have a volunteer GAL”**

**Pam Hindman,  
Assistant Circuit  
Director**

We always start a new year with high energy activity. This year we welcomed some wonderful new volunteers to our ranks; put our new mentors to work; had a very affirming in-service with Judge Williams, former Sarasota dependency judge; and completed sexual abuse training. We are going to keep up the pace in the second quarter by sending our GAL volunteers to Tallahassee for GAL Lobby Days. This is a great opportunity for some of you in the trenches to share the importance of the work you do with your legislative representatives and encourage more state support.

April 20 is our Annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon at the Polo Grill. Last year's atten-

dance was wonderful, and we expect an even better attendance this year. On April 7, the County Commissions in each of our counties will present the program with a proclamation declaring April 20, Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Appreciation Day. This is a small way to tell the community how much we appreciate the service of our volunteers. You can attend this public session by just showing up on April 7.

We are continuing to hold on to our “First in the State” designation of highest representation of volunteers with cases. One hundred percent of the children in the Twelfth Circuit are currently being represented and ninety percent of them have a volunteer GAL. Our volunteers are amazing!

Finally, our governor provided us with a psychological boost when he rescinded the additional four percent program budget cut for this fiscal year. I see it as an affirmation of the work you do which doesn't have much glamour, but the children you represent are sure worth every effort you make. I hope to see you soon. Thank you for all you do.

## KUDOS to....

**Mark Guss** is working a very difficult case. He has appeared for every hearing, deposition, and meeting, even one at which I had to participate by phone because I didn't have time to drive to St. Petersburg. He's gone above and beyond in every instance, and I couldn't be happier to have him as the GAL on such a complicated case. He is so thorough that the secretary at the Office of the Attorney General called our office to inquire whether he could bring his laptop to the TPR trial so that they could project some documents on a screen. *Jaime Molbreak*

A big "thanks" to Desoto volunteer, **Ron Burns**. I was unable to make a speaking engagement with a group of Red Hat Ladies in town who were donating toys, Wal-Mart gift cards, books, and other items for our kids—so I really didn't want to miss it. Thankfully, Mr. Burns attended and spoke to the ladies about his experiences in the program and gathered the donated items. He didn't let a room full of women wearing purple and red hold him back! Thanks Ron. *Sandee Woods*

A very special thanks to Desoto volunteer **Carol Renquest** for volunteering beyond her appointed cases and doing the office paperwork filing. This is a huge help to us, and we really appreciate her time. Mrs. Renquest's husband just became a certified volunteer, and their church is a big supporter of our program. We appreciate their part in making that happen. Glad to have you both in the program. *Sandee Woods*

**Vickie Scarborough** was instrumental in saving the placement of a baby staying in a relative caregiver, pre-adoptive home in another state. The caregivers were struggling with traveling here and with getting more information from case management. Vickie was the go-between and was so helpful. I believe she played a key part in this placement not breaking down. Parental rights were terminated at trial recently, and now the adoption and permanency can happen. *Millessa Dunlop*

**Gail Petrykanyn Davies** is just completing the medical neglect case of a three-year-old. Gail played a cru-

cial role with the parents, helping and guiding them to be able to care for this child in their home. She has been an advocate for them and an encouragement when no one was sure they would ever be able to do it. This has led to permanency for this very sick child back with his parents. *Millessa Dunlop*

**Lynn Higgins** acquired a case with two teen boys whose mother abandoned them shortly after their father died. The eldest teen is on the run, and the younger of her teens was placed initially in shelter and then with another brother. When that placement broke down, the child was re-sheltered and placed at the YMCA group home. Lynn found out that there was an aunt and uncle willing to take the teen but the Coalition initially denied the home, apparently confusing the uncle with someone else. The GAL persisted and finally the teen was placed with his aunt and uncle. This case could have turned out very badly, but the GAL stayed involved, found and fought for placement, and now the child seems to be doing quite

well, and gaining confidence. He will soon be recognized for his accomplishments in wrestling (did I mention the GAL introduced him to the wrestling coach because she was concerned about his weight?) What a great GAL! *Jeff Weaver*

**Pat Walcheski** and **Richard Smalkoski** advocated for a young teen in both his dependency and delinquency hearings by attending all hearings and having the opportunity to address the court. As a result of their advocacy, he was not placed in a residential committed facility, but was allowed to remain in his placement and follow the necessary rules of the court. They are working with this teenager by securing tutoring with Next Step, working on providing appropriate clothing, and trying to enroll him in the YMCA for after school activities. This young man has progressed immensely for the better through the support, dedication and advocacy of these two GALs. *Manny Hernandez*



## Judge Brownell Appointed in Manatee County

Effective this past January, Judge Scott Brownell has been assigned to the Juvenile Court in Manatee County. Judge Brownell has presided in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit since 1987. He received a B.A. degree in 1971 from Eckerd College and a J.D. from the University of Florida College of Law in 1974. He was in private practice from 1974 through 1986. Judge Brownell is known both statewide and nationally for his dedication to judicial education, having presented at numerous conferences throughout the country. He was a founding dean of the Florida College of Advanced Judicial Studies. In 2003 Judge Brownell was the recipient of the William E. Gladstone Award for his contribution to the courts in serving dependent children and their families.



*Judge Scott Brownell*

## Siblings Placed Together Reunify Faster

While the child welfare field has long recognized that most children in foster care fare better when placed with siblings, a recent study published in *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* shows that siblings placed together in foster care actually reunify faster than siblings placed apart.

Researchers Vicky N. Albert and William C. King studied 602 children in foster care in Nevada who had at least one sibling in long-term foster care.

The study differentiated among the 401 siblings placed completely together, the 99 placed apart, and the 102 placed "partially together" (i.e., some of the siblings in a family were placed together but at least one was placed separately). Researchers also compared relative and non-relative placements and how these affected reunification patterns.

The findings confirmed that siblings placed together were more likely to reunify than siblings placed in dif-

ferent foster homes. This trend increased over time, especially after the first year. In addition, results suggest that prior to the eighth month and after the twelfth month in care, siblings placed together with relatives returned home faster than those placed completely apart. The rate of reunification for siblings placed partially together most resembled that of siblings placed completely together.

Implications for practice, including the need to recruit, train,

and reimburse foster families willing to foster sibling groups, are discussed.

"Survival Analyses of the Dynamics of Sibling Experiences in Foster Care" was published in *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, Vol. 89(4), and is available online: [www.familiesinsociety.org/ShowDOIAbstract.asp?docid=3819](http://www.familiesinsociety.org/ShowDOIAbstract.asp?docid=3819)

## A YFA Provider Supervisor to

**Tonia Hutchinson** is the program manager of Family Preservation, the agency that represents children ages six to twenty three in Sarasota and DeSoto counties. She is a graduate of the University of South Florida with a bachelor's degree in psychology and has worked as a behavior specialist at the Crisis Stabilization Unit in Sarasota through Coastal Behavioral Healthcare for two years.

This unit works with children aged five to eighteen who have been Baker-acted, and during this time she realized that she wanted to specialize in working with the family unit as opposed to just the child. She felt that family dynamics were far more important and were the main reason

the child was suffering and in the crisis program.

In 1997 she started working at the YMCA Safe Children Coalition where she was a case manager for two years and then became a supervisor in 1999. She has been with the Safe Children Coalition for almost twelve years and says she cannot imagine any other career.

With a passion for this work, she wants to make a difference in *many* people's lives through focusing on family-centered work. "I believe all kids can be adopted and that if you show someone how much you care about them and truly want to make a difference in their life, they have a better chance at becoming successful."



**Tonia Hutchinson**

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**"I believe all kids can be adopted and that if you show someone how much you care about them and truly want to make a difference in their life, they have a better chance at becoming successful."**

## Ask an Attorney: Advocating for a 17-year-old

**Amy Clark**  
Senior Program Attorney, Desoto County

**Q:** I am a new Guardian ad Litem appointed to a child who is about to turn seventeen. I am working on my report for the upcoming judicial review. I know that there are many independent living requirements, but is there anything else I need to recommend for this teen?

**A:** Yes, two requirements that often are neglected are that upon the 17-year-old teen's judicial review, the disability of nonage of minor for executing contracts for a residential lease shall be removed pursuant to s. 743.045 and referenced in s. 39.701(6). An additional statute, s. 743.046 provides for the removal of nonage for securing utility services. Although s. 39.701(6) does not refer to this section, it is a statutory right of the child, and the Guardian ad Litem needs also to advocate for its removal. By removing these dis-

abilities, the child is eligible to enter into both a lease agreement and utility contracts. The statutes require the following three elements: the child is seventeen; the child is adjudicated dependent; and the child is in the legal custody of the Department of Children and Family Services through foster care or subsidized independent living.

Finally, the statutes specify that both the removal of the disability of nonage for executing contracts for a residential lease and the disability of nonage for executing agreements for utility services be completed on an order from the judicial review. The statutes require that the child have a copy of the order to present at the signing of a lease or utility agreements.

The Guardian ad Litem can play a vital role in making sure that the order is completed. As you are preparing for your 17-year-old teen's judicial review, notify your volunteer supervisor and the attorney that both disabilities of nonage need to be removed for this child.

Additionally, there is no harm in having both these disabilities of nonage of minors removed even if the child chooses not to live independently. Go ahead and advocate for the order so it is available if needed.

This type of proactive advocacy really does make a difference. Recently, I was attending an independent living staffing for one of the teens that is represented by the Guardian ad Litem Program. At the staffing, the independent living case worker wanted to explore the option of subsidized living for this teen. However, the case worker felt that she would first have to get an order signed by the judge. The Guardian ad Litem Program was able to provide the case worker with the disability of nonage order already signed by the judge, and this teen is well on her way to living on her own.




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**“Go ahead and advocate for the order so it is available if needed.”**



**The Register**  
 Guardian ad Litem Program  
 Twelfth Judicial Circuit

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 Bradenton, FL 34205  
 941-744-9473

**DeSoto County**  
 223 East Oak Street Ste. 2  
 Arcadia, FL 34266  
 863-993-4638

[www.12circuit.org](http://www.12circuit.org)



*Judge Titus is shown with the most recent GAL graduates. From left to right: Kelly Pepe, John and Tali Stepp, Kim Perkins, Cindi Armstrong, Pat Richmond and Carla Sullivan.*

## Notable Anniversaries—Second Quarter 2009



### Three years plus:

Berg, Neal	3
Catalano, Bonnie	3
Grabenstein, Eileen	3
Kaltenbach, Nancy	3
Keal, Susan	3
Kenny, Anne	3
O'Brien, John	3
Parsons Grubb, Paula	3
Petrykanyn Davies, Gail	3
Phalen, Clifton	3
Phalen, Julie	3
Schuler, Tammy	3
Woodhead, John	3
Graham, Deborah	4
Lukacs, Linda	4
Overholdt, Martha	4
Siegfried, Thomas	4

### Five years plus:

Pitcher, Elizabeth	5
Santiago-Ramos, Hugo	5
Shurack, Richard	7
Watson, Marcia	8

**The anniversaries listed are for those GALs whose anniversary occurred in the second quarter of 2009.**