



The Gabbing Guardian

Guardian ad Litem



North Carolina
GUARDIAN AD LITEM
A CHILD'S ADVOCATE IN COURT

Mission of the Guardian ad Litem:

“Be a voice for the children in our community.”

Thank you Volunteers

Submitted by Lee Bradley, District Administrator

It remains eerily quiet here at the GAL office these days. The phones aren't ringing their usual tunes. The door only opens and closes on rare occasions. The chatter from visiting volunteers in the hallway picking up their mail is gone. Court rooms have closed, cases have been put on hold and lives have changed. These are without a doubt drastic times involving drastic measures.

Yet here you are. **The volunteer.**

Thank you first and foremost for being a part of this wonderful program and important work. Each of you continues to make a difference in so many lives. Thank you for adhering to and understanding our new policies regarding visiting our children, agencies, and local offices. You are continuing your incredible advocacy while minimizing the risk to yourselves, your families as well as the community.

I commend and encourage each of you to remain vigilant in your GAL work and support for our kids. They need a strong familiar voice now more than ever.

Currently our offices remain open and we will update you with any changes as they are shared with us.

We are here to assist and support you in anyway we can as you continue to navigate the new procedures. Should staff end up working from home we will continue to be accessible by telephone and email. Our GAL attorneys in all counties continue to address the emergency and non secure cases as needed. They will also remain open to being able to staff your individual cases and answering any questions you may have moving forward. If you need to speak with them directly please reach out to your program supervisor for assistance.

I wish you all the best and thank you for your continued service.

Lee

March 2020



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Autism:

Submitted by Jackie Melvin, GAL Volunteer in Henderson County



I used to babysit for a juvenile with autism. I thought I had a good understanding of what autism was, but when I went to a lecture earlier this year it showed me there was a lot more to learn. The lecture was on the Signs and Symptoms of Autism and was presented by the facilitators from Autism Society of North Carolina. In this lecture we were shown practical strategies to support children and adolescence with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Today there are 1 in 59 children identified with Autism. 10 years ago there were 1 in 1,000. With the number increasing so fast at some time in the future we will all probably have a child or adolescent with some form of autism. These children are often victims of sexual assault and many more adverse childhood experiences. Most of the time autism can't be reliably detected until around age five. There is a lot of information for us out there we just need to ask.

There is a local and state Autism Society of North Carolina. You can find someone to answer any question you may have by checking www.autismsociety-nc.org. They also have a phone number 800-442-2762.



Best Practice in GAL Work Amid the COVID 19 Pandemic

Submitted by Renee Barrier, Program Supervisor McDowell County

Change is inevitable but it doesn't come easy. We all know this truth. And, it's a part of life that most of us are experiencing in an unprecedented way these most recent weeks. As a GAL, you may be trying to adjust to the recent state-wide safety measures put in place to protect not only you as volunteers, but also to prevent exposure of the children we serve. Even while we are unable to make face to face contacts with the children we represent, we are still able to communicate with them in a meaningful way.

The Best Practice Guidelines for the program specify that GAL's should have "direct and sufficient contact to carry out an independent and valid investigation of the child's circumstances and to know the child's expressed wishes." While the standard expectation has always been a minimum of monthly contact, we have the ability to make more frequent, while not face to face, contacts via phone, email, skype, etc... during this time of social distancing.

Your work as a GAL advocate is just as valuable during this challenging time. You may be the only outside contact your child has during the chaos of school closures and other shutdowns. Be present in the ways that you can. Call and talk to your GAL child on the phone. Set a weekly phone-chat date and stick to it! Let them know that while you may not be able to come and visit at this time, you haven't forgotten about them and **they still matter to you!**

you matter





The word for 2020: Change

Submitted by Melissa Evette, Program Assistant for District 29

2020- Definitely not the way I had hoped it would start. There is "that" word... it begins with a C... and for some of us it is a stressful, all caps word... **CHANGE**.

I'll admit that I am not one who does change well. I like structure. I like routines. I like to know where I am going. 2020 began with changes in the Guardian ad Litem program. We prepared you for new email accounts and new forms. Many of you expressed concerns and fears over this change. As a team, we trained how to make this change as easy on our volunteers as possible. But **CHANGE** was coming.

Then the world stopped... **CHANGE** became an even bigger word. We have been asked to stay home. We have been asked to distance ourselves from friends, social gatherings and loved ones. How in the world are we supposed to adapt to this change? I found a list of 50 strategies and they have been helpful. I am sharing some of my favorites. The very last one applies to all areas of our lives but especially in the roll of Guardian ad Litem volunteer.

- Give Thanks
- Listen to guided relaxation
- Notice your body
- Examine everyday objects with fresh eyes
- Do some gentle stretches
- Watch something Funny
- Write a letter and mail it
- Add fresh flowers to your home
- Watch the clouds
- Pet a furry creature
- Eat by candlelight
- Try something new



Meet our Newest Staff:

Submitted by Sarah Brewer, VOCA Program Supervisor in McDowell County



Hello, my name is Sarah Brewer. I am the VOCA program Supervisor for McDowell County. I feel incredibly blessed to be a part of the Guardian ad Litem program. I grew up in McDowell County and have lived here most of my life. I am a graduate of Western Carolina University with a major in Sociology and a minor in Family Wellness. My background includes 9 years in the mental health system working with children and families as a one on one, case manager, and community support worker. I worked with families in both Burke and McDowell counties. I then transitioned to work in Child Welfare in McDowell where I have spent close to 9 years as a social worker and then as a supervisor. My husband is a teacher at the McDowell high school here in Marion and we have 2 children who are very active in sports and church activities. I enjoy volunteering, gardening, camping and spending time with my family. I am really looking forward to the many opportunities here in McDowell County to work alongside the volunteers in our community.





Debbie Kennedy– 1/1
 Samantha Lowery– 1/2
 Ron Schieve– 1/2
 Wendy Stokes– 1/4
 Laura Adler– 1/7
 Megan Ziegler– 1/9
 Chris TerKuile– 1/16
 Eleanor Will– 1/20
 Cliff DeMerrit– 1/26
 Lois Ann Bloom– 1/27
 Nancy Wanamaker– 1/27
 Amy Miller-Lamar– 1/31
 Peter Voisin– 2/4



Lyndsay West– 2/23
 Darlene Drake– 2/24
 Linda Bradley– 2/25
 Rachel Keever– 3/1
 Sue Snarey– 3/2
 Bill Spears– 3/2
 Robert Lange– 3/15
 Gordy Cwik– 3/19
 Debra Jacobs– 3/19
 Emmaleigh Carpenter– 3/23
 Dick Thompson– 3/23
 Michael Gilbert– 3/28
 Elizabeth Wills– 3/28

Jacque Mentink– 2/5
 Nancy Honeycutt– 2/6
 Libby Morris– 2/13
 Joe Marin– 2/22
 Greg Vaughn– 2/23



Facebook: Are you connected?

We use this platform for a number of different reasons. We attempt to recruit new volunteers, we keep our current volunteers and the community updated on events, and we keep the issue of abused and neglected children in the hearts and minds of community members.

So, if you are connected to us, make sure to comment on our posts and share them. Comments and shares help our posts be seen by a wider audience. The more people that see our posts, the more people will ask who we are and what we do. People who ask about what we do often end up volunteering.



If you are not already connected with our Facebook pages, join in on the conversation.

On Facebook, search:

- Guardian ad Litem of Henderson, Polk, and Transylvania Counties
- Rutherford County, NC Guardian ad Litem
- Guardian ad Litem of McDowell County
- Official State Page: NC Guardian ad Litem





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