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Guardian ad Litem Program
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Raleigh, NC District 10

Wake County Guardian ad Litem Program June 2016 Newsletter

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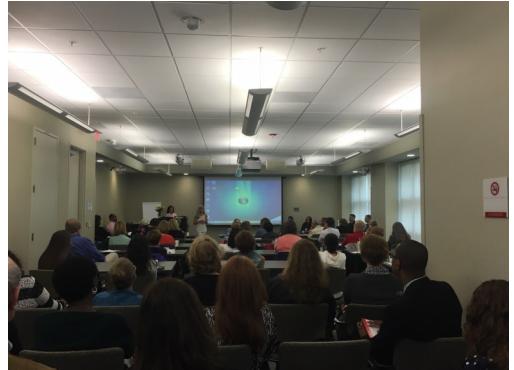
Guardian ad Litem



A child's advocate in court



On June 1, 2016, 21 new Volunteer Guardian ad Litem Advocates were sworn-in by the Honorable Judge Monica Bousman. We welcome these new volunteers to the Wake County Guardian ad Litem Program and thank them for their commitment and desire to help improve the lives of abused and neglected children in our community.



We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to presenters Cristin DeRonja, Executive Director, SAFEchild Advocacy Center, Dr. Elizabeth Witman, Medical Director, SAFEchild Advocacy Center, Melanie Shekita, Wake County Assistant District Attorney, Emi Wyble, Child Welfare Program Manager Wake County Department of Human Services, Detective Kevin Hubbard, Raleigh Police Department, and Kelly Lister, Crisis Intervention Specialist with the Wake County Public School System for facilitating our May in-service training "The Wake County Multidisciplinary Team's (MDT) Approach & Response to Child Abuse Concerns & the GAL Volunteers Role With MDT. We also would like to express our thanks to those who attended this informative training.

Cecilia McCullers Celebrating 18 Years of Advocacy!



As a young child, Ms. Cecilia McCullers was taught to give back to her community. She participated in roadside cleanup on early Saturday mornings, visited rest homes and spent time with the elderly. She states that she is instilling the same in her own children. She calls it “passing the peace”. She adds that there are lot of meanings behind this phrase; however, her definition is serving others so others will serve.

Ms. McCullers was sworn-in as a Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Child Advocate on June 17, 1998. Since then she has provided a voice to over 20 abused and neglected children who have come to the attention of the Wake County Juvenile Court System through no fault of their own. She believes that children are better served when they have a “voice”. According to Ms. McCullers, volunteering for the Guardian ad Litem Program has been a humbling and rewarding experience. She adds that this work for her is not only about the children she has represented or will represent, but it is also about “passing the peace” and inspiring others to serve as well. She advises new GALs to be consistent, non-judgmental, and good listeners.

The Wake County Guardian ad Litem Program is grateful to Ms. Cecilia McCullers and celebrates her 18th years of advocacy on behalf of children in care!

Congratulations to Our High School Graduates:

This month, **eighteen** youths represented by the Wake County Guardian ad Litem Program will be receiving their high school diplomas. Nine youths will be starting their freshman year in a community college/university this fall. We wish our graduates the very best!!!!



Spotlight on Marjorie Menestres Volunteer Child Advocate Since 2015



"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life, that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself."

These are the words of the poet-philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson that also summarize thoughts on what it means for Marjorie Menestres to volunteer on behalf of a child. Her friends and colleagues agree- Marjorie Menestres is inspirational, passionate and tireless when it comes to children.

Five minutes into a conversation with Marjorie, it's clear that this lifelong advocate for children and families has boundless energy and determination. Marjorie retired in July 2015, after 22 years at the helm of SAFEchild in Raleigh. Within a month, her continued passion for child advocacy drove her to train as a GAL, and begin tutoring at a local elementary school.

Marjorie is currently a GAL for two children, an infant and a nine-year old, both of whose stories tug at her heart, as she works towards developing a permanency plan for each of them. She also volunteers at the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA), where her engaging and upbeat personality is perfect for greeting visitors at the front desk. She logs in about 20 hours of volunteer time each week.

When she is not volunteering her time, Marjorie pursues her other passion as a lifelong student and active learner. She has two Masters degrees, from University of Florida in Rehabilitation Counseling and North Carolina State University (NCSU) in Education, and as if that were not enough, Marjorie is exploring courses in varied topics at NCSU's Lifelong Learning Institute. Her favorite classes are in history, involving the personal side of the Vietnam War and World War I. A long time book club member, she is currently enjoying "My Name is Lucy Barton" authored by Elizabeth Stroud. Stretching more than her mind, she also takes Pilates classes at the YMCA.

Most of all, Marjorie loves spending time with her family and friends in Raleigh and visiting one of her two adult sons in Santa Fe, NM. Marjorie has been married to her husband for more than 40 years, who, with a laugh she says, she met in a banana field. There is nothing ordinary about Marjorie Menestres!

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Marjorie is a veteran when it comes to building strong families. As SAFEchild's founding Executive Director, Marjorie successfully led the child abuse prevention agency in working directly with families to offer parent education and support services to help prevent abuse and neglect, and change the long-term effects of abuse, if it has occurred. She directed a caring staff in establishing parenting classes, setting up an advocacy center for sexually abused children and providing therapy services for children and their families. Those of you who attended the May 20 in-service training heard about SAFEchild's instrumental role in coordinating the work of the multidisciplinary team (MDT).

Seeing the power of prevention and education at work first hand, Marjorie reflects on why sometimes things do go terribly wrong, and children become innocent victims. She said, *"It is my strong belief that it takes more than love to raise a child; it takes a village and a support system, and accountability."*

Marjorie says what makes being a GAL different from her experience at SAFEchild, is that as a GAL she has hands-on involvement and interaction with the children and their families, and she is learning about the court system proceedings. She says her previous knowledge of working with children helped a lot, but it was the comprehensive training that she underwent to become a GAL that really prepared her to conduct her own investigations and prepare for court. *"It was a fabulous training with built-in feedback,"* she said. *"I was impressed that GALs conduct the training themselves, based on their experiences. Each module logically built upon the previous one, with important discussions and shared insights."*

The comprehensive nature of the training also affirmed for her that individuals considering becoming a GAL should not hesitate. *"I hope that others in the community who are considering becoming a GAL realize that they do not require a college degree in social work to advocate for and help children, all they need is passion and compassion to help the most vulnerable and innocent members of our society, and a willingness to give back."*

She says she had "jitters" after she first got sworn in as a GAL, but she also remembers the reassuring words of an experienced GAL who said to her that as long as a GAL strives to do what is in the best interest of the child, there are no mistakes; and there is always the support and guidance of the GAL supervisors.

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Along her journey in child and family advocacy, Marjorie has been impressed and humbled by the community that she has encountered – from the giving, selfless foster parents, the tireless social workers, the compassionate attorney advocates and the supportive GAL staff, to the inspirational judges. She says, *“they all could be doing something else, but they chose to make a difference in the lives of children.”*

As the conversation with Marjorie draws to a close, she makes a plea that we should all encourage friends and family members to volunteer a few hours a month for a child. *“Everybody can do something to help a child,” she said. “A gift of time to the child is a gift to yourself. By changing the world one child, one family, at a time, you will always get more back than you give.”*

Good advice from someone who knows!

- By Onita Dodds (GAL since 2013)

For more information about SafeChild please visit www.safechildnc.org

“We rise by lifting others”

Robert Ingersoll

- A** Always have as your goal a safe and permanent home for each child
- D** Dig for details and facts in conducting your investigation
- V** Value and respect all legal parties and participants
- O** Observe or visit each child monthly
- C** Consult with GAL staff to overcome obstacles to achieve permanency
- A** Act with Urgency
- T** Tell the judge at each hearing the needs and wishes of the child
- E** Ensure that the court reports promote and protect the best interest of each child.

Announcements

Wishing Margaret Hertzler The Best!



As you may know, on May 31, 2016 Margie Hertzler left her position as a GAL Supervisor with the Wake County Guardian ad Litem Program to pursue a career in law. Margie was a valuable member of our advocacy team. Her daily presence will be greatly missed!

Margie was sworn-in as a Volunteer Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Child Advocate in August 2007. A year and a half later, she joined the program as a Guardian ad Litem Supervisor. Margie's dedication and commitment to children in need as well as her ability to provide unwavering support and guidance to our volunteers were instrumental in our program's success. We thank Margie Hertzler for her years of service to our program and ask that you join us in wishing her the very best.

Welcoming Natalie Gamble, Guardian ad Litem Supervisor



We welcome Natalie Gamble to the Wake County Guardian ad Litem Program. Natalie joined the program on May 25. Natalie grew up in Fort Gratiot, Michigan, which is 45 minutes northeast of Detroit on the Canadian Border. She received her Master of Arts in Counseling from Central Michigan University in May 2000. Natalie is a Licensed Professional Counselor. She and her husband moved to North Carolina to escape the cold weather 11 years ago. She started working at Wake County Human Services in the Child Welfare Division as a Human Services Senior Practitioner Foster Care Social Worker in July 2005. She became a Child and Family Team Facilitator for Wake County Human Services in June 2007.

Over the past 10 years Natalie's had the opportunity to interact with Guardian Ad Litem Volunteers in Child and Family Team Meetings making decisions and advocating for the best interests of the children they serve. Natalie is excited for the opportunity to support our volunteer child advocates. In her free time she enjoys playing softball, sewing, reading and traveling. We welcome Natalie to the Guardian ad Litem family.

"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away."

Pablo Picasso

College Funding

North Carolina has two educational support programs for foster youth. The **North Carolina Educational and Training Voucher (ETV) Program** is a federally-funded, state-administered program which can provide youth who are or were in foster care with up to \$5,000 a year for qualified school-related expenses. Funding is limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis to eligible students.

NC Reach is available to eligible youth **attending a public NC Community College or University**.

DUAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

NC Reach is available to eligible youth **attending a public NC Community College or University**.

DUAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

North Carolina ETV	NC Reach
In foster care on or after your 17th birthday, OR <u>Adopted</u> from foster care with the adoption finalized <u>after your 16th birthday</u> OR <u>Kinship guardianship after age 16</u> . You must be a U.S. citizen. Your personal assets (bank account, car, home, etc.) cannot be over	<u>Adopted</u> from North Carolina Foster Care with adoption finalized <u>after your 12th birthday</u> OR <u>Aged out of foster care</u> You must be a resident of NC for in state tuition purposes.
If you were <u>funded before your 21st birthday</u> and are in good standing and progressing towards earning a credential, you remain <u>eligible</u> for continued funding <u>until your 23rd birthday</u> .	If you are in good standing and progressing towards earning a credential, you remain <u>eligible</u> for continued funding <u>until your 26th birthday. However, you can only receive this funding for a maximum of eight semesters.</u>
ETV: You must attend an accredited college, university, technical or vocational school.	NC Reach: <u>You must attend a North Carolina public college or university</u> .

2015 Legislative Changes Impacting Older Youth In Care

Youth ages 16 or 17 who are placed in the legal custody of the county department of social services with the court's consent can purchase auto insurance. The youth is responsible for paying the premium and for any damages if they are in a car accident where they are at fault. The county department of social services may approve the use of LINKS funds to cover auto insurance. The North Carolina law now also makes it easier for youth in care to learn how to drive and obtain a driver's license. To protect foster parents from financial exposure, the legislative changes also makes it possible for the foster parents to purchase optional liability insurance policy to protect their assets against litigation in the event a child in their care is hurt.

North Carolina General Assembly also extended foster care to 21 years of age starting January 1, 2017. Child welfare agencies will be able to continue to provide benefits to an individual who has attained 18 years of age and has chosen to continue receiving foster care services until age 21. However, the youth will be eligible if one or more of the following are true:

- the youth is completing secondary education or program leading to an equivalent credential;
- the youth is participating in a program or activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to employment;
- the youth is employed for at least 80 hours per month; or is incapable of completing the educational or employment requirement of this subsection due to a medical condition or disability.

Foster Care to 21 vs. CARS (Contractual Agreements for Residential Services):

CARS allows for young people to remain in a residential agreement with the county department of social services until age 21. However, there some key differences between CARS and Foster Care to 21. Offering CARS to youth in care is optional where Foster Care to 21 are codified in law and is an administrative rule. Under Foster Care to 21, all youth are entitled to continued placement. Youth who sign CARS must reside in a licensed child care facility such as a foster home or a group home. They are required to attend school or participate in some type of vocational training that will lead to viable employment. Some department of social services continue to allow the youths to participate in CARS while living in college dormitory settings. In these cases, the licensed facility maintains a bed for the young person and actively provides support and care while the youth is in school. However, under the new law, young people placed through Foster Care to 21 may live in a CARS-like setting, but they may also reside outside a foster care facility in a college or university dormitory or other semi-supervised housing arrangement approved by the director of the child welfare agency. Foster Care to 21 is effective on January 1, 2017.



As a Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Advocate, you have access to confidential information about children and people involved in those children's lives. Please keep in mind that as a GAL advocate, you may not release this information except to the child, GAL Program staff, the social worker, the court, and others as instructed by law or local court rules. There are strict guidelines about who can have access to confidential information. By law, GAL volunteers must keep all information regarding the case confidential and make no disclosure, except by court orders or unless provided by law.

When in doubt, discuss any confidentiality concerns with your Guardian ad Litem Program Supervisor.

Recommended Readings

Three More Words

By: Ashley Rhodes-Courter

A Deep Dark Secret

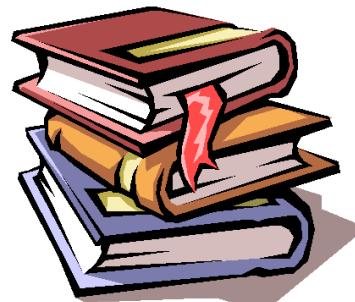
By: Kimberla Lawson Roby

As I Lay Me Down to Sleep

By: Eileen Munro

God Must Be Sleeping

By: Gregg Tyler Milligan



Up-Coming Events

Wednesday, June 1, 2016—Volunteer Child Advocate Swearing-In Ceremony. The Swearing-In Ceremony will be held at the Wake County Courthouse in courtroom 4C.

Friday, July 8, 2016 from 10:00AM to 12:00PM - Wake County Guardian ad Litem In-Service Training: Please join us for this in-service training designed to highlight legal issues pertaining to Guardian ad Litem advocacy, as seen by our attorney advocates in court. Topics will include permanency planning hearings, TPRs, GAL testimony, and more. We will also have an extended question and answer session so that we make sure your questions get answered. This training will be held at the John H. Baker Public Safety Center-1st Floor Conference room C-170.

Friday, August 19, 2016 from 10:00AM to 12:00PM - Wake County Guardian ad Litem In-Service Training: Effects of Domestic Violence on Children and the Light at the End of the Tunnel: Domestic Violence and its Impact on Children. Presenter: Stephanie Satkowiak. This training will be held at the John H. Baker Public Safety Center-1st Floor Conference room C-170.



Special thanks to the Wake County Friends of Guardian ad Litem Association for their ongoing support of children in need. For more information regarding the Friends of Wake County Guardian ad Litem Association please visit their website.

www.friendsofwakegal.org

Happy Birthday to Our Volunteer Child Advocates!

Adelphos	Charlyn	Michelle	Jennifer	Helen
Beverly	Deborah	Lawrence	Terence	Erica
Marjorie	Paula	Sarah	Elizabeth	Kathryn
Shinita	Charlene	Michael	Kimberly	Emily
Jocylene	Yolanda	Cheryl	Eliane	Bruce
Linda	Mary	Kelly	Cheryl	Dawn
Tia	Ashok	Katyna	Melissa	Susan
Marcia	Casey	Michael		

