

GUARDIAN AD LITEM FOCUS



Guardian ad Litem, Mecklenburg County Office Bldg
700 E 4th Street, Charlotte, NC 29202

Greetings GAL staff and Volunteers! Please welcome our new volunteers who were sworn in on 10/22/09 by the Honorable Judge Louis Trosch.

**Daphne Barnwell
Lyvonda Bess
Monica Cole
Pamela McCarter
Myra Jones
Courtney Burbank
Lucky Daniels
Stephanie O'Neill
Erica Romain
Diana Davis
Brett Barber
Jovea Herbin
George Lynch
Claire Hudson
Michelle Robinson
Jeanne White**

**Congrats!
we look forward to
working with each of
you!**



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We're on the web! Visit us at www.galcharlotte.com

Join us for an important Workshop to learn about opportunities for funding from Gang of One through an RFP Process.

Albemarle Road Recreation Center

5027 North Idlewild Road

November 12, 2009

12 Noon - 1:30 pm

Bring your own lunch!



*Find out about Gang of One programs and the Gang Prevention Coalition

* To Learn More: Call Gang of One at 704.432.4264/GANG or gangofone@cmpd.org

Volunteers, please take a moment to fill out a survey being conducted by researchers at UNC-CH regarding child abuse and community standards by accessing this link.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=14vAuC3RO_2b6EMxSYf6fO5Q_3d_3d>

National Adoption Day

Saturday, November 21

9:00am - 11:30am

Mecklenburg County Courthouse main lobby

Come celebrate all the adoptions of children who have been adopted since May 2009. Several children will have their adoptions finalized on Nov 21st. Check with your Program Supervisor regarding the children to whom you are assigned who are close to adoption.



SHARE THE GAL EXPERIENCE WITH YOUR FRIENDS

If you love volunteering with Guardian ad Litem, be sure to tell your friends. One option you may want to consider is purchasing GAL holiday cards from National Court Appointed Special Advocates at www.co-store.com/nationalcasa. These cards display a special GAL message or photo telling your friends and family just how important your Volunteer work is with the Guardian ad Litem Program!

Volunteer Highlight

Liz Payerle has been a volunteer since March 2006. She has represented about fifteen children, all at one time for at least a year. That is an awesome task which requires dedication, passion, and commitment to the children. Her court reports are always submitted on time, even when she has to write at least 2-3 reports in a week. Most people would think she would get burned out, but not Liz. People who know Liz, know that she is a team player who is dedicated. One therapist described her as a passionate advocate who does her job well.

Her passion and dedication is evident when she interviews relatives for placement. Sometimes this means conducting out of state calls, answering calls in the middle of the night from relatives because the child is AWOL, and reaching out to teen's boyfriends to ensure that the child is being treated appropriately. These are just a small number of things that Liz will do for the children on her caseload. If she needs to visit the children weekly, or even twice a week then Liz is the person for the job.

Liz Payerle lights up when she speaks about this program. She is truly an asset to Guardian ad Litem in that she not only handles cases, but she also helps out the office with recruitment. This includes tasks such as: interviewing, speaking at trainings, and promoting this program that she truly loves.

Liz Payerle, we appreciate your love and your passion for the children. This passion is contagious and often ignites others passion when it dwindles from time to time. Again, thank you for being a volunteer and for everything you do for Guardian ad Litem!

Seeking AmeriCorps VISTAs...

The Mecklenburg Guardian ad Litem Advocacy Foundation AmeriCorps VISTA Project in Charlotte, North Carolina is seeking individuals who would like to provide a year of service making a difference in the lives of children living in poverty.

The Mission: to raise community awareness by educating the public about abused and neglected children's issues, poverty issues, and the benefits of the Guardian ad Litem program; to recruit volunteers for the Guardian ad Litem (G.A.L.) program; and to support and promote the work of Guardians as they advocate for children. This project will have several components including working with city departments, community leaders, State Program Supervisors and GAL volunteers to improve retention of volunteers, increase program fundraising, enhance community awareness, develop a technologically sophisticated work group, and coordinate activities between state and foundation staff.

Three selected candidates will work as a team within the Foundation to help GAL volunteers meet standards of achievement, remain affiliated with the program for long-term progress, and serve client populations with increasing success.

Requirements: Bachelors Degree and enthusiastic interest in children and community improvement. If interested in information about how to apply, please email Diana Bagwell at guardian@meckguardian.org. Thank you!



A Note from Our Attorney, Laurie Meilleur

Concurrent Goal Recommendations

This is now my second article since joining GAL as an attorney advocate and I appreciated all the feedback in terms of getting to know Charlotte and local activities. I was a little (or “very”) skeptical of moving to Charlotte, but I have to say that I am unexpectedly happy to be living in the Queen City. In terms of the job, it has had moments of extreme joy and pain as I am sure most of you have or will soon experience for yourselves. I am proud to be part of this organization and to get to work with dedicated volunteers who take the time to make sure these kids aren’t just file numbers.

One of the things I have noticed in working with volunteers (and I would like to give a big “hello” to my fellow July classmates), is that there is hesitancy in recommending a goal other than reunification in the first six months of a case despite some pretty significant history and glitches on the part of the parent(s). No one wants to rip a family apart. I too, feel some grief when I go to TPR hearings and the parents are trying to fight to maintain their parental rights. However, your job as the Guardian ad Litem is not to play nice and worry about hurt feelings. For instance, if there is extensive history with the family and the parents are slow to comply with their case plans, or do not take visitation seriously, I would encourage you to take to your Program Supervisor or even the Attorney Advocate about recommending an additional goal aside from reunification if you feel that it is in the best interest of the child/children. This is not a blanket suggestion for every case. It will depend on the circumstances and situation of your child/children.

There are strategic advantages for being aggressive with concurrent goals in the early part of the case. For instance, it can scare a parent into compliance for fear of losing their child/children and expedite reunification. I’ve been in court where a parent’s attorney thanked the GAL for recommending a concurrent goal of TPR/Adoption because she wanted to impress what was at risk upon her client. Additionally, if we are more aggressive in the early part of the case, it can make it easier for a goal change as the case goes on because the attorney advocate can highlight how we have been asking for a goal change since the previous date and reiterate those reasons supporting the goal change. Remember, the next hearing after the first review hearing is usually six months. This is compared to at least four hearings in the first six months of the case (the nonsecure, the adjudication, the disposition and the first review).

You are the child’s advocate. Again, I would only consider concurrent goals in the early stages of a case *if* there are factors like: (1) a significant CPS history/YFS involvement, (2) a delay in seeking substance abuse treatment, (3) delay in addressing case plan, (4) inconsistent visitation and (5) what you think would be the in the child’s best interest. As always, call your program supervisor if you have any questions! Thank you for everything that you do.