

Guardian ad Litem Newsletter

District 7

Spring

*Spring is finally here and we all know that April showers bring
May flowers!*

News About Us

Happy Birthday To You!

We have several guardians who will be celebrating birthdays this spring along with belated birthday wishes for those who celebrated last month!

March Birthdays

| | | | |
|-------------------|------|-----------------|-----|
| George Abrams | 3/6 | Gail Jones | 3/2 |
| Pamela Cannady | 3/8 | Tonya Layton | 3/3 |
| Laurie Cooper | 3/15 | Geneva Reynolds | 3/1 |
| Jacqueline Hansen | 3/7 | Antonia Rover | 3/2 |
| Chadwick Isbell | 3/17 | | |

April Birthdays

| | | | |
|-----------------|------|------------------|------|
| Tonya Barnes | 4/30 | Eileen Stevenson | 4/20 |
| Betty Boykins | 4/4 | Betty Wilkins | 4/26 |
| Margaret Cropps | 4/15 | | |
| Gloria Downing | 4/3 | | |
| Lee Riggins | 4/24 | | |

May Birthdays

| | | | |
|------------------|------|--------------|------|
| Regina Benbow | 5/19 | Mary Horne | 5/4 |
| Janice Denson | 5/18 | Allyson Moye | 5/6 |
| Mary Lou Flowers | 5/12 | Judy Smith | 5/13 |
| Bobi Gregory | 5/4 | | |
| Vonicer Hinnant | 5/6 | | |

Sadly, we must share with you that Barbara Kaye Etheridge passed away January 20, 2009, after a courageous battle with cancer. She was a compassionate person who loved children and was a volunteer for the Guardian ad Litem for several years.

New Monthly Update Forms

You should have received this week a letter and from via e-mail. If you did not, that means we do not have your current e-mail address on the group mailing list.

Please call the office, 252-291-1526 to let me know how to correct that.

We know that our best communications with you are face to face or at least over the telephone. However, as our program grows, 142 GAL's and 275 children, we struggle to keep fully abreast of all that is happening with the children and with our GAL family.

I have lived long enough to learn that communication is everything in almost every area of our lives and it is vitally important to a dynamic, effective team effort for kids. It is not "busy work."

What you have learned about the children you work with can best be crafted into workable strategy and persuasive reporting as the whole legal team works together.

This will help us to help your children. Please take the few minutes to supply whatever relevant information you have for your families of children each month.

Thank you in advance for helping us in this way. I hope you will find that it clarifies issues for you, aids you in preparing for court report writing and helps you move cases along more effectively.

As many of us know the economy is not in the best shape right now and it has had a direct impact on many of our families. Numerous agencies are working hard to help in these desperate times.

For example, Wilson County DSS has developed and implemented M.O.R.E. classes through a Work First Demonstration Grant and classes are taught by DSS staff. The classes cover basic workplace skills, including how to complete an application and paperwork associated with being newly hired. Recent statistics point to a 73% completion rate of the classes and an employment rate of 77% of these completing the program. M.O.R.E. job readiness classes are held Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m.-noon at DSS. Contact them for more information.

It is unacceptable for one child in the United States to be homeless for even one day.

The year 2008 will long be remembered by Americans as a time when grossly overpaid bankers, captains of industry, and carmakers hobbled to Washington, hats in hand, begging for bailouts and infusions of billions of dollars. Ignored by members of Congress and the media were scores of children – many still infants and toddlers – who were homeless in the midst of this economic turmoil. Without a voice, more than 1.5 million of our nation's children go to sleep without a home each year. Homeless, these children also endure a lack of safety, comfort, privacy, reassuring routines, adequate health care, uninterrupted schooling, sustaining relationships, and a sense of community. These factors combine to create a life-altering experience that inflicts profound and lasting scars.

The National Center on Family Homelessness (NCFH) has created *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness* to provide a comprehensive snapshot of child homelessness in America today. Updating a study NCFH released in 1999, this report shows that the problem of child homelessness is worsening. This report shows that the majority of homeless children reside in very few states. During 2005-2006, 75% of America's identified homeless children lived in 11 states. Studies show that homeless children are twice as likely as other children to repeat a grade in school, to be expelled from school, or to drop out of high school-and their estimated graduation rate is below 25%.

Ending child homelessness is within our reach, despite current economic circumstances. This report shows that several states have created the infrastructure and programs needed to turn the tide. At least six states have created extensive plans to combat child homelessness.

Did you know that-

**North Carolina ranks 32nd among the 50 states in high rates of child homelessness & 39th in overall wellbeing of children with 1 being the best and 50 being the worst?
You may want to go to the NCFH website.**

You may find the following bit of information about Mental Health Services helpful:

One of the goals of the Division's *State Strategic Plan: 2007-2010* is to provide helpful and easy-to-understand information about the service system. The *Consumer Handbook*, was developed to help guide and assist individuals seeking services and supports from the public mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse service system. It includes information about how to access services, person-centered planning, crisis services, rights and responsibilities of consumers, and helpful contacts and resources.

This handbook is available via the Division website at:

<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas/announce/2008/consumerhandbook-0608.pdf>.

Both a Spanish language translation and a large print version of this handbook will be forthcoming in the near future.

All Local Management Entities (LMEs) and providers are required to make printed versions of the *Consumer Handbook* available to consumers, family members and the general public.

Shannon Boone, our current intern who has been a GAL for two years now, is working on a wonderful project for you. Our resource manual for District 7 was several years old and badly needed updating. She is working to make the calls and interviews to put together a new resource manual for us. Thank you Shannon!!

Here are a few of the resources she has identified:

My Sister's House

Office Phone: (252) 462-0366

Toll Free: 1-888-465-9507

24-Hour Emergency Crisis Line: (252) 459-3094

Website: www.mysistershousenc.org

My Sister's House provides the following services for survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault: Crisis Response 24 hours a day; help with medical, legal, and investigative procedures; court preparation and accompaniment; school presentations; community education; temporary shelter; individual and group support sessions; referral to helping agencies, volunteer training and support; assistance with housing, education, and employment.

Down East Partnership for Children

Office Phone: (252) 985-4300

Website: www.depc.org

The Down East Partnership for Children is a non-profit organization that serves children in the Edgecombe and Nash county areas. DEPC directly provides funds to more than 30 local programs in the areas of Child Care, Family Resources, Information/Education, and Community Collaboration. Their website provides a wealth of information regarding their programs and services that many of you may find very helpful.

Unfortunately, not everyone was able to attend our Outback Luncheon. We missed all of you that were unable to sign up for that. You do so much all during the year and it is right that you should be recognized, especially in April, the National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Here is the Governor's Proclamation about Guardian ad Litem Child Advocate Month in North Carolina.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM CHILD ADVOCATE MONTH

APRIL 2009

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program, celebrating more than 25 years of child advocacy, has established a distinguished record of public service through its work to enhance the quality of life for children; and

WHEREAS, all 100 counties in North Carolina have a Guardian ad Litem program; and

WHEREAS, Guardian ad Litem volunteers come from a variety of professional, educational and ethnic backgrounds, acting as advocates for abused and neglected children in the complicated and often unfamiliar court and child welfare systems; and

WHEREAS, the court appoints Guardian ad Litem advocates to serve as officers of the court, helping to improve the quality of information presented to the court by acting as the court's eyes and ears in the child's life; and

WHEREAS, April 2009 has been proclaimed Child Abuse Prevention Month, an observance that reflects the purpose of Guardian ad Litem programs, which is to protect and defend children from harm and ensure that abused and neglected children are provided with the court-ordered services they need; and

WHEREAS, April is recognized annually in the United States of America as a time to honor the contributions of volunteers through National Volunteer Month, and Guardian ad Litem child advocates donated more than 800,000 hours of service to the children of North Carolina in 2008.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE, Governor of the State of North Carolina, do hereby proclaim April 2009, as "**GUARDIAN AD LITEM CHILD ADVOCATE MONTH**" in North Carolina, and urge all North Carolinians to join in this observance.

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in Raleigh this twenty-third day of March in the year of our Lord two thousand and nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty third.

New Letter from Jane Regarding Travel Reimbursements

Dear Guardian ad Litem Volunteers,

Of late I have been writing too often to you regarding cuts in the budget of the Administrative Office of the Courts. And, I realize that for some of you, these cuts have had an impact upon your service as a GAL volunteer. Unfortunately this is another such letter. We just received a directive from Judge John Smith, the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts, regarding a freeze on all expenditures. The Governor and the Office of State Budget have directed state agencies and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to sharply curtail their budgets for the remainder of the fiscal year, and the allotment of funds received by AOC has been dramatically reduced.

The freeze on travel, the purchase of supplies, training and other activities is effective immediately. The goal is to save funds in order to make payroll and to pay for utilities. I asked Judge Smith whether we could continue to reimburse our GAL volunteers at the reduced rate of .14 cents per mile, since the traveling that you do is so essential in the representation of your child clients. Unfortunately, at this time we can no longer afford to pay even that reduced amount – the money simply is not in the budget. Judge Smith knows our program well; in fact he served on an early Guardian ad Litem Advisory Board, but he explained to me that the budget did not permit any reimbursement for your travel. It clearly pained him to say that, and he expressed the hope that we would not lose volunteers based on this new budget cut. I truly hope that it will be possible for you to continue to serve as a GAL volunteer. You have always been the strength of our program, and the children need your strong advocacy

I know that other agencies are experiencing similar budget cuts – travel is being curtailed, trainings and conferences are cancelled, and some agencies are even running out of paper supplies. We are in the midst of such a severe economic crisis – we can only hope that recovery is on the way and that we will soon be able to operate a program that will be able to honor your service and not create financial hardships for you.

We will still be having our statewide training conference to celebrate *Making Children our Priority for Twenty-five Years!* Since the conference is totally supported by federal funds, we will be able to make the travel reimbursements as previously stated in the conference registration materials. I hope that many of you will be able to attend the conference, meanwhile I thank you all for your dedicated service as a Guardian ad Litem volunteer.

With best wishes,
Jane

UPCOMING EVENTS/REMINDERS

GAL TRAINING IN MAY

There will be a GAL training for new volunteers to be held in Tarboro, NC. This training will be held on May 12, 13, 14 and May 19, 20, 21. Please encourage your family, friends, or co-workers to become a part of the GAL family and begin making a difference in a child's life. For more information, contact any of the supervisors, or call Artelia Turner at 977-2803. As usual our training could not happen without the wonderful work of Artelia. She is the glue that puts this all together and makes it happen!

SUMMER POLICE ATHLETIC PROGRAM FOR KIDS

The Wilson Police Department has secured a grant to provide summer athletic camps to help keep kids off the street. If you have kids in your caseload who would benefit from this free or nearly free (depends on the amount of the grant and number of kids) program you can call WPD or Detective Joe Lucas at (252) 205-1798. You can also purchase 50/50 raffle tickets for \$1 each. If you win, you get half of the proceeds, the kids get the other. Call Det. Lucas or the GAL office if you want some tickets.

Guardian ad Litem Family Picnic

Save the Date-September 12, 2009

We have secured a spot at the Sunset Park in Rocky Mount across the street from City Lake on September 12 for a family get-together. We have long talked about this. We want to meet the great families that have the grace to share you with us! Please save the date. More later on this.

Also in the Fall-Monthly In-Service Conversations

We are hoping to begin regular in-service learning and sharing opportunities with different representatives from our various counties. We will shoot for July in Wilson to start. After that we will rotate from county to county. I would love for us to meet for a meal where possible. If you know

of a restaurant that might accommodate groups occasionally of varying sizes, please send me an e-mail or give me a call. We are trying to locate places. If you have a preference about times of day or days of the week, we want to hear that too. We have so much to learn from each other as GAL's and from others working in various capacities in interrelated agencies.

Do you know of someone you would love to have come talk to us? Please give us feedback on this, won't you?? You can add it on at the end of your monthly update.



We have a special treat for you all in this edition of our newsletter. I think we all have had Sue's delicious taco dip at some time or another and we always ask for the recipe. Well here it is:

7 Layer Taco Dip

Ingredients:

- 1 (1 ounce) package taco seasoning mix
- 1 (16 ounce) can refried beans
- 1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1 (16 ounce) container sour cream
- 1 (16 ounce) jar salsa
- 1 large tomato, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 bunch chopped green onions
- 1 small head iceberg lettuce, shredded
- 1 (6 ounce) can sliced black olives, drained
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

Directions:

In a medium bowl, blend the taco seasoning mix and refried beans. Spread the mixture onto a large serving platter.

Mix the sour cream and cream cheese in a medium bowl.

Spread over the refried beans.

Top the layers with salsa. Place a layer of tomato, green bell pepper, green onions, and lettuce over the salsa, and top with Cheddar cheese. Garnish with black olives.