



# GAL News of District 9

January /February 2010

## District Administrator's 2 Cents

The groundhog prognosticator brought unwelcome news of a late arrival for spring but the winter weather hasn't prevented GAL from keeping up with placement changes and advocating for youth inside and outside the courtroom. I am extremely pleased that the number of children without GAL is smaller than any time in my 5 years as District Administrator. We are currently providing training to 16 individuals and they should be ready for service in April. In addition to increasing case coverage, we have to turn our

attention to decreasing the length of time our cases are open. Almost 1/3 of our youth have been in care for more than 2 years. The majority are only over by a few months but it deserves attention. It can be discouraging but we can't forget our successes of the past year - the 211 children served, the 68 adoptions, reunifications and guardian placements attained and the over 700 hearings that GAL participated in. I shared this at the wonderful Start the Year Out Right event and appreciate the positive response from

advocates. It was great to see everyone that could attend on that rainy night. Thanks to Mamie Jones for arranging a location, Judge Davis and Attorney Advocate Byron Dunning for their encouraging words and support, Brenda Grover for taking pictures and to Robin Darone and Wilidene Mellas for helping with planning, food and door prizes. I look forward to seeing the great things you accomplish this year on behalf of children and sharing them with you next

January.  
- Mary Jo

## District 9 Guardian ad Litem Program



### Welcome to our new Volunteers!

- Sandra Williams
- Mark Thomas
- Jeanne Jones

New GAL Training Session now in Progress



### NEW FACES

Pictured are (l. to r.) Sandra Williams, Jeanne Jones Judge Bridges, and Mark Thomas.

More photos inside

### Inside this issue:

You've Been Busy!	2
Satellite Office	2
Court Dates	3
Continuing Ed	3
Photo Gallery	4/5
2010 Handbook	6
Happy Birthday!	6

# You've Been Busy!

January 2010

County	GAL Advocates	Family Groups Served By Program	Children Served By Program	Children without Advocates	Hearings Scheduled	Hearings Completed	# of Children Without Permanence >2 years
Franklin	38	40	63	3	15	12	24
Warren	8	5	10	0	4	3	7
Vance	28	32	65	2	22	14	24
Granville	24	31	51	4	12	8	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	98	108	189	9	53	37	63

## Satellite Office News

Welcome to Sandra Williams, Jeanne Jones, and Mark Thomas who were sworn in by Judge Bridges in December. All 3 have made their first court appearances for their cases and are doing a wonderful job. Thank you to Mark Thomas for recruiting his wife to join GAL as well. The Start the Year Out Right event was a huge success. It was a time of food, fellowship and information about Mental Health from Dr. Drew Bridges. A big thank you to Robin Darone and the Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Association for assisting with the event. And a special thank you to Willadine Mellas for helping to provide refreshments. Samantha and I are currently doing a GAL training in Oxford on Monday nights from 6-8 at Central Children's Home. We have 10 people who are training to be GAL volunteers. This is one of the biggest classes we have had in a while and I am grateful to all who made it happen. If anyone is interested in "refresher" training, please feel free to join us. We would love to have you!

I recently had the opportunity to watch the movie "Precious". It is a movie that touches on several issues that we deal with as GALs including sexual abuse, the welfare system, and doing what is best for the children. There is some strong adult language but a very good movie. As always, thank you for all you do for the children!!

-Wynona Thomas, Program Supervisor

## LEGAL UPDATES



### Permanency Planning Hearings

There has been an NC Appellate court decision that is impacting court time. When there is a permanency planning hearing, there now must be evidence presented. The DSS and GAL reports are no longer sufficient on their own. So far, the way our district is handling this is to be sure there is testimony given for permanency planning hearings unless there is full consent by all parties.

It is prudent to expect that GAL should be ready to testify more than before for those incredibly important permanency planning hearings. If you like to read more about this decision follow this link:

<http://www.aoc.state.nc.us/www/public/coa/opinions/2010/pdf/091087-1.pdf>

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION UPDATES**

6-hours of continuing education/year is an expectation that staff try to accommodate while considering your busy schedules. We will continue to share opportunities through our newsletters, emails, website and our Facebook Group as they become available.

- \* Carol Derrenbacher and Dorothy Coleman were able to attend the Wake County Session **"DRUGS UNCOVERED: WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW!"**
- \* 35 of you were present to hear psychiatrist and storyteller Drew Bridges entertain and educate us on what it's like to engage a psychiatrist and how GAL can work with psychiatrists and other mental health professionals at the Start the Year Out Right event. (The address for the Storyteller's Book Store in Wake Forest is 100 E. Roosevelt Avenue.)
- \* On line options continue to be available to you through National CASA
- \* CASA E-Learning: Education and Youth in Out-of-Home Care and Aging Out: Supporting Youth Transitions into Adulthood. 27 Advocates have taken advantage of this opportunity to date. Congratulations!
- \* Training for new GAL is also available as a refresher course. Sometimes, the information in training has different relevance after you've worked a case. You are welcome to join us by calling the office for date, time and chapter. Right now, there are 2 classes underway. Monday evenings at Central Children's Home in Oxford at 6pm and Tuesdays at Franklin County Courthouse jury room at 4 pm. (Originally this class was scheduled for 6 but participants agreed the earlier hour is better given the weather and early darkness.) Veteran GAL always bring life to the training and help trainees get a clearer picture of what being a GAL in our district is like.

### **FROM YOUR RECRUITER**

Thank you for coming out on such a dreary evening to Start The Year Out Right. I was fortunate enough to see alot of you I hadn't seen in a while and to meet some new volunteers as well. I will be contacting you soon; just want to get through some of this bad weather. My email is 4cgalva@gmail.com or r.darone@yahoo.com.

We had a wonderful evening of food and fellowship. I want to say a special thank you to my sister Will, who helped me shop and prepare some of the food and to Lowe's Foods on 98 in Wake Forest where she works. They gave us a gift certificate towards the food. I also want to thank Mary Jo, Wynona and Samantha, without you guys we would be lost. Thank you again for all of your support.

-Robin

### **Upcoming Court Dates:**

**Franklin County: February 25**

**March 25**

**Vance County: February 3 & 17**

**March 3 & 17**

**Granville County: February 11**

**Warren County: February 23**

**March 11 & 23**

**\*\*\*\*\* Remember to have reports in to the office one week prior to court \*\*\*\*\***

# START THE YEAR OUT RIGHT EVENT



**Top (L) Photo** Robin Darone, Dr. Bridges, Lu Thompson, Bill Tatum  
**Top (R) Photo** our crowd  
**Middle Photo:** Dr. Drew Bridges, psychiatrist and storyteller  
**Bottom Photo:** (l) Judge Davis (r) Attorney Advocate Byron Dunning





(l) Group  
(r) Wynona  
and Vanita  
Henderson,  
Vance GAL



## RECOGNITIONS AND AWARDS



Carol Derrenbacher,  
Franklin Co. GAL  
receives  
10 year award



Helen Amis,  
Granville Co. GAL  
receives 5 year award

*Thanks to Brenda Grover for being our photographer*

### Years of Service Recognitions

#### 10 Years

Carol Derrenbacher

#### 5 Years

Janet Bailey

Helen Amis

Tolokun and Dawn Marie Omokunde

Rachel Ellington

Sue Hinman

Congratulations and thank you!



# 2010 Handbook

## Health:

1. Drink plenty of water.
2. Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a beggar.
3. Eat more foods that grow on trees and plants and eat less food that is manufactured in plants..
4. Live with the 3 E's -- Energy, Enthusiasm and Empathy
5. Make time to meditate.
6. Play more games
7. Read more books than you did in 2009 .
8. Sit in silence for at least 10 minutes each day
9. Sleep for 7 hours.
10. Take a 10-30 minute walk daily. And while you walk, smile.

## Personality:

11. Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
12. Don't have negative thoughts or things you cannot control. Instead invest your energy in the positive present moment.
13. Don't over do. Keep your limits.
14. Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.
15. Don't waste your precious energy on gossip.
16. Dream more while you are awake
17. Envy is a waste of time. You already have all you need..
18. Forget issues of the past. Don't remind your partner with His/her mistakes of the past. That will ruin your present happiness.
19. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone. Don't hate others.
20. Make peace with your past so it won't spoil the present.
21. No one is in charge of your happiness except you.
22. Realize that life is a school and you are here to learn. Problems are simply part of the curriculum that appear and fade away like algebra class but the lessons you learn will last a lifetime.
23. Smile and laugh more.
24. You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree...

## Society:

25. Call your family often.
26. Each day give something good to others.
27. Forgive everyone for everything..
- 28.. Spend time w/ people over the age of 70 & under the age of 6.
29. Try to make at least three people smile each day.
30. What other people think of you is none of your business.
31. Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends will. Stay in touch.

## Life:

32. Do the right thing!
33. Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful or joyful.
35. However good or bad a situation is, it will change...
36. No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.
37. The best is yet to come..
38. When you awake alive in the morning, give thanks.
39. Your Inner most is always happy. So, be happy.

## NEWS AND INFORMATION

### SSI Changes Rule to Benefit Disabled Youth Leaving Foster Care

The Social Security Administration has issued new rules that directly apply to disabled youth leaving foster care. Effective immediately, a disabled youth eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) may file an SSI application up to 90 days before federal foster care payments are expected to end. This is an exception to the general rule of accepting an SSI application in the month before the month of eligibility. This policy will aid disabled youth in foster care to make the transition to adult life by helping to ensure that they have income and health benefits in place. View the policy using the link below. <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/public/reference.nsf/8b709aba3e20a0dd852574da00547b45/4e6c5c380cf7ee5f852576a900606add!OpenDocument>

### CONTACTING SOCIAL WORKERS AFTER HOURS

Do you know how to reach DSS outside of office hours? DSS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year even when the office hours end. Is **YOUR** social worker available? No. DSS agencies utilize an on-call system and there is **A** social worker on call but it may not be **YOUR** social worker. You can access DSS by calling 911 if you live in the county of your case or the Sheriff's office in that county if you live outside the county of your case. The on-call social worker may or may not know your case so be prepared to provide some history and the urgency of contacting someone outside of office hours.

### Criminal Court and our Youth

There is a revised **Proposed** 2009 Formal Ethics Opinion under review which rules that a criminal defense lawyer or a prosecutor may not interview a child who is the prosecuting witness in a criminal case alleging physical or sexual abuse if the child is younger than the age of maturity for criminal responsibility as determined by the General Assembly (currently age 16) unless the lawyer has the consent or authorization of a non-accused parent or guardian or a court order; a lawyer may interview a child who is the age of maturity for criminal responsibility as determined by the General Assembly or older without such consent or authorization provided the lawyer complies with Rule 4.3, reasonably determines that the child is sufficiently mature to understand the lawyer's role and purpose, and avoids any conduct designed to coerce or intimidate the child. Additionally, the opinion reaffirms that if the child is represented by a GAL Attorney Advocate, that the attorney must give permission for the attorney (prosecutor or criminal defense) to interview the child.

## Happy Birthday!

**February:** 4 Dorothy Ortiz, 9 Lu Thompson, 9 Nancy Dilger, 11 Robin Darone, 15 Richard Daughtrey, 24 Tom Carlson,  
26 Jennifer Dalman

**March:** 1 Christina Radosta, 10 Joannie Hargrove, 13 Janet Harris, 21 Sharon Cotrell, 24 Carly Shearin, 30 Kathleen Shefchuanas



---

Mary Jo Van Horne, District  
Administrator  
PO Box 673, Louisburg, NC 27549  
919-497-3010  
Fax 919-497-5504  
mary.j.vanhorne@nccourts.org

Wynona Thomas, Program  
Supervisor  
PO Box 722, Henderson, NC 27536  
252-738-9024  
Fax 252-492-6666  
wynona.m.thomas@nccourts.org

Samantha Branch, Program Specialist  
P.O. Box 673  
Louisburg, NC 27549  
919-497-3010  
FAX 919-497-5504  
Samantha.r.branch@nccourts.org

## CELEBRATE FEBRUARY... THE HISTORY OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Black History Month is an annual observance in February, celebrating the past and present achievements of African Americans. In February 1926, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, proposed the establishment of "Negro History Week" to honor the history and contributions of African Americans to American life. Dr. Woodson, known as the "Father of Black History", chose the second week of February because it commemorates the birthdays of two men who greatly affected the African American community: Abraham Lincoln (February 12) and Frederick Douglass (February 14). Negro History Week became Black History Week in the early 1970's. In 1976, the week-long observance was expanded to a month in honor of the nation's bicentennial.

## WILL YOU HELP A CHILD?



Each year, thousands of children in North Carolina are thrust into the court system through no fault of their own. Some are victims of violence, psychological torment, or sexual abuse. Others have been either neglected or abandoned by their own parents. Most of them are frightened and confused. Often these children become re-victimized by an over-burdened child welfare system. A complex legal network of lawyers, social workers, and judges who frequently do not have the time to give thorough detailed attention to each child who comes before them.

The NC Guardian ad Litem Program was created in 1983 under the Administrative Office of the Courts to make sure that the abuse and neglect these children originally suffered was not compounded by the system created to serve them.

A Guardian ad Litem is a trained community advocate who is paired with an attorney advocate to ensure that the child's rights and best interests are before the courts. Ad Litem means "this litigation" or "for this case". The GAL is appointed to represent the child only for the duration of the court's involvement and does not serve as the child's legal guardian. The GAL serves as the child's voice in court. Duties include exploring all facts relevant to the case, making recommendations to the court and monitoring the case so that it will move through the court and Social Services systems without unnecessary delays. It is the sole task of GAL to focus on the best interest of the child. Call the Guardian ad Litem Office today. Share this information with your friends. There are children counting on you.