

# GAL NEWS



A child's advocate in court

4th District—Onslow/Jones/Duplin/Sampson

Fall 2010

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## **GAL State Administrator Announces Her Retirement**

Greetings! It is so difficult to write this message and to tell you that I plan to retire. I celebrated my 70th Birthday at the end of last month, and it was a little momentous for me. Suddenly becoming 70 didn't make me feel old or even older, but it did make me take stock of my life. At this time, I need and want to spend more time with my family, and for that reason I plan to retire December 1, 2010.

I know that we are in a challenging time, and I don't want you to think that I am abandoning you. I feel confident that the Guardian ad Litem Program will flourish with new leadership, because I know the depth of talent in the field and in the state office. And, I know the commitment that you all have to our program and the children we serve.

I have had many jobs, but serving as GAL Administrator has certainly been the most rewarding and enjoyable. . . . Being offered this position in February 2002 represented such a circle for me. . . . I have gained a strong respect for the talents and dedicated commitment of our volunteers, attorneys, and our staff in the state and district offices.

But, I will miss working with you, because I have enjoyed that experience so very much.

With my gratitude and very best wishes,

Jane



## **Let's Tee it Up for the Children!**



The Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Association is planning a golf tournament in which the main purposes will be to showcase our program as well as a recognition event for our more than 120 dedicated volunteers.

The format will be a "Superball", (also called "Captain's Choice") tournament to be held on November 5 at Rock Creek Country Club. There will be a "shotgun" start (simultaneous tee off times) at 12:00 with lunch provided. Flyers and entry forms will be published in the Daily News and posted at area golf courses. The entry fee will be \$75.00 per player and players may form their own teams.

We will be seeking donations from area merchants to help finance the event. Volunteers who may know area businesses who would be willing to help are encouraged to contact the GAL office. We will also need 6 to 10 volunteers to assist with various tasks in preparation for and staging the tournament. **And of course we need players!**

Please call Rusty Brown at the GAL office or Mac Moody at 910-340-8970 if you have questions or suggestions.

Dear GALs,

The past three months have flown by as I continue to work and learn in the 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. I think that I have met most of our volunteers at this point and all I can say is “Wow, what an amazing job you are doing in our courts and our communities.” In all four of our counties, Onslow, Jones, Duplin, and Sampson, our volunteers have continued to advocate for children when times are difficult and court sessions are long. Thank you all for your continued efforts.

There have been changes in our District recently. I would like to welcome Joanie Shostak to our Onslow office as the Military Child Project Coordinator. Joanie will be working with military families, volunteers, and forming a Best Practice Manual that will be put to use across the state. Also, in the Onslow office is Vickie Adamson. Vickie is completing her BSW internship with East Carolina, and will be with us “at least” through November. Last but not least, we welcome Tawanta McCrimmon to our Duplin County office as she completes her BSW internship with UNCW. Tawanta will also be with us “at least” through November.



I would like to commend volunteer Linda Mylan who recently completed GAL Training for Facilitators course. By completing this training Linda (and others) can help train new volunteers. Linda is already putting her training to work, as she assists Mac Moody and Andy Webb in training a class of 16 new volunteers in Onslow County. These volunteers will complete training and be sworn in by the end of October. The Training for Facilitators course is provided every few months, so if you would like to become a trainer, please contact our office so we can put you on the list for upcoming training.

Duplin County will be holding new volunteer training October 18 – 26 at the Duplin County Courthouse. These classes will be scheduled 9am to 4pm so that new volunteers can be sworn and ready for cases by November. As many of you know, our caseloads are rising in Duplin and Sampson Counties and we certainly encourage each of you to introduce a “prospective new volunteer” to our program.

Finally, I wanted to mention our upcoming GALVA Golf Tournament. This Tournament will be held Nov. 5 at Rock Creek Country Club at noon. Proceeds of this tournament will help in our continued recruitment and training of volunteers. The funds also provide assistance to children who may encounter needs not covered by other funds. The Tournament will also honor two individuals who are very special to our program, Jean Hawley, the first 4<sup>th</sup> District GAL Administrator (1986 – 2005) and Ernie Wright, GAL Attorney Advocate (1986 – present).

The Tournament will offer door prizes, food, and great prize money (first place: \$1,000). For more information and to get involved, please visit our website at [gal4kids.org](http://gal4kids.org) or contact our office.

Thank each of you for your continued child advocacy. As you are aware, the abuse and neglect continues in our communities, and with your support we can make a difference in a child’s life.

Rusty Brown, District Administrator

### **Intern – Vickie Adamson**

Vickie joined us in late August. She is closing in on her Bachelor of Social Work degree at East Carolina University. She will intern with us through November but intends to stay on as a volunteer while she is in the area. Her main area of concentration will be assisting Joan Shostak in Operation Military Child.



Vickie has been a resident of Onslow County for many years, and brings a wealth of experience and community involvement to our program. She is a good fit in her role, assisting with Operation Military Child, and will be sorely missed when her internship is completed. Vickie will be moving to Nebraska in early 2011 where she will pursue a Master of Social Work degree.

Vickie is the proud homemaker for Marine husband, Josh, and son, Ethan. “We are very family oriented, preferring the quiet life at home,” Vickie says.

Welcome, Vickie and family – we wish you well here and beyond.

**Calendar**

**October**

- 4 to 8 – Judges Conference No Court District Wide
- 13 – Court in Duplin Co.
- 14 – Court in Sampson Co.
- 15 – Court in Onslow Co.
- 27 – Court in Duplin Co.
- 28 – Court in Sampson Co.
- 29 – Court in Onslow Co.

**November**

- 1 – Court in Jones Co.
- 5. – GOLF Tournament
- 10 – Court in Duplin Co.
- 11 – Veteran’s Day Office Closed
- 15 to 19 – Weeklong Court in Onslow Co.
- 24 – Court in Duplin Co.
- 25 & 26 – Thanksgiving Office Closed



**December**

- 2 – Court in Onslow Co.
- 6 – Court in Jones Co.
- 8 – Court in Duplin Co.
- 9 – Court in Sampson Co.
- 13 to 17 – Weeklong Court Onslow Co.
- 22 – Court in Duplin Co.
- 23 – Court in Sampson Co.
- 24 & 27 – Christmas Break Office Closed

In a dark moment I ask,  
 "How can anyone bring a child into this world?" And the answer rings clear,  
 "Because there is no other world, and because the child has no other way into it."  
 ~Robert Brault

**Birthdays**

**October**

- 11 – Jennie Gray
- 12 – Marilyn Boyce
- 13 – Cherie Bedford
- 16 – Michelle Jackson
- 16 – Darrell Patterson
- 21 – Daryl Steinbraker
- 23 – Andrea Frazier



**November**

- 5 – Bridget Howell
- 10 – Carol Paes
- 11 – Anna Chandler
- 11 – Joel Churchwell
- 14 – Stephanie Patterson
- 19 – Barbara Anderson
- 26 – Sandra Price
- 27 Claudia Thompson
- 27 – Terry Colligan

**December**

- 3 – Tabitha Ernst
- 5 – Angela Hansel
- 10 – Fred Franklin
- 11 – Sheila Allen
- 11 – Demoris Johnson
- 15 – Alene Cobb



**Anniversaries**

**October**

- 1997 – Tabitha Ernst
- 2007 – Patricia Raynor Thad Toomer Anna Chandler
- 2008 – Mary Alexander Anna Jones Robin Kornegay Helen Flood Joe Flood Aishia Greene Jennifer Kroesch Lethia Lee
- 2009 – Donna Brewer Bridget Howell Teresa Laughlin Stephanie Patterson Delores Worrell



**November**

- 2005 – Carol McCullen
- 2006 – Linda Passingham
- 2007 – Annisha Maxwell
- 2009 – Claudia Thompson Mary White

**December**

None

In the United States today, there is a pervasive tendency to treat children as adults, and adults as children. The options of children are thus steadily expanded, while those of adults are progressively constricted. The result is unruly children and childish adults.  
 ~Thomas Szasz

## EACH ONE REACH ONE



Our coverage of cases remains fairly high, but this is because we have closed many of our cases that were awaiting adoption, or where older youth have aged out of services. This, coupled with fewer petitions being filed by several of our DSS agencies, has assisted in maintaining good case coverage. The exception to this is Sampson County where we have seen an increase in cases and we do not have enough volunteers to cover all of these new cases.

As always, our dedicated and awesome volunteers are our best recruitment resource. If you know of friends or family members that are looking for ways to serve their communities or that have a heart for children, please refer them to the Guardian ad Litem Program. Each volunteer that makes a referral is eligible to receive an Each One Reach One lapel pin and certificate from National CASA. As always, thank you for your volunteer service. Pictured to the right is **Claudia Thompson**, one of our volunteers from Duplin County receiving her EORO Award and pin.

Over the last two months we have attempted several new recruitment methods. We have had two 30 second commercials running on Time Warner Cable in Jacksonville, and on Camp Lejeune. So far we have received two phone calls as the result of these commercials. We have also purchased T-shirts with a recruitment logo on the back. If you would like to wear a T-shirt to help recruit, you can pick one up at the GAL Office. So far we have had one prospective volunteer respond after seeing one of our volunteers wearing their shirt at Target. We have also developed a Facebook page to get our message out there. You can access the Facebook page from our web site [www.gal4kids.org](http://www.gal4kids.org) or by searching for "Guardian ad Litem 4<sup>th</sup> District". Most volunteers report having heard or seen three or more recruitment pitches before taking any action, so the more we get the word out there using various means, the more successful we will be.



Currently we have 20 new volunteers in training in Onslow County using both the class and workbook methods. This is the most we have ever had in training at any one time. Mac Moody, our volunteer recruiter and trainer, was instrumental in recruiting the majority of these new volunteers. His letters to the editor have motivated volunteers into action. One of the volunteers currently in training was recruited by an active volunteer under the Each One Reach One program.

### Operation Military Child Client Coordinator

I joined the Guardian ad Litem Program at the beginning of August with the title of Military Child Client Coordinator. More simply put, my job entails heading up our newest project: Operation Military Child.

Operation Military Child is a two-year grant received from the Governor's Crime Commission. Specifically, it is aimed at improving our advocacy efforts to provide a more effective and efficient outcome for our military child clients. Included in this effort are the recruitment of more active duty military members and spouses to serve as volunteers and the development of Best Practice Guidelines to be utilized when working with military-related cases.

I am extremely proud to be joining Guardian ad Litem and working on Operation Military Child because this venture combines two things I'm passionate about: military children and families and advocacy work. As I meet more of our volunteers I am in awe of their compassion and responsibility when handling the cases they work on. Many are selfless individuals who I feel lucky to be working with.

I, myself, am a military spouse, so working with Base agencies is very familiar. Not to mention, I have frequently volunteered on Base working with military families and children. Also, I come from a criminal justice background which is useful for the type of work we do and cases we see.

I look forward to meeting more of our volunteers in the future, and I am here to help our volunteers in any way I can.

Joanie Shostak



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



**Thad Toomer** deserves special recognition for his dedicated efforts in advocating for more than fifteen children in the Sampson County Court system, though he is a resident of Duplin County. Most of the children have been placed a great distance away, yet he has faithfully attended to their cases, attended home visits, attended meetings at DSS, and attended court hearings (I know, Thad- mostly continuances). Maybe we should call him the “super attendant”. Thad still finds time to do other volunteer activities, as well, such as Habitat for Humanity. Thad is also involved as a Volunteer Training Facilitator for Duplin and Sampson Counties.

## Festival Latino de Duplin

Thanks to volunteer **Elva Rivera** and GAL intern **Tawanta McCrimmon** for representing the Guardian ad Litem Program at the Duplin County Latino Festival on Saturday, October 2nd. They did a great job bringing awareness of the GAL Program to a rapidly growing piece of the population in Duplin and Sampson Counties.

### Spotlight on Volunteer – Kristi Walls

Immediately after joining us in the spring of this year Kristi immediately accepted a challenging case involving 3 children, a substance abuse challenged mother, and an extended family with other substance abuse issues. One of the children is an infant who was alleged to be sexually abused. Another of the challenges is one of a placement with relatives that just barely meets minimum acceptable standards.

Kristi is accepting these challenges while courageously dealing with adversities of her own. Marine husband, Ben, has served tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Immediately after returning from his latest tour he was diagnosed with a serious late stage brain tumor for which he has undergone 4 surgeries and more than a year of radiation and chemotherapy. Thankfully, he is recovering well.

Kristi’s daughter, Alexandria, has just started first grade. Sixteen year old daughter, Taylor, has done so well in high school that she will graduate a year early.

Thank you for sharing your time, energy and talents with us, Kristi, Ben, Alexandria and Taylor! We wish you all continue success and good fortune.



### A Letter from Deana K. Fleming Associate Courts, Administrative Office of the Courts

Dear Advocates:

An opinion was issued by the Court of Appeals in which the termination of parental rights (TPR) order was reversed and remanded due to the fact that the Guardian ad Litem was not present at the TPR hearing. While Guardian ad Litem report was prepared and submitted at the TPR hearing as well as most of the hearings in the underlying juvenile case, the GAL assigned to the case was not present in court. The opinion is silent regarding the presence of GAL staff as “substitute” for the GAL in court.

Based on the opinion, a GAL’s presence at court hearings cannot be downplayed. Certainly much of your work is done investigating, attending meetings, preparing the court report, etc. outside of court; however, as Guardians ad Litem you are the child’s “representative” and should be in court if at all possible. Please pay particular attention to court hearings which are subject to appeal, specifically: termination of parental rights; review or permanency planning hearings when custody is changed (i.e. custody or guardianship is ordered); and the adjudication/disposition hearing.

Thank you for all that you do on behalf of the abused and neglected children in your community.  
Deana K. Fleming, Associate Counsel

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Changing Lives  
One Life At A Time

### ***GAL Volunteer Safety***

The GAL program is highly invested in keeping you - the GAL volunteers - safe. If you ever have a question or concern about the safety of any aspect of your work or if you feel apprehensive or fearful, you should immediately consult with GAL program staff. The safety tips below are mostly common sense and good advice whether you are doing GAL volunteer work or not.

- **Think ahead.** Know the situation and know where you're going in order to look confident.
- Meet a parent or another person in a **neutral place** initially, and if necessary, thereafter.
- **Be aware** of the immediate area.
- **Tell someone** where you'll be, how long you'll be there, and when you expect to return. If plans change, call and let that person know.
- Keep safe, but **be respectful** of the neighborhoods and homes you are entering.
- **Travel in pairs** if necessary.
- You may want to **avoid carrying a bag.**
- **Trust your instincts.** If you are really uncomfortable, take protective action—walk away.
- **Don't share personal information** about yourself or your family, especially your phone number(s) and address. Home addresses can easily be found on the Internet using a home phone number. All correspondence and communication should flow through the CASA/GAL program office.
- If you witness or see signs of illegal activity, **get out** of the situation as soon as you can.