



**Florida Guardian ad Litem Program's Report
on the Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation
August 10, 2017**



Florida Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program
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GuardianadLitem.org

THE FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM FOUNDATION WAS CREATED PURSUANT TO § 39.8298

Within the Justice Administrative Commission, the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office (GAL Program), which has oversight responsibilities for and provides technical assistance to all guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem programs located within Florida's 20 judicial circuits, was authorized to create a Direct Support Organization pursuant to § 39.8298, Florida Statutes.

Mission

The Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation's (the Foundation) mission is to provide additional resources for the GAL Program, its volunteers, and its affiliated circuit non-profit organizations in order to promote guardian ad litem representation for abused, neglected and abandoned children in Florida's dependency system.

Results

Advocacy and Generating Public Awareness of the Guardian ad Litem Program

In order to support the Guardian ad Litem Program, it is essential that the GAL Program is promoted in a manner that enables all Floridians the opportunity to understand the vital role that the GAL Program performs in our communities. With a reliance on attracting and retaining quality volunteers to advocate for dependent children it is imperative that the GAL Program is visible and promoted. The GAL Foundation has maintained and increased its public presence by supporting and participating in the Statewide Children's Week held each year in Tallahassee. The GAL Foundation is also very involved in the Children's Week Dinner which brings together more than 400 leading child welfare professionals.

The GAL Foundation also developed a public service announcement (PSA) that features Florida State University Head Baseball Coach Mike Martin and his wife Carol. Coach Martin is one of the most accomplished and revered college baseball coaches in the country. The Martins have graciously agreed to be the spokespersons for the GAL Foundation.



(L-R: Alan Abramowitz, Carol Martin, Mike Martin, Eric Clark)

Promoting Statewide GAL Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

Guardians ad Litem provide critical advocacy on behalf of children in the dependency system. For many abused children, a GAL volunteer is the only constant adult presence in their lives.

In addition to the 30 hours of required volunteer training that is conducted by the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program, the Foundation has developed regional training events for GAL volunteers. These trainings, sponsored by Sunshine Health gave GAL volunteers expanded knowledge on topics such as: Children's Healthcare and Eligibility, Information Regarding DCF Safety Methodology and the Hotline, A Judges' Perspective from the Bench, and A Mock Trial with GAL Attorneys. To date over four hundred GAL volunteers have attended these regional trainings. Two additional regional trainings are scheduled in the fall of 2017 and should attract over two hundred more GAL volunteers.

As a small measure of the gratitude that the Foundation has for the GAL volunteers, a recognition program has been instituted for volunteers with twenty-five years of service. This initial event recognized forty-one volunteers who had twenty-five years or more of service to the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program. Each award recipient received a GAL themed watch and was publicly recognized at a local GAL event. Through this initiative, the GAL Foundation not only hopes to recognize the tremendous contribution of our long-term volunteers but also increase retention of volunteers throughout the organization.

Increasing Size and Scope of GAL Foundation Board of Directors

Realizing the importance of a vibrant and diverse board of directors is an area of on-going focus for the GAL Foundation. The number of board members has increased in the past year as well as their geographic location. The board of directors has members located in Miami, West Palm Beach, Jacksonville, Gainesville, Orlando, Kissimmee, and Tallahassee. Candidates are currently being identified in Tampa and Pensacola.

Bringing Non-Profits Together

The GAL Foundation also serves as a resource for twenty local non-profit organizations (“non-profits”) that support the individual GAL Programs in the circuits. In the 2017 Legislative Session, the GAL Foundation worked to ensure issues important to the non-profits and GAL Program were represented in the Florida Legislature. Fourteen non-profits contributed to this initiative and began meeting to ensure their voices were represented during the legislative session.

Monthly conference calls are conducted to share information with the non-profits. Increased communication between the GAL Foundation and local non-profits has generated positive results and the GAL Foundation is viewed as a valuable resource for the local GAL Programs and the non-profits that support them.

A meeting of the Foundation and the twenty local non-profit organizations was held on May 3, 2017 in Orlando. Over sixty non-profit board members representing fourteen non-profits attended a half day event that focused on strategic planning. This will become an annual event and will focus on issues that are relevant to the success of all parties participating.



Providing Financial Support to Meet the Needs of Abused and Neglected Children

Supporting the needs of Florida's dependent children is a critical part of the Foundation's mission. Whether through grants, individual or corporate donations, or time, the Foundation has continually worked to provide support to children represented by the GAL Program.

The Foundation received and acknowledged donations from private individuals, corporations, foundations, and bequests. Many of the donations received were derived through social media and networking within the community. The Foundation actively writes proposals for grants from foundations located in Florida.

When a child-specific need was identified, the Foundation provided targeted support for unique and unfunded needs of children who are represented by GAL volunteers. The Foundation funded such things as medical needs and money for activities related to normalcy.

With funding from the Jim Moran Foundation, the Fostering Futures training will be offered to GAL volunteers in Duval and Nassau counties. The focus of this training is to improve outcomes for youth 14-21 years of age. The Fostering Futures Program is intended to train GAL volunteers to develop a professional relationship with older youth, investigate their needs, identify gaps, and facilitate needed services.

The Fostering Futures initiative is a "blended" or two -part curriculum that includes 1) an e-learning experience and 2) an in-person training. Together, these modules are designed to give volunteers a solid base of knowledge and skills to advocate on behalf of youth between the ages of 14 and 21 who may be required to emancipate from (or "age out of") the foster care system.

PLANS FOR THE NEXT THREE FISCAL YEARS

The Foundation's plans for the next three fiscal years focus on the mission of the Foundation as well as the GAL Program. The Foundation will continue to develop statewide partnerships with private and philanthropic supporters to enhance GAL training and improve advocacy across Florida. These partnerships within the community not only will lead to a better understanding of the GAL Program but also the needs of Florida's abused and neglected children. The Foundation will continue its partnership with Sunshine Health to provide Regional Volunteer Conferences through 2017. Additionally over the next three fiscal years, the Foundation has the following plans:

- The Foundation will assist the GAL Program with branding and public awareness of the GAL mission and recruitment of volunteers.
- The Foundation will strengthen the network of local Guardian ad Litem non-profits across the state, in support of a unified mission. Whether through shared conference calls, the Foundation website, emails, or meetings the Foundation will

communicate with local non-profits to share best practices concerning fundraising, training and volunteer retention.

- The Foundation will seek funding to provide Fostering Futures training in all twenty judicial circuits.
- The Foundation will continue to sponsor events that recognize the leadership and the success of GAL Program staff and volunteers.
- The Foundation will also support statewide GAL volunteer training events ensuring GAL volunteers have the latest and best information. The Foundation will serve as a resource to the volunteers on how and where to get the best information and required continuing education.

The Foundation will adhere to all applicable state and federal rules and regulations that govern IRS 501 (c) 3 non-profit organizations. The Foundation Code of Ethics and IRS Form 990 are attached to this report and will be available online at the Foundation website, www.FLGAL.org.

RECOMMENDATION

The Foundation continues to provide essential support to the GAL Program and serves the critical function of soliciting and receiving grants and resources from private and philanthropic organizations for the Program and the children it represents. In addition, the Foundation conducts the following activities which further the Program's mission:

- developing statewide partnerships;
- publicizing the Program's mission to represent the best interests of children;
- coordinating with and serving as a resource to the twenty non-profit organizations affiliated with the local GAL Programs;
- enhancing opportunities for recruitment and retention of volunteers; and
- offering supplemental training opportunities for volunteers.

Without the Foundation, the GAL Program would have fewer opportunities to educate, advocate, and support the needs of dependent children. In light of its growing success and continued commitment to GAL, the Program recommends the continuation of the Foundation as its Direct Support Organization.

Sincerely,



Alan F. Abramowitz
Executive Director
Florida Guardian ad Litem Program

Florida Statewide Guardian ad Litem Foundation

Code of Ethics

Adopted July 2014

I. INTRODUCTION (Purpose and Intent)

The Florida Statewide Guardian ad Litem Foundation (Foundation) is a Direct Support Organization authorized by §39.8298, Florida Statutes. The Foundation's mission is to provide additional resources for the Florida Guardian ad Litem Programs, its volunteers, and its affiliated circuit non-profit organizations in order to promote Guardian ad Litem representation for abused, neglected, and abandoned children in Florida's dependency system. Pursuant to §112.3251, the Foundation has adopted a code of ethics to guide its employees, board members and committee members in their conduct when acting on behalf of the Foundation.

II. STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. SOLICITATION OR ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS

- **Influence of Judgment.** No employee/member of the Foundation may solicit or accept anything of value, including a gift, loan, reward, promise of future employment, favor, or service, based upon any understanding that the member's / employee's official actions or judgment would be influenced thereby.
- **Personal Benefit.** No employee/member of the Foundation may **solicit** any gift from a lobbyist or Foundation vendor, where such gift is for the personal benefit of the employee/member or any other person.

B. DISCLOSURE OR USE OF CERTAIN INFORMATION

No current or former employee/member of the Foundation may disclose or use non-public information obtained because of their Foundation employment or position as a member for the personal gain or benefit of themselves or any other person or business entity.

C. DOING BUSINESS WITH ONE'S AGENCY

No employee/member of the Foundation who participates through decision, approval, disapproval, recommendation, preparation of any part of a purchase request, influences the content of any specification or procurement standard, renders advice, investigates, audits or acts in any other advisory capacity in the procurement of contractual services may become or be the employee of a person contracting with the Foundation.

D. UNAUTHORIZED COMPENSATION.

No Foundation employee/members or their spouse or minor child shall, at any time, accept any

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compensation, payment, or thing of value when such employee/member knows, or, with the exercise of reasonable care, should know, that it was given to influence a vote or other action in which the employee/member was expected to participate in his or her official capacity.

No employee / member of the Foundation shall use or attempt to use his or her Foundation position or any property or resource within his or her trust, or perform his or her duties to secure a special privilege, benefit, or exemption for himself, herself, or others

E. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

All Foundation employee/member are required to provide a signed Acknowledgement regarding provisions of the Foundation Code of Ethics.

F. RESTRICTIONS ON VOTING

No Foundation employee/member shall vote on any matter that the employee/member knows would inure to his or her special private gain or loss. Any employee/member who abstains from voting in an official capacity upon any measure that the employee/member knows would inure to his or her special private gain or loss, or who votes in an official capacity on a measure that he or she knows would inure to the special private gain or loss of any principal by whom the employee/member is retained or to the parent organization or subsidiary of a corporate principal by which the employee/member is retained other than an agency;¹ or which the employee/member knows would inure to the special private gain or loss of his or her relative or business associate, shall make every reasonable effort to disclose the nature of his or her interest as a public record in a memorandum filed with the person responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting, who shall incorporate the memorandum in the minutes. If it is not possible for the employee/member to file a memorandum before the vote, the memorandum must be filed with the person responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting no later than 15 days after the vote.

¹ "Agency" means any state, regional, county, local, or municipal government entity of this state, whether executive, judicial, or legislative; any department, division, bureau, commission, authority, or political subdivision of this state therein; or any public school, community college, or state university.

Form 990-N (e-Postcard) Summary
(THIS IS NOT A FILEABLE FORM - FOR REVIEW PURPOSES ONLY**)**

Tax period beginning 07/01/2015 and ending 06/30/2016

Organization's legal name

Employer ID number

FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM FOUNDATION INC

45-0501348

Other names used by organization (DBA)

Number and street (or P.O. box, if applicable)

Room/Suite

Telephone number

PO BOX 10688

8504104642

City or town, state or country and ZIP + 4

TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302

Web address, if applicable _____

Check if organization is not a 509(a)(3) supporting organization and its gross receipts meets limits for the tax year

Check if organization is terminating (going out of business)

Information regarding principal officer:

Name

BERT EARP

Street address

1713 MAHAN DR

City, state or country and ZIP + 4

TALLAHASSEE, FL 32308