



*North Carolina*

**GUARDIAN AD LITEM**  
A CHILD'S ADVOCATE IN COURT

June 2021

Edition

# GUARDIAN AD LITEM NEWSLETTER

District 8

Lenoir • Wayne • Greene



## Dear Volunteers and Supporters,

*It was wonderful seeing so many of you during April and our Drive Thru Outback Celebration. For those of you who we missed, please know how much we appreciate your support and your advocacy on behalf of the children we serve. I am so proud of each of you and your incredible commitment to the youth you represent.*

*During this pandemic, not one volunteer walked away or did not fulfill their oath to protect the best interests of the children we serve. In fact, over 26 new volunteers completed their training and joined our ranks as Guardians Ad Litem.*

*As summer heats up, so unfortunately does our case load. We appreciate all your hard work on behalf of our children. We continue to need your service whether that be virtually or in person. Please continue to have regular and consistent contact with the children you advocate for and the collaterals in their lives. If they are old enough, it is important that we also ascertain their wishes. Remember, advocating for the children's best interests and wishes are our duties to the court. If you see you have time to take on a case, let us know in the office or respond to the blasts as they go out. This will help us stay ahead of the ever-growing caseload.*

*Finally, I want to praise my staff and our attorney advocates. Throughout this pandemic Alicia, Cynthia, Sebastian, Darrell and George have worked hard to support your work and make sure the children are protected.*

*We have two interns this semester whom you will get to know later in this newsletter. Between our volunteers, interns, staff and attorneys, we have an incredible team doing amazing work on behalf of the children of our community. Thank you for being a voice for the children in our community.*

*With much love,*

*Colleen*

## Hello GAL Volunteers and Supporters,

*It's hard to believe that 2021 is almost half over, and even harder to believe that we have been dealing with this pandemic for 14 months now! I don't know about you, but when it all started last year, I thought it would be over in a relatively short period of time. Boy was I ever wrong!*

*While things are starting to look up, we still have to adhere to the guidelines and practice good judgement when it comes to being in contact with others, we all long for things to be "normal" again. After all this, I don't think we can be sure what "normal" will look like in the future. It may look very different.*

*But despite all that we have been through and the challenges we have faced over this past year, one thing has remained steadfast and true- you, our GAL volunteers! You have braved the storms and continued to serve the children of our district who need our help. You did not give up, give in, or shy away from the important task that you perform. I was so glad to learn that our program did not lose one single volunteer and actually added 26 volunteers to the team during this most challenging time! This is such a great accomplishment, and for that, you should be proud!*

*I hope you know how important you are to our court system. The children in our court who have been abused and neglected depend on you to be their voice. I appreciate all of the time and effort that you volunteer and put into these difficult cases. The cases involving our abused and neglected children are some of our most important cases that we deal with. The children depend on you, and the court needs your critical input, along with DSS, when making decisions that involve their placement.*

*So, thank you for hanging in there with us, being creative with ways to connect with the children and making yourself available to the court. I hope to see all of you again soon!*



**Judge Annette Turik**  
*District Court Judge*





## Our Mission

North Carolina Guardian ad Litem equips community volunteers to serve abused and neglected children by advocating for their best interests in court.



BE A  
 VOICE

FOR THE  
 CHILDREN



IN OUR  
 COMMUNITY



Goldsboro, NC 27530

919-722-6300

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 130 S. Queen St.

Kinston, NC 28501

252-520-5450

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Local DSS Offices

Lenoir County 252-559-6210

Wayne County 919-705-6533

Greene County 252-747-5932

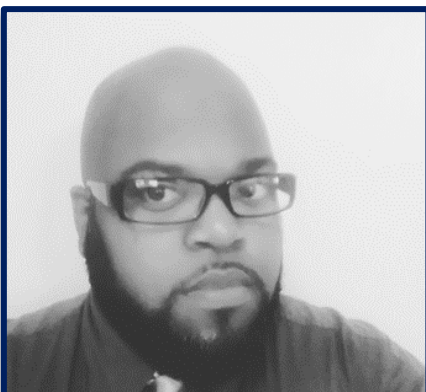
## Meet Our Staff



Colleen Farrell Kosinski has been the District Administrator for the Guardian ad Litem Program for the past 20 years. I am originally from the Northeast growing up in the Philadelphia PA, area before moving to Long Island NY to finish High School. I graduated High Point College in High Point, North Carolina with a Degree in Human Relations, which combines Business and Counseling. I have worked for the past 34 years in positions within the court system either at Dobbs Youth Development Center, as a Court Counselor, at NOVA and I also coordinated a Flood Recovery program after Hurricane Floyd. I love working with the community to solve issues to bring about better resources for children and families.

When not working I am the wife of Victor Kosinski, an Army Veteran who works as a Veteran's employment counselor and tow amazing daughters Catharine and Victoria Kosinski who are my pride and joy. I also have a herd of cats, dogs and a really fast turtle at home named Speedy Gonzalez. My family loves to camp, travel and go to the beach or the mountains.

I love working with our volunteers through the Guardian ad Litem program because we can see every day that we are able to truly make a difference in the lives of the children we serve. We protect children and make sure they are safe. What an awesome responsibility is that to be a part of. I am grateful to our community that keeps coming forward to meet our program need, because we could not do this work



Sabastian M. Ratliff, Jr. Program Supervisor for Guardian ad Litem. I currently Supervise cases in Wayne County and work to recruit, train and retain volunteers in Greene, Lenoir & Wayne Counties. I came to the GAL program in March of 2014.

I was born and raised in Lenoir County and I graduated from Kinston High School class of 1997. I attended North Carolina Wesleyan College where I obtained a BA in Business Administration. I obtained my Master's Degree in Counseling Studies from Capella University in 2011. Working with Guardian ad Litem has been a constant learning experience and I must say I have enjoyed ALMOST every moment of it.... lol



Cynthia Coley is a GAL Supervisor in Wayne County. Cynthia has formal training with undergraduate and graduate degrees. As with most people, every past experience, skills and education has helped to prepare Cynthia for GAL world. Cynthia has a mediation background and utilizes those skills in GAL work. Cynthia has a history in training and dealing with challenges.



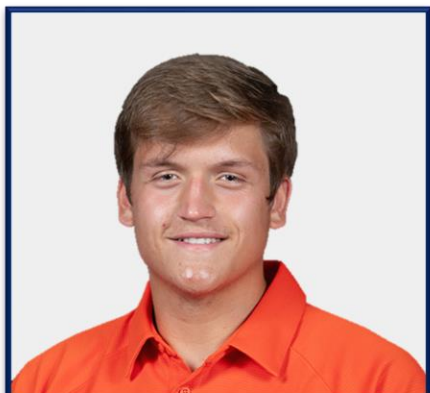
## Meet Our Staff



Alicia Easter-Rodeberg is the newest member of the GAL Staff having been here for just over 2 and a half years. Alicia was a Respiratory Therapist and member of the pediatric trauma flight team before taking time to stay at home with her boys. Before coming to GAL as the Program Specialist and Supervisor of Greene County, she was the Lenoir County Coordinator at SAFE in Lenoir County. Alicia has lived in NC for 11 years with her 2 sons, Ian and Conner, who both are away at college. She now spends time on her small farm with her horses and new German Short-Haired pointer, Ellie Belle.

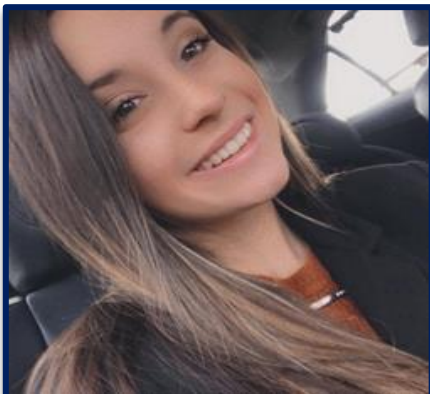


Ms. Emma as she is affectionately known came to the Guardian ad Litem program through the Title Five Grant program, she worked diligently providing office support for six years until the grant ended, and we worried that Ms. Emma would leave us. Luckily, Ms. Emma did not leave us and has continued on volunteering every Wednesday in fact she has volunteered her time for a total of-13 years helping provide office support, so we can serve the children of our community. Ms. Emma is retired from Barnett Textiles, where she worked for 28 years before retiring. She is the devoted mother of one daughter, grand mother of two grandchildren and Great grandmother of three great Grandchildren. Ms. Emma loves to serve. She was recently chosen to serve as a Deaconess at her church the Faith Tabernacle UHC and serves that church proudly. When not at the Guardian ad Litem program Ms. Emma can be found gardening or reading her Bible. Ms. Emma is a true blessing to the Guardian ad Litem program.



Micah Mooring is an intern for the Guardian Ad Litem Program this summer. Micah is a 2021 Campbell University Graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in the field of Criminal Justice. He will be attending the Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law in the fall.

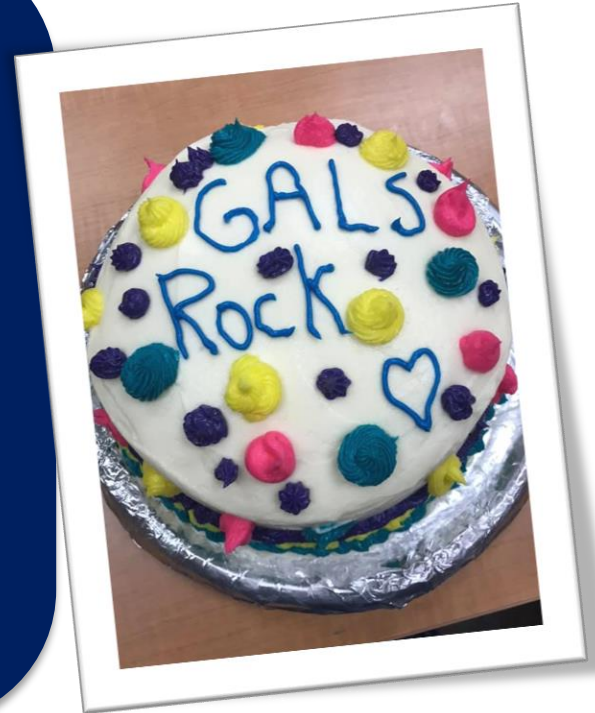
Born and raised in Wayne County, Micah attended the Wayne School of Engineering and graduated with honors. He is a Criminal Justice Award of Excellence recipient, and a former Division I Tight-End for the Fighting Campbell Camels Football Team.



Hi, my name is Ellie Williams I became an intern with the Guardian Ad Litem in March of this year. I attend LCC in Kinston as of right now and hope to transfer to ECU and pursue my career in Radiology. I have loved working with Guardian Ad Litem the past few months and hope to continue to be a part of their work. As a mother myself, I would love to continue to be part of a group who helps children!

## GAL Tips

During a recent GAL Reboot Training we took part in many informative and motivating exercises. One of those exercises included identifying some different ways to effectively ask our child-clients the ever important "What are your wishes?" We have included some of what the class felt were the best options for asking that in the different age ranges. We hope that these examples can assist you in better helping our children share their desires with the court.



### 6 Year Old

- "What makes you the happiest in your life?"
- "Who makes you feel safe?"
- "If you had a magic wand and could wish for anything, what would it be?"

### 12 Year Old

- "What would you like to see happen?"
- "What worries you about going to high school?"
- "Who makes you feel safe and loved?"
- "What would you like to tell the judge?"

### 17 Year Old

- "What is your plan for the future?" (Think Transition)
- "What is your dream for after high school?"
- "Do you have an ID/Social Security card/Driver's License?"
- "What are your strengths and weaknesses?"

# Tips for Writing GAL Court Reports

As you all know the Guardian ad Litem Program rolled out new templates for GAL court reports on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. The goal of the GAL program was to create unified court reports statewide. Along with testimony, court reports are one of the only ways GAL's communicate with the court and all other parties involved. We'd like to take this time to thank each and every one of you for being willing to make the change to the new formats. Here are some tips to use when using the new formats at completing your GAL court reports

## Things You Should Do:

- Read the appropriate template in advance of each hearing and use it to guide your investigation.
- Discuss templates with your supervisor.
- Expect to communicate, at least monthly, with your supervisor about your investigation.
- Ask questions about any parts of the template or instructions that you don't understand.
- Think about what the child has reported to you that is relevant to each section of the report. Record that information where appropriate.
- Write in the active voice. (For example, write, "Mr. Jones supervised the visit" rather than, "The visit was supervised by Mr. Jones.")
- Speak About yourself in the third person.



## Courtroom Protocol

As we start transitioning back to in person court sessions, it is time to reiterate the dos and don'ts of the courtroom. Some of us are naturally rule followers, some of us are not. Whether or not we are rule followers, there are always rules to be followed-whether they are written, spoken, observed or a combination of any.

### Do's

**DO**-Come to court as often as possible.

**DO**-Wear court attire, which is business casual.

**DO**-Make sure court reports are submitted timely, this ensures timely filing.

**DO**-Silence your cell phones.

**DO**-Eliminate talking during court, texting is better.

**DO**-Take the time to talk with a child or parent that came to court, just do it outside the courtroom.

**DO**-Remember that you can't have a private conversation in a public place. Make arrangements with staff to go to the office for private conversations.

### Don'ts

**DONT**-Walk in and out or around the courtroom. It is understood that people have to manage their bodies, however, constant moving is frowned upon distraction.

**DONT**-Move beyond the railing. The first two rows of seats to the right remain reserved for GALs.

**DONT**-Have conversations with attorneys in the courtroom. If it is personal, please do it another time. If it is GAL related, the Attorney Advocate should be handling the issue, which means you should have spoken with the supervisor of the case, so they have a chance to talk with the Attorney advocate prior to court.

**DONT**-Chew gum eat or drink in court.

**DONT**-React if the ruling is not to your liking.

**DONT**-Speak in open court unless you are asked/invited by the judge.

Following courtroom protocol impacts the reputation of the GAL program. As a member of the GAL program, it is imperative that we all do our part to continue to enjoy a good reputation.

## Introducing Drug Court

Keeping children safe and helping families become healthy is at the heart of what we do. Many of you have probably heard of a family drug court, and we would like to share more about the 8th District Family Accountability and Recovery Court (FARC).

The Family Accountability and Recovery Court is a positive and supportive environment where parents meet with a collaborative team that can help them address their substance abuse needs as they are hopefully on the road to recovery. FARC helps address child maltreatment, parental substance disorders, and parenting needs by providing treatment, intensive case management, and judicial supervision to those parents who struggle with substance abuse and who are at risk or already have lost custody of their children. The presence of these additional services will hopefully increase the likelihood of reunification among families, and/or other positive outcomes for the parents and children.

Family Accountability and Recovery Team members include Judge Beth Heath, local treatment and mental health providers, Parent Attorneys, GAL, DSS, a Family Case Coordinator, and the FARC Coordinator. Other community agencies that may attend are the health department, Cooperative Extension Agency, Vocational Rehabilitation and the community college. FARC is truly a team effort by many who want to see families healthy and children safe. FARC currently meets every other Thursday in both Lenoir and Wayne counties and beginning in July, FARC will meet in Greene County.

In 2020, Judge Beth Heath applied for two federal grants to help expand the services and impact of FARC, and in October 2020 she was awarded grants by the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Site-Based Program (COSSAP).

An additional grant from Eastpointe was also awarded. The goal of FARC is to increase reunification of parents and their children by increasing the number of successful graduates from the 8th Judicial District Family Accountability and Recovery

Court, and the monies from the grants will be used to work towards that goal by:



## Introducing Drug Court

mental health and substance use disorder assessments and treatment, develop and provide transitional housing for women, provide transportation services, provide training on family treatment court best practices, and hire additional staff to help meet the needs of FARC and the families we serve.

The OJJDP and COSSAP grants are helping to fund the Women's House of Hope, which is located on Mitchell Street in Kinston. This beautiful home will house women who are in need of support, services, and hope. There will be many opportunities to share your gifts and talents with the Women's House of Hope.

Bridgette Rhodes is the new Family Accountability and Recovery Court Case Manager and is a direct contact for

parents participating in FARC. Bridgette uses her years of experience and education in substance abuse, along with her compassion, as she supports and guides parents during their time in FARC.

Audra Haddad is the new Family Accountability and Recovery Court Grant Administrator. In this new position Audra manages the administrative side of the grant while promoting FARC to the community. Audra has been a GAL volunteer for many years and is excited to continue to work toward helping those in need.





The transition to virtual training instead of in person training during the Pandemic has been so beneficial to the GAL program as we continue to recruit and train new volunteers.



# Child Abuse Prevention Benches

As you all know the month of April is National Child Abuse Awareness Month. This year the Guardian ad Litem Program for District 8 was able to dedicate benches in Both Lenoir and Wayne Counties in honor of the children lost to childhood abuse.

In 2019, North Carolina had 58 deaths related to child abuse or neglect. One of these was reported in Lenoir County. In Lenoir County the bench will be moved around the community all year long to serve as a reminder that we must do all we can to help prevent child abuse in our community. In Wayne Co the Child Abuse prevention bench will be displayed year-round with the exception of December in the Atrium of the Wayne Co. Courthouse.

Though April is the national month of recognition of childhood abuse it does not stop occurring once April is over. If you know or suspect a child or loved one is involved in a form of neglect or abuse it is mandatory to speak out to help the individual. "Everyone in North Carolina is a mandatory reporter, you don't even have to know that abuse or neglect occurred if you suspect you report it and it's not like you're going to get them in trouble," said Colleen Kosinski, Guardian Ad Litem. "People say all the time, 'well I didn't want to get in trouble' or 'I didn't want to get in their business' but how would you like to be that child who's living through abuse?"


These benches serve as a representation of the lives lost due to childhood abuse. Even though April is the national month of childhood abuse awareness the 8<sup>th</sup> District will not stop supporting this cause after the month is over.





## Get Involved



 North Carolina  
**GUARDIAN AD LITEM**  
A CHILD'S ADVOCATE IN COURT

# HOW DO I VOLUNTEER?

1. Visit [www.volunteerforgal.org](http://www.volunteerforgal.org)
2. Find your local program.
3. APPLY!

