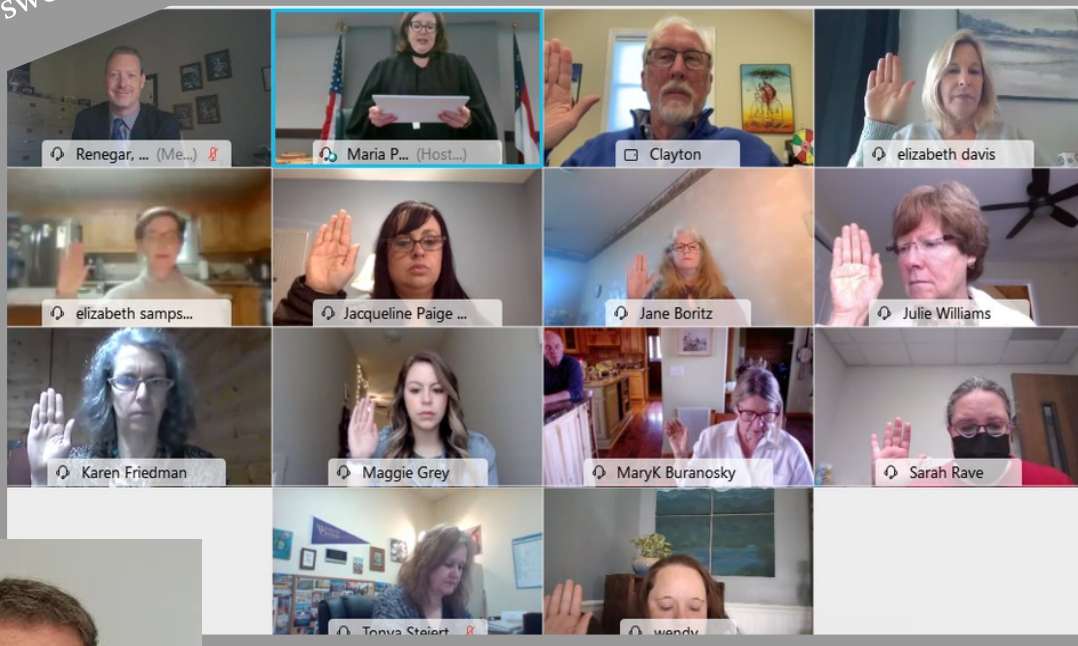


Spring  
'21

# 30th District NCGAL

BE A VOICE!

11 New Advocates  
being sworn in!



## The Admin's Corner:

What. A. Year!

We hope and pray that you and yours have made it through ok, and I know we're all looking forward to getting this all behind us! We've all done what we could to adapt, and I'm so proud of all of you for doing what you can to advocate for kids as well as continuing to bring in new people to the program. I am thrilled that we've been able to add some new staff to our district, and we have had some incredible interns! Read on to find out more about all that's been going on and be introduced:

## Meet the Interns!



Hey all! My name is Grayson Epperson and I am currently finishing my internship with GAL. I am a graduating senior at Western Carolina with a Major in Psychology and a minor in Philosophy. I wanted to do my internship with GAL to help kids in need. I've always wanted to work with kids in some capacity, and GAL gave me the route to help in a way that I could. I've had an amazing time as an intern and plan to stay on after my internship ends to continue to advocate for the children of these counties. I thank you all for your time and dedication to the children of our district.



Hello, My name is Abigail Williams and I am currently interning with Guardian Ad Litem. I am 22 years old and have lived in Western North Carolina my whole life, specifically Maggie Valley. I am a senior at Western Carolina University and will be graduating this coming December. I am double majoring in Psychology and Criminal Justice, my goal after I graduate is to get my Masters degree in Criminal Justice. I am passionate about Criminal Justice reform and making this world a better, more just place for everyone. I decided to intern with Guardian Ad Litem because I am passionate about advocating for people, children need a voice in the courtroom to look out for their best interest and I intend to be that voice. Guardian Ad Litem looks to make a difference in a child's life by placing/or keeping them in an environment where they feel safe to grow and focus on their future. I have heard personal stories of children and families saying their GAL changed their life for the better, and I would like to be a part of that change.



Hello everyone! My name is Maggie Grey, and I will be interning with GAL this summer. I'm 21 years old, and I'm from Iron Station, North Carolina, just outside of Charlotte. I am currently finishing the first semester of my senior year at Western Carolina University, and I will be graduating this coming December. I am double majoring in political science and psychology, and I hope to pursue a Masters of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling following my undergraduate degree, to work with children and families in the future. I began to volunteer with GAL because working with children is my passion, and I am also looking forward to interning beginning this summer. I am honored to be working with GAL, and thank you all for the difference you're making in the lives of children in our district.





## Clay/ Cherokee County

### From the Desk of Tonya Steiert:

I am so proud of my volunteers in Clay and Cherokee county for their dedication during the pandemic. They adapted to the new normal and still found a way to “visit” the children and advocate for them in court! They also took on new cases during this difficult time and never missed a beat!

- 38 Children found permanent homes!
- 8 new GAL Advocates

### Welcome To:

- Michelle “Micki” Benton
- Walt McCown
- Crystal Curasi
- Jane Boritz
- Chari Milligan
- Steven Milligan
- Clayton Williams
- Julie Williams

### Volunteer Spotlight:

All my volunteers are superstars and I am so blessed to work with each and every one of them. I would like to say a special thank you to Connie and David Lance, Dawn McCurdy, Andrew Davis, Susan Haley, Kathy Danielson, Fannie Watson, and Bert Schafer for all their extra help while we were all adjusting to the Covid guidelines and for their willingness to take extra cases during the pandemic.

A sad farewell to the following volunteers who have left or are leaving the program due to moving out of the area: Bob Dalsemer, Mark March, Diana Fetzer, Don and Jackie Slifer. Thank you so much for your time and dedication to the children and the program. We will miss you!

# Haywood County



- 26 Children Found Permanent Homes
- Five New GAL Advocates!

## From the Desk of Maria Parrish:

The last six months have been challenging; we still faced Court closures and delays, COVID-19 restrictions on in-person meetings and visits, the access to services for our children and the Respondent Parents was difficult at best, among other things. Despite it all, our volunteers rose to the occasion. We had 10 Adoptions, 9 Reunifications, and 7 Guardianships filed in that time! That is a great number of children achieving permanency, especially under the circumstances. As we steadily get new cases, you consistently step up. I am so thankful for all the incredible hard work, flexibility, and strong advocacy you have all continued to provide for the children of our county.

We welcomed five new GALs to Haywood County in the last six months: Dianna Messer, Vicky Boswell, Jack King, Beth Brody and Wendy Jones. Let us know of any creative recruiting ideas you may have, that are pandemic friendly.

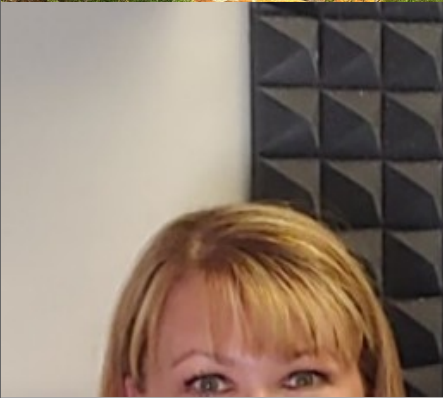
THANK YOU. You continue to be amazing!

*Adoption Day for  
this Sweet Girl!*





# Jackson/Swain County



From the Desk of Shannon Cowan:

Happy Spring from Jackson and Swain Counties! This time of year always brings the promise of rebirth and renewal. Life and nature is waking up in the warm sunlight and our spirit feels ready to make a fresh start. I hope we all feel this way after the heaviness of the past year.

I'm sure I speak for all of the GAL Program Supervisors in the 30th Judicial District when I say how proud and thankful I am of our volunteers and their commitment to this program despite the many COVID related setbacks. While many volunteers expressed frustrations at safety limitations placed on them, their frustrations were for all the right reasons. I heard over and over again "I need to see my children. I don't feel I am advocating for them when I can't see them". Despite this, we found or searched for new techniques to advocate for our children. Some of us embraced difficult technology for the first time. We vented and cursed and many secretly wanted to throw their hands in the air.

**BUT YOU DIDN'T!** Not one Jackson or Swain GAL volunteer resigned their position during these crazy, stressful months. **AND**, we picked up some new wonderful volunteers along the way.

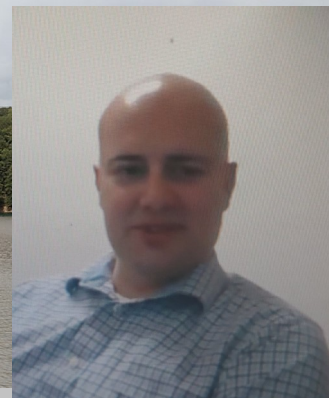
My shoutout goes to **ALL** the volunteers in the 30th Judicial District for your commitment, determination and resiliency. Special recognition to my volunteers in Jack-

## Welcome to:

- Liz Sampson
- Karen Friedman
- Sarah Rave
- MaryK Buranosky
- Liz Davis
- Maggie Grey
- Haley Pesqueira
- Bettye Boggs
- Greg Boggs
- Qua'Nazia Morring
- Crystal Cole



## Macon/Graham County



Welcome to our new GAL  
Advocates!

- Paige Johns
- Elizabeth Truax
- Diane Mahoney
- Debra Adams

### Volunteer Spotlight:

**Michele McMahon and Beth Kaufholz** — Michele and Beth set up and ran the GAL meet and greet to introduce the new supervisor in Graham County. The event was put in the Graham Star and has brought good attention to the program in that county. Way to go Michele and Beth!

In December, roughly 70-80% of the children were assigned a volunteer. As of the most recent end of month, the number is over 90% thanks to the volunteers stepping up to the plate and being willing to take on cases before I can even ask!

**Carolyn Everett** — Carolyn has brought a Volunteer into the Program (Paige Johns). Others who have applied for the program have mentioned her as well! Carolyn is living proof that the Volunteers are our best recruiters!

Over the next six months, we are working to hopefully being able to do a lot more in person. Depending upon the status of the pandemic, along with guidance from government officials, the Volunteers for Macon and Graham Counties will be treated monthly, to a get-together to catch up with each other and to work on any improvements we can make (of course, there will be food). Recruitment goals over the next 6 months include having enough volunteers for 100% coverage; and working toward having enough volunteers to where each volunteer only has one or two cases.

Special shout-out to **Velma Zeek**, who will be celebrating her 21st year as a Volunteer this year!

Another set of shout-outs for **Sherry Hayes** (for 11 years); **Bob Justin** (for 10 years); **Tawana Valentine** (12 years)!



Be Sure to take care of Yourself while Advocating for others!

Do this By....



Enjoying the Outdoors or Going on a Hike!



Self-Reflection or Journaling



Hang out with your Friends!



Talk to a Loved One!

Most importantly, talk to your supervisor if advocating starts to become overwhelming!

## Meet our new staff!

Tracy Hall is a mom of two girls, two dogs and two cats. Tracy loves sports and attending any, and all sporting events. She is an accomplished cook who loves spending time in her kitchen surrounded by friends and family.

Tracy has been a social worker since 1993, and has work experience at DSS, Hospice and mental health agencies. Tracy is both honored and humbled to begin work for Guardian Ad Litem and grateful to be a part of this team who does such vital work for the kids and families of our communities.



Jake Shamblin is the Program Supervisor for Macon and Graham Counties. He grew up in West Virginia, just outside of Charleston. He's married to his high school sweetheart, Mallorie, who he met at Poca High School (yes, they were the Poca Dots if you can believe that) for 11 years. Jake and Mallorie have 4 kiddos (Levi 8, Noah 5, Thea 3, and Phoebe 1); and they live in Robbinsville.

Jake joined the military in 2009 and is still in the service. He's have held just about every job from the being in the Infantry to a Judge Advocate (JAG). In 2016, they moved to Alabama, where he attended law school and continued in the National Guard. After law school and the bar exam, Jake worked as a Chief Clerk and Appointed Judge in the Elmore County Probate Court. In his previous job, he heard cases and quickly learned that adoptions and guardianships were his favorite types of hearings.

He came on board with the Guardian Ad Litem Program in December of 2020. He said that it has been a real privilege to work with this crew in the 30th District and that he really enjoys working with the awesome Volunteers in Macon and Graham Counties.





# GAL Training

**Date:** June 24th, 2021

**Time:** 9:30am



*We hope to see you  
all there!*

## Location

This training will be held in the Jackson County Public Library.

Address: 310 Keener Street, Sylva, NC,  
28779

Find us in the Library Community Room!

## Agenda

Training will begin at 9:30am with a session about the GAL Guidelines. This segment will be led by NC GAL 30th District staff.

Immediately following this session, at around 10:45am will be a training provided by KARE.

KARE will instruct volunteers and staff about recognizing and responding to the signs of child abuse.

Training will conclude just after 12:00 noon.

**\*Light refreshments\***

**\*Door prizes!\***



*North Carolina*

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

# Welcome to all our new advocates!

