



A CHILD'S VOICE

Monthly Newsletter of the Wake County Guardian ad Litem Program

Wake County Guardian ad Litem
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Holiday Wishes

It is the season of many holidays around the world. They are holidays of peace and joy, love and caring, sharing with families and friends, and generosity to those in need. While this is the time of the year that brings out the best in most people, it is the Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Child Advocates who embody the true spirit of the season throughout the year. It is hard to imagine a more valuable or heartfelt gift than the time and energy you give to making a difference in the life of a child.

May the peace and joy of the season be with you and your loved ones throughout the New Year.
Happy Holidays!!!!

Wake County Guardian ad Litem Staff

*"Children are great imitators.
So give them something great to imitate."
-anonymous*

Being a Guardian ad Litem...

"Serving as a Guardian ad Litem is challenging, rewarding and important to the well-being of the children for whom we advocate.

I can still conjure up goosebumps on command when I recall the evolution of a parent who was locked in a relentless battle with addiction, or one trying to modify behavioral issues or maybe just working on parenting capability in order to heal the relationship with her children and bring them home. Working with a dedicated social worker, sharing her burden to ensure that a child was getting the services she needed, was as satisfying and rewarding as being on an effective team can be. I have met foster parents whose dedication to the children in their home and their skills in parenting were remarkable to the point of being inspiring. Providing thorough and accurate information to the court so that the best legal decisions can be made in the interest of the child is rewarding and always seems to be appreciated. And of course the staff in the GAL office are unfailingly supportive and appreciative of their volunteers.

What may be the best part of this work is the reward that can come from getting to know a child and developing a relationship built on trust and commitment. And although our work is often complicated, I love the simplicity of our mission that drives every decision we make and action we take; to advocate for the best interest of the children we serve." - **Will Service, advocating since 2007**



"Children placed in foster care often experience many changes. Placement, assignments of social workers, and other service providers, but often, their GALs are the only consistent person in their lives as they navigate through the foster care system. I value being able to bring that consistency into a child's life. I believe that to whom much is given, much is required. I have been the recipient and the beneficiary of kindness and care of others. I am happy that through my advocacy with the Wake County Guardian ad Litem Program, I can simply pay it forward."

-**Cynthia Wright, Advocating since 2009**

"To be honest, being a GAL is a selfish act and fulfills a desire to step outside, of my safe, comfortable work to help a child in need. Each one of these children will grow up to be our neighbors and likely parents themselves, so every time we help them find a better future, our own future brightens. When I talk about being a GAL, it is easy to share the rewards and satisfaction I get because I know children in care need and deserve our advocacy." - **Julia Lee, advocating since 2011**



Being a Guardian ad Litem...

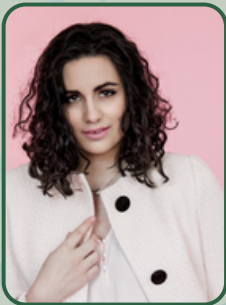


"This month will mark my first full year of being a Guardian Ad Litem. Being a Guardian ad Litem has been an immensely rewarding experience. The bond I have had the opportunity to create with my GAL child has been beyond anything I ever expected. Being a Guardian ad Litem has given me the opportunity to help my community by being a voice for our most vulnerable community members. In the year that I have been able to be in this role, I have seen how impacting our role can be. Seeing children start to look forward to your next visit, actually enjoying telling me about achievements or challenges. I knew I wanted to give back to my community when I signed up for this role, I just never imagined how much this role would be giving me. I hope to be able to continue in this role for years to come."

- **Carolina Aguilar, advocating since 2020**

Being a GAL is an opportunity to help an innocent child in need. Support and guidance are always there when needed; and a single individual can have a great positive impact on a child's future."

- **Roger Liddle, advocating since 2013**



"Serving as a Guardian ad Litem means being able to advocate for the children of Wake County a chance to a brighter future for the children. Knowing I am helping children through such a stressful time makes me feel empowered and thankful. The moment that brings me a lot of joy is when I get to explain to the children that their voices and wishes are just as important as the adults in the courtroom, as they realize they are extremely valued and loved. The best part of being a Guardian ad Litem is when the kids are happy to see you; they really melt my heart and make me feel like I've truly helped make a positive impact in their lives each and every visit."

- **Daisy Bunting, advocating since 2021**

Serving as a guardian ad litem gives me the opportunity to help a child who has suffered through no fault of his or her own. It is a way to serve my community and to give back. If I am able to help in some small way to bring light into a child's life and to improve the chances of a good life for that child, my work is more than worthwhile." - **Helen Krauss, advocating since 2013**



Being a Guardian ad Litem...

"Serving as the Guardian ad Litem means I get to be an advocate for a child who may feel all alone in a confusing and frightening situation. Serving as a GAL, I get to step in and speak up for our most prized and vulnerable citizens, the abused and neglected children of our community and make sure they are heard in the midst of overwhelming circumstances." - **Nyree Clark, advocating since 2018**



"Being a Guardian ad Litem has given me the chance to continue being connected with children. In my professional career as an educational speech-language pathologist, I had constant connections with kids from preschool to high school. I missed that, but being a GAL afforded me the opportunity to spend time with children and caring foster families to ensure that these children were being nurtured in healthy, positive and safe environments."

-**Tomma Hargraves, advocating since 2018**

"By making the commitment to become a Guardian ad Litem, I knew the potential impact I could have in advocating for abused and neglected children. Serving as a child advocate is undoubtedly the most rewarding experience of my life. Not only do I get to support a child, but in the same sense, the GAL program also provides me an opportunity to serve my community in a way I have never been able to before."

- **Jamar Wilson, advocating since 2020**



"As a Guardian ad Litem, I am the voice of the child.... at least to the judge. I visit with the child at the foster home, the visitation room at DSS, at school or daycare. Through their eyes, they see people coming and going. As a Guardian ad Litem, I get to be one consistent person during their time in care. I value the opportunity to sit at the middle table in the courtroom representing and advocating for the child who has hopes and dreams and whose voice needs to be heard." - **Linda Hoard, advocating since 2008**

What is...

Casey Life Skills Assessment

The Casey Life Skills Assessment is a tool that assesses the behavior and competencies youth in care (ages 14-21) need to achieve to their long term goals. The assessment helps youth self-evaluate themselves in the following areas: maintaining healthy relationships, good work and study habits, planning and goal setting, using community resources, daily living activities, budgeting and paying bills, computer literacy, and permanent connections to caring adults. The result is to be used in a collaborative strength-based conversation and communication between the youth, his or her social worker, as well as others involved in the youth's life as a way to support and actively engage in them in the process of developing their goals.

If you are advocating for a youth between the ages of 14-18, please make sure to review the results of their Casey Life Skills Assessment. This will enhance your advocacy on their behalf.

4-H

4-H is a positive youth development program for youth ages 5-18. 4-H is open to any youth who wants to grow, lead, and make a difference. 4-H programs and groups are led by trained individuals. The four H's are head, heart, hands, and health. The following are some of the programs offered by 4-H Youth Development in Wake County:

- 4-H Club
- Teen Programs: Leadership, Civic Education, Workforce Development and Community Services
- Summer Camps and daytime programs
- 4-H Public Health and Nutrition and physical activity
- Youth Transition Groups that build life skills
- Youth Volunteer program- Make a difference
- Forms for youth, clubs, and volunteers
- Partnerships working with community
- Cooperative Extension, empowering people providing solution

Advocating for Holiday Visitation for Children in Care

As we are nearing the holiday season where there is much emphasis on families spending time together, please remember the children for whom we advocate. Many of the children and youth in the foster care system are missing their biological families, and even more so as the holidays approach. As the children's advocates, you can play an important part in advocating for extended holiday visits with biological family members where appropriate.

Wake County Human Services: LINKS December Calendar

07

Dec.

At Home Cooking Class
6:00 pm, virtual.

10

Dec.

SAYSO YALC Greensboro Trip

14

Dec.

SAYSO Chapter Meeting
6:00 pm, virtual.

21

Dec.

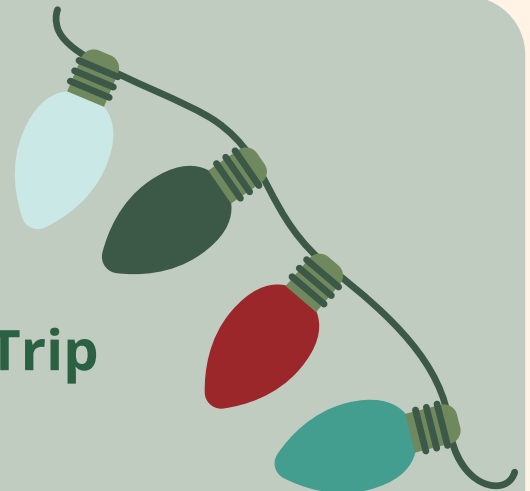
LINKS Holiday Celebration
5:30 pm, in person.

If you are advocating for a youth thirteen or older, please encourage their participation.

For more information regarding LINKS, please contact:

Kimberly Gibson at (919) 210-7863 or Kimberly.Gibson@wakegov.com

Cara O'Connor at (434) 989-0998 or coconnor@hopecenteratpullen.org



Confidentiality as a Guardian ad Litem Volunteer



As a Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Advocate, you have access to confidential information about children and people involved in those children's lives. Please keep in mind that as a GAL advocate, you may not release this information except to the child, GAL Program staff, the social worker, the court, and others as instructed by law or local court rules. There are strict guidelines about who can have access to confidential information. By law, GAL volunteers must keep all information regarding the case confidential and make no disclosure, except by court orders or unless provided by law.

When in doubt, discuss any confidentiality concerns with your Guardian ad Litem Program Supervisor.

Recommended Readings



More to Me by Saty Cornelius

Up From Never by Joseph Sorrentino

Walk to Beautiful by Jimmy Wayne

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma by Bessel van der Kolk, M.D.

In Between by Katie Parker



Special thanks to the Wake County Friends of Guardian ad Litem Association for their ongoing support of children in need.

Monthly In-Service Trainings:

Upcoming Events:

Wednesday, December 8, 2021 from 10:00am-12:00pm

Wake County Guardian ad Litem In-Service (WebEx): Ask your Attorney Advocate

Presenters: Christina McCoy & Jonathan Blanken, Wake County Guardian ad Litem Attorney Advocates

Thursday, January 20, 2022 from 10:00am-12:00pm

Wake County Guardian ad Litem In-Service (WebEx): Services Available to At Risk Youth & Youth in Care through the Corral Riding Program

Presenter: Holly Healy, Educational Trainer

Friday, February 18, 2022 from 10:00am-12:00pm

Wake County Guardian ad Litem In-Service (WebEx); Autism Spectrum & Services Available to Families and Children Through the Wake County Autism Society

Presenter: Louise Southern and Kim Pizzard, NC Autism Society

**Happy Birthday
to our volunteer
child advocates!**

Gail
Ezekiel
Angel

Aliss
Judy
Suzanne
Kelley
Cynthia
Susan
Onita
Christine

Sharon
Kaitlyn
Emily
Megan
Aaron
Natalie
Jennifer
Dana

Thomas
Cameron
Donna
Joy
Jakeema
Whitney
Laura
Sylvia