

Guardian ad Litem News

NC Guardian ad Litem Program
23rd Judicial District

Alleghany, Ashe, Wilkes, and
Yadkin Counties

April/May 2021
Spring Quarter

A Note from the District Administrator...

Spring has sprung in 2021! Flowers are blooming and the temperature has warmed up! Yes, I love this time of year!

Along with the changes in the outdoors, our district offices are beginning to see each staff person return to their offices. By May 3rd, all District 23 staff will be back full-time in our offices. We will continue to follow our district courthouses' policies for masks, social distancing, etc.

We are gearing up to start our second New Volunteer Training course for 2021 beginning Tuesday, May 4th. This class will again be virtual using WebEx, as well as, the online Moodle Room through National CASA/GAL. We have 10 individuals signed up! Woohoo!

We continue to limit our in-person child visits as you will read in the GAL Reminders. Most of our court hearings remain virtual in District 23 via WebEx. There are a few in-person court hearings. If a GAL Advocate wishes to attend court in-person, they must be pre-approved completing the COVID checklist. Our state administrator and other management continually assess the COVID status and let us know if the regulations will be changing in the coming weeks and months. I thank each of you for your continued patience and understanding in operating in the GAL world through these means.

April is Guardian ad Litem Child Advocate Appreciation Month. Although, we were not able to have an appreciation event in person again this year, we truly are so grateful for each of our Advocates. The devotion, care, and hard work each of you provide to serve the children in our community is outstanding! You are all the top of the tier for people who volunteer in service to others and we are so happy to have you all on our GAL team.

Finally, thank you all for keeping GAL Program a priority in our community and for the support in recruiting more voices to advocate for the children in our district.

Tamara Lakey



In This Issue . . .

[A Note from the District Administrator](#)

[New Volunteers Affirm GAL Oath](#)

[April - GAL Child Advocate Appreciation Month](#)

[April - Child Abuse Prevention Month](#)

[More Voices Needed](#)

[GAL Anniversaries for Spring](#)

[Upcoming GAL In-Service Advocate Trainings](#)

[Reminders for GAL Advocates](#)

[GAL New Volunteer Training](#)

[District Offices and Staff Contact Information](#)



www.VolunteerForGAL.org

North Carolina | District 23
GUARDIAN AD LITEM
A CHILD'S ADVOCATE IN COURT
ALLEGHANY, ASHE, WILKES AND YADKIN



Welcome New District 23 GAL Advocates



(Above): The Honorable District Court Judge Robert Crumpton administered the Volunteer Oath to three new GAL Advocates virtually in February 2021. The new GALs are Donna McPartland (Ashe), Tasha Farrish (Wilkes), and Joyell Leonard (Yadkin).

Right: Justin Church affirmed the Volunteer Oath in January. District Court Judge Donna Shumate administered the oath. Justin is serving children in Wilkes County.



- A** Always have as your goal a safe and permanent home for each child
- D** Dig for details and facts in conducting your investigation
- V** Value and respect all legal parties and participants
- O** Observe and visit each child monthly
- C** Consult with GAL staff to overcome obstacles to achieve permanency
- A** Act with urgency
- T** Tell the judge at each hearing the needs and wishes of the child
- E** Ensure that court reports promote and protect the best interests of the child

GAL Child Advocate Appreciation Month

We are so grateful to all 99 of the GAL Child Advocates in our district. These outstanding individuals are the voice for over 300 children in Alleghany, Ashe, Wilkes, and Yadkin counties. GAL Advocates give of their time to dig for details, collaborate with others, recommend the child's best interest, empower the child's voice, stay vigilant on the interworking of the child's life, and above all else maintain confidentiality of all the information they obtain about the child and their case. These individuals do not do this work for any monetary rewards, recognition, accolades, or power. Their sole purpose is to help a child and to be a voice for the children in our community! Wow, what fantastic community members they are to give so much of themselves for others! Please join us in sending each of them a huge thank you!

Check Out the Awesome Faces of the 99 GAL Child Advocates in District 23



April - Child Abuse Prevention Month



Each year, April is designated Child Abuse Prevention Month. And, with this recognition, Guardian ad Litem Program partners with other agencies and groups in the community to plant pinwheels for prevention in each of our district's four-counties. Typically, we have GAL staff, volunteers, court personnel, and other community individuals help with these events to place pinwheels at each county courthouse. Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions we were unable to hold an event in 2020 & 2021. But, with the help of some courthouse and DSS employees, GAL staff, were able to plant pinwheels in Wilkes and Yadkin Courthouse yards. We thank those court employees that were able to help the GAL staff with the efforts. We are hopeful to be able to hold pinwheel planting events in all four counties for Child Abuse Prevention Month in April 2022.

More Voices Needed for Children

Although we have 99 GAL Advocates currently serving almost 300 children in our district, we still need more. We have over 70 children who do not have a GAL Advocate to be their voice. We ask that you consider volunteering some of your time to becoming an advocate for a child. If we had 50 more community members join us on the GAL team, then we would be able to provide each of these 70 children an advocate specially appointed to pursue their best interest.

GAL Advocates are highly trained, supported, and partnered with GAL staff and an Attorney Advocate. GALs visit with the children regularly to learn their wishes and be able to identify any services or other needs of the children. The advocates dig for details by accessing records, talking with parents, caregivers, school personnel, or other agencies involved with the family. GALs collaborate with these people and agencies to determine recommendations for the child's best interest. Advocates are coached and guided by their GAL Supervisor throughout the case-life. Each GAL is paired with a GAL Attorney Advocate to represent the child in court and be the child's voice for their wishes and recommendations. GAL Advocates help pursue a safe, permanent home for each child they serve.

If you feel you have what it takes to help a child, then please visit our website and complete an application www.VolunteerForGAL.org. If you would like to talk with someone or get more information locally, please contact us at 33-651-4421 or via email GAL.District23@nccourts.org. You could make the difference in the life of a child! Be sure to share this volunteer opportunity with others. You could also partner with a relative or friend to dually serve children together. We have numerous husband-wife, siblings, and friends who partner together on cases. Please help us provide a voice for all the GAL children in our district! Be sure to LIKE and FOLLOW our district Facebook page NC Guardian ad Litem – District 23.

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**THE BEST WAY
TO FIND YOURSELF
IS TO LOSE YOURSELF
IN SERVICE
TO OTHERS.**

GHANDI



UPCOMING GAL ADVOCATES VIRTUAL IN-SERVICE TRAININGS

(Check your Ncgalvolunteer email notices or contact GAL staff regarding links to register for trainings)

Its All About Connections: The Power of Attachment

Facilitated By: Children's Home Society
Tuesday, 5/11 OR Thursday, 5/13 (12 – 2 pm)

Understanding Minors' Rights & Connecting Young People To Sexual & Reproductive Health Care

Facilitated By: Shift NC
Tuesday, 5/4 (12 – 2 pm)

The Impact of Trauma on the Family

Facilitated By: UNC School of SW
Wednesday, 5/26 (12 -2 pm)

GAL ADVOCACY ANNIVERSARY DATES

April

Jessica Franse	5 th	3 years
Louis Watts	7 th	7 years
Ruth Kandaras	12 th	2 years
Terri Smoot	16 th	7 years
Priscilla Cox	22 nd	5 years

May

Pamela Kilby	21 st	3 years
Michele Laskus	23 rd	12 years

June

Terri Delbridge	1 st	6 years
Allen Williams	4 th	20 years
David Borrows	5 th	4 years
Kayla Hamby	5 th	4 years
Dianne Griffin	10 th	2 years
Julie Younce	10 th	2 years
Trish Edwards	10 th	2 years
Tonya Blevins	10 th	2 years
Susan Allen	27 th	10 years
Sarah Aguilar	27 th	2 years



REMINDERS FOR GAL ADVOCATES

Volunteer Emails

Please remember to check your GAL email accounts regularly (possibly daily) for all correspondence regarding GAL work, updates, etc. If you have any issues, please contact your GAL Supervisor.

Continued COVID Restrictions

Please remember to follow the NCGAL guidelines regarding any in-person child visits and court participation during COVID restrictions. You must have completed the D23 GAL COVID checklist with your GAL Supervisor and have prior approval from the District Administrator. The only approved in-person visits with the children are at their placements. Permission to attend DSS meetings, observe parent-child visits, or visiting the child in other locations is not approved by NCGAL at this time.

Closed Case Files

Please remember to turn in your paper copies of any child-client records, file, etc. to GAL staff when one of your cases close. Contact your GAL Supervisor and arrange to get the paperwork turned into our offices for approved disposal of documents. Also, if you have any saved documents on your electronic devices (computers, cellphones, tablets, etc.) please get with your GAL Supervisor about proper deletion of documents, photos, videos, etc.



New GAL Volunteer Advocate Training

**6-Weeks Online/Virtual Training Course
August – September 2021
Start Date & Time TBA**

Once a week 2-hour virtual group meetings & weekly online individual work between classes

Registration Deadline: August 1st, 2021

Must complete an online application and be approved by GAL District Administrator prior to participating training

Visit our website to make an application: VolunteerForGAL.org

**Be a voice for the children in
our community**



District Offices & Staff Contact Information

District Main Office:

Wilkes County Courthouse
500 Courthouse Drive, Suite 2037
Wilkesboro, NC 28697
336-651-4421

Ashe Satellite Office:

Ashe County Courthouse
150 Government Circle, Suite 3204
Jefferson, NC 28640
336-219-1421

Yadkin Satellite Office:

Yadkin County Courthouse
101 South State Street, Room 105
PO Box 461
Yadkinville, NC 27055
336-679-3671

District Administrator:

Tamara Lakey
Office: 336-651-4466
Cell: 336-337-2368

GAL Supervisor (Alleghany/Ashe):

Michelle Dix
Office: 336-219-1421
Cell: 336-279-6088

GAL Supervisor (Wilkes):

Jessica Bryant
Office: 336-651-4467
Cell: 336-937-2462

GAL Supervisor (Wilkes):

Denise Greene
Office: 336-651-4465
Cell: 336-937-2541

GAL Supervisor (Wilkes/Ashe):

Christie Lupton
Office: 336-651-4468
Cell: 336-705-9341

GAL Supervisor (Yadkin):

Catharine Davidson
Office: 336-679-3671
Cell: 336-937-2623