



# Florida Guardian ad Litem Program ~ Seminole County

## Local Program Overview

- ✓ Seminole County has 164 Volunteer Child Advocates, 4.5 Child Advocacy Coordinators, and 2 Child's Best Interest Attorneys.
- ✓ In 2012, the Seminole County GAL Program advocated for a total of 367 children involved in 233 cases. Volunteers represented 86% of the cases.
- ✓ We have grown from 119 volunteers in 2007 to 164 to currently. This is a 37% increase in volunteers since 2007.
- ✓ In the past couple of years we had remained status quo, replacing the number of volunteers who leave the program. Now with a contracted Volunteer Recruiter we have started to grow, increasing by 10% in the last six months. We are on target to meet our recruitment goal by July 2012. In order to assure all children have volunteers we need continued funding for our recruiter position.
- ✓ In 2012, the Seminole GAL Program advocated for children in the following ways: 28 Children were adopted, 107 Children were reunified with their parents, 58 Children were permanently placed with relatives or non-relatives, 8 Youth turned 18 and aged out of the system
- ✓ There are currently 12 volunteers in Seminole County authorized to transport children. These volunteers report better communication with the children, improved relationship with the child, expanded opportunities to include the children in activities they would not otherwise experience, and ensure child's safety. The volunteers are facilitating visitations with siblings, shopping, trips to the library and just taking a child out to eat—all valuable experiences for both the volunteer and the child.



*Eagle Award  
Winner 2012  
Prudential Davis  
Productivity Awards*



*Angels in Adoption  
Award Winner  
2012*

Congressional Coalition on  
Adoption Institute

Florida Guardian ad Litem Program - 18th Circuit  
Sharon A. Graham, Seminole County Program Director

[www.GuardianadLitem.org](http://www.GuardianadLitem.org)



# Florida Guardian ad Litem Program

## FY 13-14 Budget Overview—*I Am For the Child*

- ✓ Florida Law mandates that all abused, abandoned and neglected children be represented by a Guardian ad Litem.
- ✓ The GAL Program is requesting \$1.8 in recurring funds in FY 13-14 so that volunteers will be able to represent 75% of the children in need. This will pay for temporary staff to recruit, train and oversee 650 new volunteers, and will serve an additional 1,300 children.
- ✓ If funded, 23,617 children will be represented in FY 13-14 — almost all by trained volunteers.
- ✓ GAL volunteers contribute more than \$20 million in donated goods and services.
- ✓ This does not include the contributions of more than 20 not-for-profit agencies that raise money locally for the GAL Program.
- ✓ When children have a volunteer advocate, the return rate into foster care is cut in half and educational outcomes are improved.
- ✓ The job of the GAL staff has become increasingly complex. The GAL Program is also requesting \$2.1 million to compensate staff whose role has changed from that of carrying a caseload to one where they recruit, train, manage and supervise volunteers. We are also requesting funds to make the salaries of legal staff competitive with those of other state and local government agencies.
- ✓ The all-volunteer model allows the Program to serve more children, more efficiently. This requires a level of management skill not previously needed.



*Eagle Award  
Winner 2012*

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ductivity Awards*



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*2012*

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Florida Guardian ad Litem Program  
Alan Abramowitz, Executive Director  
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**GAL**

Guardian ad Litem

**A POWERFUL VOICE FOR  
FLORIDA'S CHILDREN**

**FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM  
PROGRAM**

A Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is appointed by the court to advocate for a child. Most of these children have been removed from their homes because of alleged abuse, abandonment or neglect. The GAL becomes familiar with the child and the child's case and makes recommendations to the court to help ensure a safe, caring, stable and permanent environment. The GAL Program has a volunteer base of more than 8,000 volunteers.

**CHILDREN WHO HAVE A  
GAL VOLUNTEER:**

- Do better in school
- Are 50% less likely to return to foster care
- Have fewer placement changes
- Receive more services
- Are more likely to be adopted, when appropriate
- Spend less time in foster care

**\$15,774,382** GAL time and services

**+ \$2,779,082** GAL donated mileage

**+ \$2,000,000** Orange County Bar  
pro bono services

**= \$20,553,464**

**RETURN ON  
INVESTMENT**

**THE VALUE OF  
GUARDIAN AD LITEM VOLUNTEERS**

**“The total value of GAL  
volunteers is over \$20 million to  
the state of Florida. But a  
GAL’s contribution to a child’s  
life is priceless.”**

**It would take an additional 449 state  
employees to do the work of Florida’s GAL  
Volunteers and  
\$18,241,971  
to pay their salaries and benefits.**



**TO LEARN MORE:  
GUARDIANADLITEM.ORG  
1-866-341-1425**



**Eagle Award Winner 2012  
Prudential Davis  
Productivity Awards**

**Angels in Adoption  
Award Winner 2012  
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