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## **Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation, Inc. Report to the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program**

### **Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation, Inc.**

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# **Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation, Inc. Report to the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program**

## **THE FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM FOUNDATION WAS CREATED PURSUANT § 39.8298**

Within the Justice Administrative Commission, the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program (GAL Program), which has oversight responsibilities for and provides technical assistance to all guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem programs located within Florida's twenty judicial circuits, was authorized to create a Direct Support Organization pursuant to § 39.8298, Florida Statutes.

## **FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM FOUNDATION MISSION AND RESULTS**

### **Mission**

The Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation's (Foundation) mission is to provide additional resources for the GAL Program, its volunteers, and its affiliated circuit non-profit organizations in order to promote Guardian ad Litem representation for abused, neglected and abandoned children in Florida's dependency system.

### **Results**

#### **Advocating and Creating Public Awareness of the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program**

In an effort to support the GAL Program, it is essential that Floridians understand the importance of the GAL Program, as well as its reliance on volunteers to provide a voice for children in dependency court. The Foundation has maintained a public presence by supporting and participating in the Statewide



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Children's Week held annually in Tallahassee. Children's Week brings together organizations concerned with children's issues throughout the state of Florida.

### **Promoting Statewide GAL Volunteer Recruitment and Retention**

Volunteers are crucial to the GAL Program. GAL volunteers represent the best interests of a child involved in Florida's dependency system. With ever changing social workers, schools and even foster parents, often times a GAL volunteer is the one constant in a dependent child's life. The Foundation supports the GAL Program's goal of 100 percent representation of all of Florida's dependent children.

### ***Launch of the New Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation Website [www.FLGAL.org](http://www.FLGAL.org)***

The new Foundation website is an updated meeting point for potential volunteers and donors to learn more about the Foundation, the work of the GAL Program and donate to the Foundation. The simplified and easy to navigate format of the new Foundation website gives the user the latest



Foundation news, volunteer training materials, and links to the GAL Program website. The Foundation has also been active on social media such as Facebook in order to reach more potential volunteers and keep current volunteers informed of the latest happenings.

**Providing Financial Support to Meet the Needs of Abused and Neglected Children Who Are Represented by a GAL Volunteer**



Supporting the needs of Florida’s dependent children is a critical part of the Foundation’s mission. Whether through grants, individual or corporate donations, or time, the Foundation has continually worked to provide support to children involved in the GAL Program. One way the Foundation raised money this year was through its first charity annual Golf Tournament. The Foundation held the golf

tournament in conjunction with the GAL Programs Disabilities Conference and had over 60 players and 30 sponsors including Akerman, LLP and Sunshine Health. The golf tournament was such a success the Foundation is planning another tournament for 2016.

The Foundation also received and acknowledged donations from private individuals, corporations, foundations and bequests. Many of the donations received were through social media and networking within the community.

Finally, when a specific need was identified, the Foundation provided targeted support for unique and unfunded needs of children who are represented by GAL volunteers. The Foundation funded such things as medical needs and money for activities related to normalcy for children represented by GAL volunteers.

## **FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM FOUNDATION PLANS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2015-2018**

The Foundation’s plans for the next three fiscal years supports the mission of the Foundation as well as the GAL Program. The Foundation will continue to develop statewide partnerships with private and philanthropic supporters to enhance GAL training and improve advocacy across Florida. These partnerships within the community

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not only will lead to a better understanding of the GAL Program but also the needs of Florida's abused and neglected children.

The Foundation will also assist the GAL Program with branding and public awareness of the GAL mission and recruitment of volunteers. The GAL Program has more than 10,000 volunteers but still needs more to ensure no child goes to dependency court without a voice. The Foundation will continue to plan yearly Golf Tournaments including players, and sponsors and use that money to serve the Foundation's mission.

The Foundation will strengthen the network of local Guardian ad Litem nonprofits across the state, in support of a unified mission. Whether through shared conference calls, the Foundation website, emails, or meetings the Foundation will communicate with local non-profits to share best practices concerning fundraising, training and volunteer retention.

The Foundation will continue to sponsor events that recognize the leadership and the success of GAL Program staff and volunteers. The Foundation will also support statewide GAL volunteer training events ensuring GAL volunteers have the latest and best information. The Foundation will serve as a voice to the volunteers of how and where to get the best information and required continuing education.