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Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation, Inc., Report to the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office

Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation, Inc.

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THE FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM FOUNDATION WAS CREATED PURSUANT TO § 39.8298

Within the Justice Administrative Commission, the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office (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 20 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 (the 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 Children's Week held annually in



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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 children 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 adult in a dependent child's life. The Foundation supports the GAL Program's goal of representing all of Florida's dependent children in out of home care, and dependent children under age three years in their own homes.

Hiring Chief Executive Officer of the Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation

Eric Clark was hired as of July 11, 2016, as CEO of the Guardian ad Litem Foundation. Clark will be working with the local non-profits that support the GAL Program in each of Florida's 20 circuits to advance the Guardian ad Litem Foundation's mission. Clark comes to the Foundation with immense enthusiasm, experience and ability to get things done. Throughout his career, Clark has shown his dedication to children through his work with the Boys & Girls Clubs in Virginia as well as Florida. His extensive institutional knowledge of the non-profit world will enrich an already successful non-profit network.



Bringing Non-Profits Together to Ensure Issues Important to the GAL Program are Promoted in the Legislature

In the 2016 Legislative Session, the GAL Foundation hired a lobbyist to ensure issues important to the 20 local non-profit organizations and GAL Program were represented in the Florida Legislature. Nine local non-profit organizations contributed to this important initiative and began meeting to ensure their voices were represented during the legislative session. With every meeting, the GAL Foundation and the non-profits

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work together to present a unified mission and work to meet the needs of Florida's dependent children.

Developing the *Amended and Restated Bylaws of Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation, Inc.*

The GAL Foundation updated the Bylaws of the Foundation on March 31, 2016. These Bylaws address matters such as the Board of Directors role and responsibilities, meetings, hiring of Foundation CEO, and recordkeeping. The Bylaws along with the GAL Foundation Code of Ethics are posted on the GAL Foundation website, www.flgal.org.

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 represented by the GAL Program.

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

Finally, when a child-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.

FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM FOUNDATION PLANS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2016-2019

The Foundation's plans for the next three fiscal years derive from 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 not only will lead to a better understanding of the GAL Program but also the needs of Florida's abused and neglected children.

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The Foundation is partnering with Sunshine Health to provide Regional Volunteer Conferences throughout the Fall and Winter of 2016 and 2017. Training Topics will include Children’s Healthcare and Eligibility; GAL Former Foster Youth Panel; from the Bench; and A Mock Trial with GAL Attorneys.

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 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.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eric Clark".

Eric Clark

CEO, Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation

This report is submitted in accordance with § 20.058, 9 F.S.; requiring citizen support and direct-support organizations to annually submit certain information to the appropriate agency; requiring each agency receiving such information to post submissions on the agency’s website; requiring each agency receiving such information to annually submit a report to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.