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CONTACT PERSON: Margie Menzel

Phone: (850) 922-7287

Cell: (850) 354-2046

E-mail: Margie.Menzel@gal.fl.gov

GUARDIAN AD LITEM NAMES 2018 STATEWIDE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

[Tallahassee, Florida] – A Brevard County woman has been named the Statewide Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program's Volunteer of the Year for her work on behalf of abused, abandoned and neglected children, the program announced Tuesday.

Colleagues say Patti Reges, who has been a GAL volunteer in Brevard County for 20 years, has been exceptionally tenacious in fighting for hundreds of children over her long tenure, especially traumatized children with special medical needs.

"Patti's diligent visits, calls and follow-ups keep adults accountable and children safe," GAL Executive Director Alan Abramowitz said.

Abramowitz announced Tuesday that Reges had won the Audrey L. Schiebler Volunteer of the Year Award for 2018. Given that the statewide program had more than 12,000 certified volunteers during that time, he said, it's no small accolade.

One of Reges's charges – a baby who was shaken nearly to death last year and not expected to survive – instead received the finest medical care and is now in an adoptive placement thanks to Reges. GAL Circuit Director Sharon Graham of the 18th Judicial Circuit says Reges spent hundreds of hours and drove all over the state on the little boy's case.

"He has fought hard and is still with us today," Graham said of the baby. "Patti is still holding him during his hours-long neuro-storms. She played a strong part in finding him an adoptive placement."

Reges not only managed the baby's thousands of pages of medical records, Graham said, but dedicated herself to his two older siblings as well. Graham credits Reges with getting the oldest child placed with a grandparent and the middle one with a permanent guardian.

Finally, Reges fought for the baby's father to surrender his rights to the child on the grounds he posed a threat to his safety. She gathered the evidence, recruited an outstanding volunteer attorney, and the father surrendered his rights three months later.

"Patti is very well respected in court, and no one questions her stalwart integrity," Graham said. "She respectfully listens to all sides before advocating for the child's best interests."

To learn more about the Guardian ad Litem Program or to become a volunteer, visit www.GuardianadLitem.org or call 1-866-341-1GAL.

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