



Children's Guardian Fund

Letter from Our President

Serving as president of the **Children's Guardian Fund** has been both demanding and exhilarating. The demands are easy to understand: there are currently almost 1,000 children in our area who have been removed from their families because they were abused, neglected or abandoned. The epidemic of prescription drug abuse has led to a tragic increase in the number of infants born addicted and the economic downturn has led to family stress that often results in children being harmed. The demands on our funds have grown accordingly.

We want children of all ages to get the help they need with their school studies. We want the child with a musical gift to join the school band or the church choir. For children with an interest in athletics, we want to provide team uniforms, or soccer cleats, or baseball mitts. We want to be sure that a newborn baby abandoned in the hospital and taken in by a generous neighbor or relatives has a crib to sleep in.

The volunteer child advocates from the **Guardian ad Litem** program provide a voice for the child who has nobody else to speak on their behalf. The **Children's Guardian Fund** supplies the money that enables the advocates not only to speak up, but also to pay for some of the everyday extras that allow children in foster care to feel more like the other kids in their neighborhood, allowing for normalcy. In turn, we rely on you, the generous residents of our area, to donate the funds that enable us to help these children who deserve so much more than to be neglected, abused and abandoned.

We are the not-for-profit organization that says "yes" to at risk children and their advocates and we say "yes" thanks to the generosity of people like you.

Harold "Hal" Hedley



2013-14 ANNUAL REPORT for Children's Guardian Fund



Meet our Board of Directors

Harold "Hal" Hedley, President
Judy Sharple
Kimberly Hopper
Melissa Allen
Carol Belmont
Jasmine Cresswell Candlish
Jeremy Carter
Wendy Cox
Betty Ewing
Debbie Fallucca
Andrea McHugh
Gordon E. "Mike" Michalson, Jr.
Mark Sharff
Ian Sharp
Connie Shingledecker
Thomas Shults

Our Staff

Svetlana Kaminsky, Office Manager
Jan Vestal, Program Director

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REGISTRATION #: CH37509.

Our History

We were formed to work in concert with the Guardian ad Litem program.

The Guardian ad Litem (GAL) program in the 12th Judicial Circuit was established in 1980 as a pilot project in response to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act passed by Congress. Now a mandated statewide program, GAL receives funds from the state and counties to pay the salaries of all full-time staff, currently 28 in the 12th Circuit, as well as administration costs such as office space, computers, telephones, etc.

By state law, each circuit must have its own nonprofit arm to raise the additional dollars necessary to support its GAL program.

The Children's Guardian Fund (CGF) was established in 1996 as a 501(c)(3) to raise the funds needed to support the 400 volunteer Guardians ad Litem and to supplement the state aid provided for the 1,100 area children in care each year as a result of abandonment, abuse or neglect.



Our Programs

Providing a Voice for Every Child

GAL and CGF are committed to the goal that each and every child should go to court and through the child welfare system with a personal advocate. To this end, CGF provides the GAL program with funds for the recruitment, training and retention of trained child advocates. During the past year we have focused on ensuring that advanced training is available for staff and volunteers. Training is vital for volunteer GAL child advocates because it ensures that they are fully informed and truly able to represent a child's best interests, even in the most complicated cases.

Normalcy and Enrichment

With the growing demand for normalcy and enrichment support since the passage of the "Let Kids Be Kids Bill" in 2013, CGF has prioritized the funding of requests for normalcy items and experiences. For years, CGF has worked to minimize feelings of isolation and rejection among children living in foster and state care. Now, with the legislation on our side, the dream to improve the lives of children living in out-of-home care is more attainable than ever. In the past year we have streamlined our request process to ensure easy access and accurate tracking of all the requests we receive. In addition, we actively collaborate with existing community resources to meet some of the demand for things such as laptop computers, travel, and trendy teen clothing.

Bridge to the Future/Next Step

Through this program, CGF advocates for adolescents age 13 to 23 who need extra support as they transition out of state care and into self-sufficiency. During the past year we concentrated on strengthening the consistency and significance of the services that are provided to this vulnerable population by collaborating with existing community resources. We invested time into ensuring that our New College tutoring program is fully operational and easily accessible by all teens in foster care. We have also taken on paying for tutoring of children and teens who cannot access the New College campus where we coordinate free tutoring. Beginning in 2014, we developed a new initiative to provide driver's education to eligible young adults as well as jobs for all the teens who want one. This has already resulted in several teens gaining the important life skills of being a good employee, as well as stronger community ties to local employers and businesses.

Some of the items we fund to make children feel normal and loved:

- Cribs and mattresses
- Baby stroller
- Horseback riding therapy
- Summer camps
- Back-to-school supplies
- School field trips
- 2nd pair of glasses
- Bicycles and helmets
- Prom attire and tickets
- Sports equipment and fees
- High school yearbooks
- Clothing for work
- Driver's licenses



Academic Awards

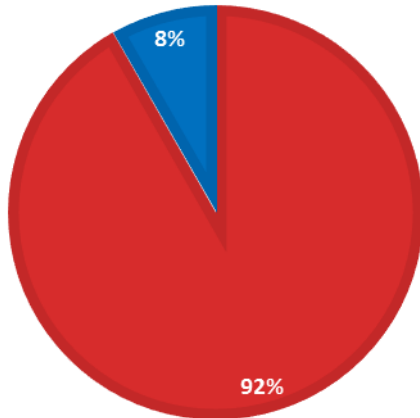
Our Academic Awards program recognizes children in care who have made a commitment to their studies and have shown improvement in attitude and effort. To honor their achievements, twice a year we present them with a certificate and a cash award which increases by age and grade level.

Financial Summary

2013/14 FISCAL YEAR

May 1 - April 30

■ Program Expenses* ■ Administration Expenses*



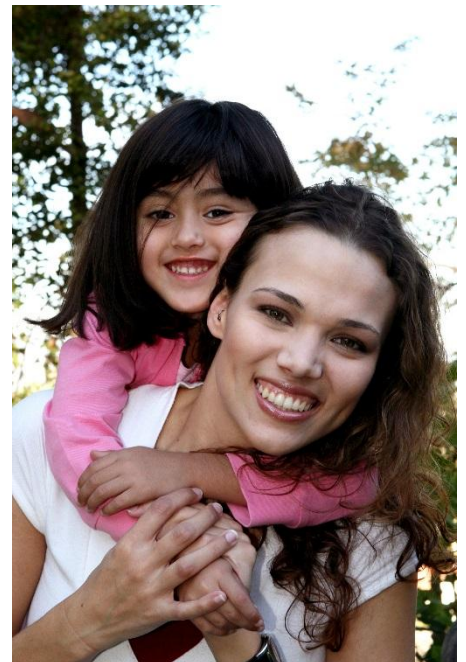
*Per IRS 990

Financial Responsibility

The Children's Guardian Fund is operated by one office manager and one program director who receive a lot of support from the 17 dedicated volunteer board of directors and 430 volunteer child advocates. An organization with strong volunteer roots, the Children's Guardian Fund always puts the needs of children first. Our operations costs are kept at a minimum thanks to in-kind office space, donated computers, and free record management software.

Looking Ahead

The Children's Guardian Fund has established a Planned Giving program to ensure long term sustainability. Our increasing endowments at the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation help assure support for area at-risk youth well into the future. We have established procedures for accepting bequests and planned gifts. Our trained personnel are prepared to work with financial and legal advisors to ensure the greatest yield on gifted resources for the enhancement of the lives of our area youth.



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Our Mission

The mission of the Children's Guardian Fund, Inc. is to raise funds to ensure that every abused, neglected and abandoned child in the 12th Judicial Circuit of Florida has a court-appointed Guardian ad Litem and that financial assistance is available for the child's health, educational and social needs.

Our goal as an organization is to provide each child and young adult in state care with the normalcy and enrichment support they need to help them succeed as they move forward in life.

"Many people spend their lives striving to make an impact through success in business, sports or personal achievement. I have found that making a difference in someone else's life, especially a child in need, is impact that really matters. It can truly change the course of a child's future and of those around them for generations to come."

~ Lynn I., GAL Volunteer Child Advocate

"My wish came true. I bought a dress and had the right shoes, good hairstyle and matching earrings to attend my 8th grade dance. If it wasn't for you guys, I don't think I would have had such a great opportunity in my life as a teenager."

~ Girl living in a shelter and then placed in a foster home after her biological mother died of a drug overdose

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have too much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

~ Franklin D. Roosevelt

"Community without benevolence invites it's own destruction."

~ Confucius

"Don't build a community by crisis, build it by design."

~ M. Scott Peck, M.D.

Help us change the end of the story



**Children's
Guardian Fund**

Nonprofit
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