
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Voices for Children of Tampa Bay Recognized with the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program Non-Profit Organization of the Year Award

[Tallahassee, Florida] Alan Abramowitz, Executive Director of the Florida Guardian ad Litem Office, announced Voices for Children of Tampa Bay is this year's winner of the Non-Profit Organization of the Year award. The Non-Profit Organization of the Year award is given to a 501(c)3 organization who consistently assists the Florida GAL Program in all aspects of advocacy, fundraising, and support for the benefit of the GAL Program's mission and the children the GAL Program serves. Voices for Children of Tampa Bay exhibits exceptional commitment to involvement with and for the GAL Program throughout the 13th Circuit with dedication to the principles and standards of the GAL Program.

Voices for Children of Tampa Bay (Voices) has been an integral partner with the 13th Circuit GAL Program. Voices exceeds expectations in fundraising and in supporting GAL volunteers. Voices has provided food and water for the office and staff; they arranged, planned, and attended a volunteer appreciation event at a local park. Voices provided each GAL volunteer with \$10 gas cards during the holidays included with a hand-written thank you note as a token of appreciation. Voices is also funding a large GAL volunteer appreciation event in October and is providing several raffle items for the GAL volunteers.

This year, Voices has raised \$30,000 and used those funds to ensure children get to be children. Their efforts have paid for clothing, special summer camps for kids, Busch Gardens tickets, and car seats. Voices regularly and enthusiastically grants requests for the items children need. Voices is also a partner in meeting the legal needs of children the GAL Program serves. Voices has provided \$25,000 to assist with issues such as: obtaining birth certificates, depositions, expert testimony, evaluations, and bonding assessments.

Voices has implemented Florida's first courthouse dog named Tibet. Courthouse dogs calm children who may have to testify during what is certainly a stressful and difficult time. Tibet has a soothing effect on children waiting in the courthouse, during depositions, interviews, visits with parents, and court hearings. Voices funds Tibet's handler, volunteer Brenda Kocher's training including certification in childhood trauma. Tibet's veterinary care, food, and supplies are funded through Voices donors. To share the significance of courthouse dogs, Voices is filming a Public Service Announcement along with local providers and judges. Tibet brings love to the GAL office, the Attorney General's office and to the children the GAL Program serves.

Alan Abramowitz said, "Throughout my years working in child welfare, I have learned no one accomplishes great success alone. To change a child's life and to ensure they are in a safe and permanent home, takes a team of dedicated hard-working people who have the same mission. This is particularly evident when looking at the support non-profit organizations across the state give to our local GAL Programs. Voices represents what can be accomplished when two organizations work

together to change the life of a child. I thank Voices for all they have done and all they will certainly continue to do for our GAL volunteers, staff and the children we serve.”

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

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