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FIFTH CIRCUIT GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM

For Immediate Release

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Hernando County Children Need Your Help

*Become an advocate for an abused or neglected child***.**

No one should simply shake their head and sadly lament the horrific story of child abuse. Instead of passive despair, let these tragic incidents serve as a galvanizing call to action for us all to commit to ending abuse and securing the safety and future of every child in Hernando County.

Yes, we *can* end child abuse. We can end it when we all become advocates for children.

For some of us, that advocacy comes in a formal role. Teachers, childcare workers, health care providers and others who come into daily contact with children can be vigilant for signs of abuse and neglect. Their actions to report suspected abuse or to offer extra time and attention to fragile children can do more than make a difference. It can save lives.

Guardian ad Litem (GAL) volunteers also put their passion for the well-being of children into action. Assigned to advocate for abused and neglected children, GAL volunteers make sure kids do not get lost in the overburdened legal and social service systems or languish in foster homes. Volunteers advocate for the children until their court case is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home.

For many abused children, their GAL volunteer is the one constant adult presence in their lives.

Intense advocacy can break the cycle of abuse and neglect. When children grow up in homes where their only adult role models respond to them with violence and disregard for their needs, they repeat that cycle with their own children. When a GAL volunteer intercedes, it not only changes the course of one child's life, it makes an impact for generations.

Your advocacy for children not only will help end child abuse, it will improve our community for everyone who lives here. Children who are abused and do not get the support they need to heal are more likely than other kids to drop out of school, end up homeless, turn to crime, and rely as adults on social welfare programs. When we work together to protect vulnerable children, it saves lives and tax dollars.

There are many life-threatening and incurable diseases that sadly afflict children. But we have the cure to child abuse. It lies within each of us. Now is the time to act.

If you are interested in making this cause, your cause, become a Guardian ad Litem volunteer. Contact Diana Gisonni at 352-812-6971 or email her at diana.gisonni@gal.fl.gov. For more information, visit our website – www.guardianadlitem.org