



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**COMMUNITY CHILD ADVOCATES ARE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR UNPARALLELED
COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION**

May 7, 2008-Miami, FL- Following its annual tradition, the 11th Judicial Circuit Guardian Ad Litem Program celebrated its volunteer child advocates at a recognition dinner held at the Alexander Hotel on Miami Beach on Tuesday, April 29. Year after year, this Program pays homage to those members of our community who, through their work as Guardians Ad Litem, speak up for the best interests of abused, abandoned, and neglected children in dependency court and make a difference in the lives of those that usually go unheard.

Nearly two hundred child advocates, judges, attorneys, and guests gathered at the *Guardians are Champions* recognition banquet to say thank you to the over 350 Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) volunteers who make up the lifeblood of the Program, which, in the year 2007, reached a milestone of 90% representation. "This is our favorite night of the year! It is very exciting to honor our volunteers for the hundreds of hours they dedicate to being the voice for the abused and neglected children of Miami-Dade County," said Joni Goodman, the 11th Judicial Circuit GAL Program Executive Director. "We try to give special recognition each year to volunteers who go above and beyond. Our volunteers are a special group of people who are committed to advocating for the needs of foster children. No one does more for these children than them," concluded Goodman.

As it is customary, the banquet presented special awards to a law firm who has provided sterling pro-bono service and seven outstanding individuals, all of whom have truly outdone themselves to make a long lasting difference for the children served by the Guardian Ad Litem Program. Each award was introduced by a short video presentation on each recipient, with the emotional stories and inspiring actions of each featured volunteer serving as testament to how commitment and love for children can overcome the biggest hurdles of life.

This year's award recipients are:

Division One: Isabel Diaz

Division Two: Diana Hearon

Division Three: Ronald Kates

Division Eight: Phyllis Greenberg

Division Nine: Yaselitt Marcia

Transitioning Youth Project Award: Betsy Skipp

Lorraine Munroe Spirit of Excellence Award: Lynn Hausmann

Don Quixote Pro-Bono Attorney Award: Hogan & Hartson LLP

With over four thousand children in Miami-Dade's foster care system, the work of the Guardians Ad Litem is of utmost importance. They are the eyes and ears of the abused, abandoned, and neglected children who are removed from their homes and do not have a loving and caring adult to look after their best interests.

Voices For Children Foundation is a not for profit organization that raises funds to ensure that every abused, abandoned and neglected child in Miami-Dade County has a court appointed Guardian Ad Litem and that financial assistance and other resources are available for their accompanying health, educational, and social needs. Guardians Ad Litem are trained, court-appointed adults who serve as the representative voice for abused, abandoned, and neglected children involved in dependency court proceedings. There are over 4,000 children in court proceedings who need representation, with the Guardian Ad Litem advocating for 90% of them. Be a Voice, visit www.voices4.org. To become a Guardian Ad Litem, call 305.638.6861.

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Community child advocates are recognized (page 2)

Picture Captions:

Division One: GAL Supervisor Kristine Inyang, awardee (at podium) Isabel Diaz, GAL attorney Marissa Leichter, Judge Geri Cohen, Judge Mindy Glazer.

Division Two: GAL Supervisor Marjorie McKenzie, awardee Diana Hearon, GAL Attorney Jessica Allen, Administrative Judge, Cindy Lederman

Division Three: GAL Supervisor Cooky Silverman, awardee Ronald Kates, Judge Nushin Sayfie, GAL Attorney Robert Latham

Division Eight: Former GAL supervisor Tatiana Crockett, awardee Phyllis Greenberg, GAL Asst. Supervisor Judith Sinclair, GAL Attorney Jennifer Hinchey, GAL Supervisor Yvonne Palmer-Bennett

Division Nine: GAL Supervisor Taylor Wall, awardee Yaselitt Diaz, Judge Valerie Manno Schurr, GAL Attorney, Loreal Arscott

Transitioning Youth Project Award: GAL Attorney Kristen Holt, Judge Nushin Sayfie, Awardee Betsy Skipp, GAL Project co-ordinator Becky Calderon

Lorraine Munroe Spirit of Excellence Award: GAL Director Joni Goodman, awardee Lynn Hausmann, Judge Nushin Sayfie, GAL Supervisor Cynthia Kline, GAL Attorney Khamisi Grace

Don Quixote Pro-Bono Attorney Award: Jose Talavera (Hogan & Hartson), Miguel Gonzalez (Hogan & Hartson), GAL Volunteer Andrea Steinacker, Shelby Pasarell-Tsa (Hogan & Hartson), John O'Sullivan (Hogan & Hartson), Olga Garcia (Hogan & Hartson), GAL Director Olga Garcia, GAL Regional Counsel Mercedes Scopetta.

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