

All Things Judicial Highlights Guardian ad Litem Attorney Advocates



From NCAOC Communications Office <NCAOCCommunicationsOffice@info.nccourts.org>
To <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
Reply-To <NCAOCCommunicationsOffice@info.nccourts.org>
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COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
MEDIA@NCCOURTS.ORG
PO BOX 2448, RALEIGH, NC 27602

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North Carolina

GUARDIAN AD LITEM
A CHILD'S ADVOCATE IN COURT

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Chief Justice Paul Newby proclaims April as North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Appreciation Month for the Judicial Branch.

RALEIGH —In honor of April being recognized as [Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Appreciation Month](#), the April episodes of *All Things Judicial* highlight the [North Carolina Guardian ad Litem program \(GAL\)](#). In [today's episode](#), we interview five attorney advocates who are staff or contractual attorneys in the GAL program. These attorneys are an essential part of a collaborative model, that along with volunteers and staff, ensure that abused or neglected children in North Carolina receive GAL legal advocacy services. GAL Advocacy Supervisor Ruth Griffin moderated the interviews where attorneys shared about their experiences in serving as advocates ways to improve the system of representing abused and neglected children in court, and how they cope with the sometimes difficult circumstances in their cases.



"Especially in the courtroom, I always try to make sure that (the child's and GAL's) voice is heard," said attorney Vernon Cloud on the podcast. "Letting people know that I represent the child and to contact me first ... is a constant battle."

The North Carolina Guardian ad Litem program equips over 5,000 child advocate volunteers to serve abused and neglected children by advocating for their best interests in court.

In 1983, the North Carolina General Assembly established the Office of Guardian ad Litem Services as a division of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts. When a petition alleging abuse or neglect of a juvenile is filed in district court, the judge appoints a volunteer GAL advocate and an attorney advocate to provide team representation to the child, who has full party status in trial and appellate proceedings. All GAL advocates are trained, supervised, and supported by program staff in each county of the state. The collaborative model of GAL attorney advocates, volunteers, and staff ensures that all North Carolina children who are alleged by the Department of Social Services to have been abused or neglected receive GAL legal advocacy services.

MORE INFORMATION

All Things Judicial is a podcast about the important role of the North Carolina Judicial Branch in state government. The podcast follows a bi-monthly release schedule with each new episode available for download every other Wednesday and can be found on all podcast apps and on [NCCourts.gov](https://www.nccourts.gov).

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About North Carolina Judicial Branch

The [North Carolina Judicial Branch](#) is an equal and distinctively separate branch and core function of government. More than 7,000 Judicial Branch employees statewide administer justice in courthouses in North Carolina's 100 counties. The [Judicial Branch budget for FY 2021–22](#) was \$672.4M, 86.2% of which is used to pay salaries and the remaining 13.8% is used for operations. The Judicial Branch receives only 2.59% of the overall State budget.

About North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts

The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) is the administrative agency for the [North Carolina Judicial Branch](#), providing administrative services to help the North Carolina court system operate more efficiently and effectively, taking into account each courthouse's diverse needs, caseloads, and available resources.

Media Contact

[Chris Mears](#)



North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts
901 Corporate Center Drive, Raleigh, NC 27607
919-890-1000 | www.NCcourts.gov

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