

"GETTING THE WORD OUT"
GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM
PROJECT PROPOSAL

By Guardian 26:
Kitzzy Aviles
Marc Love

Submitted to:
Dr. Lori Brodkin, UCF
Nadine Miller, GAL

October 12, 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	2
Introduction.....	3
Problem: Getting the Word Out	3
Solution: Writing a Press Release and Volunteer Profiles	4
Objectives	4
Rationale.....	4
Outback Steakhouse Press Release.....	4
Profiling GAL Volunteers.....	5
Drafting and Revising Documents.....	5
Management.....	6
Conclusion.....	7

INTRODUCTION

A state mandate requires that a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) be appointed to represent every child involved in a court case of abuse, neglect or abandonment. The Seminole County GAL Program has fulfilled this requirement for the past 25 years as a volunteer organization. Volunteers get to know children personally and represent them in court.

Ms. Miller, the executive director of the Seminole County GAL Program, identified specific writing needs to Guardian 26. The first is to create a press release celebrating its new sponsor, Outback Steakhouse. The second is to create a document profiling GAL volunteers. The GAL Program does not have a writing staff and other documents are needed. Guardian 26 has agreed to complete the Outback press release and volunteer profiling. During production, Guardian 26 will communicate with the Seminole County GAL Program regularly to ensure that the documents are coming along as expected.

This proposal explains the project's objectives in detail along with the organization and the strategy Guardian 26 will use when completing this project. A Gantt chart outlining deadlines for all major milestones is included in the management section.

PROBLEM: GETTING THE WORD OUT

The mission of the Seminole County GAL Program is "to recruit, train, support and supervise volunteers to advocate for the best interest of children who are alleged to be abused, neglected or abandoned and who are involved in court proceedings." The number of children who need a guardian greatly exceeds the number of available volunteers, leaving thousands of children unrepresented. In order for the GAL Program to be able to recruit volunteers and seek additional funding to support it, the community needs to become aware of this great program.

Ms. Miller expressed a need for professional writers to write articles and press releases to inform the community that the program exists and to highlight its needs and its successes. Since the GAL Program is a non-profit organization with limited funding and resources, the current staff does not have the time to write these documents themselves. Additionally, we will be able to offer a fresh perspective when drafting these documents.

SOLUTION: WRITING A PRESS RELEASE AND VOLUNTEER PROFILES

The main goal of the Seminole County GAL Program is to get the word out about the program and recruit new volunteers in order to have 100% representation of children needing a guardian. With this in mind, Guardian 26 has defined the following objectives for this project to help the GAL Program meet their goal.

OBJECTIVES

- Write a press release about the new partnership with Outback Steakhouse.
- Create and administer a survey to gather information from current volunteers about their experiences as a GAL.
- Compile responses from the survey into short article pieces profiling what it is like to be a GAL.
- Using the volunteer profiles and information gathered from GAL about the program, write an article expressing the need for volunteers.

RATIONALE

The Seminole County GAL Program does not have any staff to meet its writing needs. Ms. Miller shared with us many writing opportunities, but we chose these because they would have the most impact and reusability. The Outback Steakhouse press release will meet an immediate need as well as begin to get the word out about the GAL Program. The volunteer profiles will give the community an idea of what guardians do, why they are needed and how they can help. In addition to using the survey and profiles in the article we will write, Ms. Miller will be able to reuse these pieces for future articles or promotional materials.

OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE PRESS RELEASE

The Seminole County GAL Program recently secured a partnership with a local Outback Steakhouse restaurant. Outback is providing support by offering lunch as well as their facilities during non-business hours for GAL to host events such as meetings and training for GAL volunteers. Ms. Miller gave us literature about the partnership and a contact at Outback Steakhouse, Amy Pickard. Publishing a press release celebrating this new partnership is the agency's top priority, so we will tackle this first. We will research local newspapers for submission guidelines to ensure we produce a press release with a high probability of getting published.

PROFILING GAL VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Miller's main goal is to get the word out about the GAL Program to recruit new volunteers. In the sample articles she gave us, she noted that the most effective articles are those that tell a story about the volunteers and the children. We will create a survey to gather information from current volunteers about their experiences with the GAL Program. Possible question topics include motivation for becoming a GAL, years of service and number of cases. Ms. Miller will give us a list of names of volunteers to interview. We will send them the survey with a cover letter explaining our purpose. Based on their responses, we may conduct follow-up phone and face-to-face interviews to get clarification of their statements and gain further understanding of their experiences. We hope to survey and interview volunteers who represent children of different age groups and who have various years of service. Through their stories, we will be able to create a mental picture depicting what a real GAL "looks like."

DRAFTING AND REVISING DOCUMENTS

This section details our process for drafting and revising the documents we mentioned in the previous sections. Since celebrating the GAL Program's partnership with Outback Steakhouse is Ms. Miller's top priority, we will begin working on this document immediately. After doing research on the GAL Program and Outback Steakhouse we will draft the press release and submit it to Ms. Miller for review, in hopes to have it published before their next event at Outback Steakhouse.

The next document we will deliver is the survey. It will include a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey and the possibility of a follow-up phone or face-to-face interview. The survey and cover letter will be reusable. Ms. Miller will approve the survey and send us a list of volunteers to contact. The volunteers will complete the survey and e-mail it back to us. We will review all response with Ms. Miller.

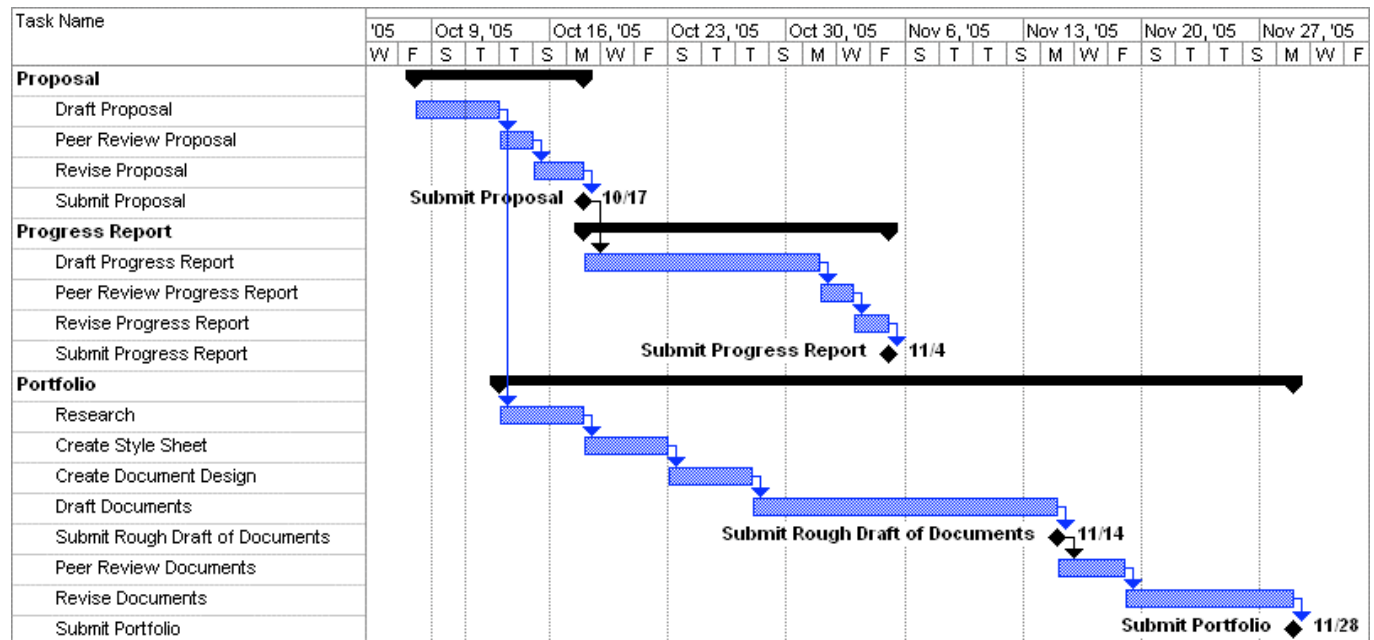
For each chosen response we will create an individual volunteer profile in paragraph form. We will compile these individual profiles with general information about the GAL Program and its need for volunteers into one article to be submitted to relevant publications. Drafting the profiles individually will allow Ms. Miller to use them in other promotional materials and serve as a template for future volunteer profiles.

MANAGEMENT

Guardian 26 has two members, Marc Love and Kitzzy Aviles. Kitzzy secured the Seminole County GAL Program as a sponsor and will serve as a liaison to the agency. Prior to discussing the Seminole County GAL Program’s writing needs, the members of Guardian 26 completed a 22-question survey to help identify their strengths. The survey asked each member to rate his or her skills in categories like research, writing, editing and design. Guardian 26 divided tasks based on these results. For instance, we found that Kitzzy has a lot of design experience, so she will produce the design and visuals needed. We found that Marc enjoys researching, writing and editing, so he will lead those areas. Since this is a two person team we did not feel the need to appoint a group leader or class liaison. Ultimately, Guardian 26 feels that each member’s contributions will overlap categories equally.

Ms. Miller is our contact with the GAL Program. All documents will be created to meet the class requirements and her expectations. She has given Guardian 26 an open-door invitation for questions and concerns. We will keep her informed of our progress at least once every two weeks. The Gantt chart in Figure 1 shows the project's milestones.

Figure 1: Gantt Chart



CONCLUSION

We believe that "volunteer" Guardians are better than appointed workers because they are concerned primarily with the children. We feel that it is important for the Seminole County GAL Program to continue operation on a volunteer basis. We hope that our contributions will aid this effort and most importantly, make a difference for the children.