

Recently, I had the privilege of attending the annual Guardian Ad Litem Recognition Dinner. In January I marked my second year as a GAL. I didn't attend the recognition dinner my first year and I was not prepared for the abundance of appreciation that filled the room.

Clever and thoughtful decorations and gift favors were at every seat. A yummy buffet dinner was served and complimentary beer and wine was available. Every guest received a puzzle piece with half an inspiring quotation on it. We were asked to write our name on our piece and find our 'missing piece'. Once found, we put them together and the quote was complete. It was a great way to meet and greet members of the Guardian Ad Litem "family" who serve in various capacities. I met other GALs and we shared stories and ideas and asked questions and learned from each other.

One of the highlights of the night was the speech made by Judge Martz. He spoke with great passion and reverence for all of the people who work tirelessly on behalf of the children in our care. I was particularly delighted because he is "my" judge. I am assigned to his Honor's courtroom and every time I give an official report to Judge Martz, I feel appreciated and respected. It is so important for GALs to feel necessary and heard because as a volunteer it is too easy to be overworked and undervalued.

My decision to become a GAL was based in part on being an empty-nester and my grandchildren living 1200 miles away. My decision to stay a GAL, in large part, is because of the genuine dedication to and palpable love for children that was plentiful, not just in the room, but in the hearts of all involved.

Sandra M - GAL Volunteer