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APRIL 2020



Insights from Michelle Canaday, Esq. Executive Director, 15th Circuit

Hi, all volunteers and alumni, I hope everyone is safe and complying with social distancing, as your health and the health of our kids is the most important thing. In my last email, I requested that you use social distancing and only do visits by video/telephone conferencing.

Starting this week, the Secretary of DCF put out new guidelines allowing case managers to also do visits by video which makes it doubly important that we are following up with families on any needs or concerns they may have. If concerns arise or help is needed please let your CAM and the case manager know, as we continue working together with all agencies that work for what's best for the families we serve. Let's not let any child fall through the cracks.

I hope that our plan for visiting our kids remotely has been successful so far and that you have put your visit into Optima along with the time that you spent accomplishing this. As a reminder, we use your volunteer hours to match funds for our VOCA grant through Speak Up for Kids, it is super important that you put all your minutes and hours in Optima. It would also be helpful if you completed an online training this month as we are concerned there may not be enough grant hours for March in April. You can do this by going to the I am for the Child Academy <https://florida-guardian-ad-litem-program.thinkific.com>; and picking any training that interest you and put in the hour (sometimes 1.5) you spent watching into Optima as this counts towards your continuing education credits and continuing certification. If you would like to be super helpful to your child and the GAL program you could do the Educational Advocacy Training (it's Chapter Nine on the Academy site - <https://florida-guardian-ad-litem-program.thinkific.com/courses/chapter-9-educational-advocacy>; We have a goal this year to get as many volunteers as possible trained in how to advocate for your child's education (this could help you with your own children and/or grandchildren).

As this is such a difficult time people may ask you how they can help. Please direct them to the GAL webpage <https://www.galpb.org>; to volunteer to advocate for a child or to Speak Up for Kids <https://speakupforkidspbc.org>; where they can make a direct contribution, as Speak Up continues to help pay for our children's needs, including food, clothing, and other necessities.

Please make sure you check your email for updates about the GAL program and Facebook for links to resources in our community. Please stay safe and make sure you contact your CAM to let them know how you are doing in this difficult time.

Michelle



LATEST FROM LIZ LIEBER

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Hello, volunteers, staff, and other interested parties.

While we are all at home waiting for this novel corona virus to run its course, there is surely no new advice; so, for anyone looking for enrichment and learning outside of Netflix and the cable news, try these two good reads that I came across this past January:

No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us , One reviewer called this “A seminal and breathtaking account of why home is the most dangerous place to be a woman...a tour de force.” Another said “Terrifying, courageous reporting from our internal war zone.” Ms. Synder, an award-winning journalist from the Columbia School of Journalism, details several stories of women killed by their domestic abuser whose situations were completely under the radar of law enforcement, the courts, mental health providers, advocates, etc. During her research, the author spent considerable time with some of the abusers, including those in prison, and reviews programs available nationwide to batterers. She sought out the top researchers in the fields of criminology, mental health, social sciences and domestic violence advocates. (Her footnotes and references alone are worthwhile reading for a year or more!) In addition, she explores and participates in successful Fatality Review Teams and Risk Assessment teams operating throughout the nation. The chapter on Domestic Violence Shelters is informative on why women do not readily avail themselves of shelters as an option. It's well-written, comprehensive, and easily the best book on the subject I've read in years.

Next, we have: **Talking to Strangers, What We Should Know About the People We Don't Know**, by Malcolm Gladwell

I'll just say I loved this book, it was a Wow moment throughout! He talks about these theories, Truth Default Theory, Transparency Theory, and Coupling, explaining them in the context of past and current people and events, e.g., the Cuban Spy fiasco of the '80s, Bernie Maddox, Amanda Knox, Brock Turner, poet Sylvia Plath, the Jerry Sandusky scandal, even Adolph Hitler, past English Prime Minister Neville Chamberlin, and, sadly, Sandra Bland. In our work, especially, I found the insights and theories about human psychology and behavior extremely valuable; my top recommendation!

So while you're self-quarantining and practicing physical distancing, Happy Reading. And lastly, Thank You for all you do each and every day as a Child Advocate.

Sincerely, Your Program Director,

Liz Lieber



LEGAL ON LINE with KATHLEEN CLENDING, ESQ.

These are fast moving times we live in and there is much uncertainty as to what will be happening by the time this article is published. As I write this, I am sitting in my recently created office space in my breakfast hutch drinking coffee I had to make for myself. It is not the same. A lot of things are not the same right now. I understand that in the current environment face-to-face visits may not be a reality. Unfortunately, instead of making this less work for us it makes more and our concerns are heightened. During this time of Social Distancing, we need to make sure we are contacting our children and their supports to make sure that they are safe and that their needs are being met. I believe we will all increase our knowledge of different types of technology in the upcoming weeks. We will be utilizing video chats and social media as means of connecting with friends, family and peers. While using this technology we need to make sure needs are being met.

Without attending school daily, many children miss that guaranteed breakfast and lunch meal each day. Please check to make sure your children and their family have adequate food sources. There are community resources providing meals including but not limited to lunches provided at certain schools. Our kids will still be out of school in April, but the school board had not solidified a plan for at home education at the time I was writing this. There is a plan to make sure there will be free Wi-Fi for everyone so the children can access school programs. We may need to inquire whether our children have access to a laptop, computer, tablet or even cell phone, that will allow them to complete schoolwork. Without school, some children may be in a situation where they are not being supervised adequately and the parent or caregiver is still working but has no one to watch the children. These are uncomfortable conversations, but we need to make sure that children at home have adequate care.

One technological challenge that may be most important is your Optima input. Your efforts must be documented in Optima. If an attorney is attending a hearing by phone, he or she will not have the advantage of having a CAM or volunteer sitting with them. They need to be able to review Optima and determine what is going on with the case, what the team's concerns, and needs are and any recommendations the team may have. The attorney may have to cover the case for the primary attorney who may be sick. He or she will be less familiar with the case and they will be using Optima to help them prepare. Many of our grants which funds many positions for us require proof of what we do. They need to be able to look at our Optima cases and see what we do for the children. You need to make sure to put everything in Optima. Conversations with family, therapist, teachers, and community partners can all be documented in your contact logs. Judicial Review reports need to be filed on every case and they need to be filed timely. The Judge will review to make sure the child is stabilized and safe. Reports may need to be used instead of having an actual hearing, so they need to be done on time. Please work on getting your CAMs your reports in every case. If you need help, please reach out before the last minute so you CAMs have time to work with you without the pressure of the time crunch. With all your info already put into Optima, drafting a Judicial Review Gal Report should be easier.

We are built on the backs of our volunteers and we love them and their contributions that they give daily for the welfare of our children. I ask you to take good care of yourselves and your family.

“Constant Vigilance!” Mad Eye Moody – J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

Kathleen

FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT RECRUITMENT TEAM



Ken Gotlieb

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF RECRUITMENT



Christie Geltz

The first quarter in 2020 was very busy for the recruitment department. We spoke at many chamber meetings and numerous networking events; set up Guardian ad Litem booths at six health fairs in various communities; participated in community events such as Access Life Fair at John Prince Park and scheduled many other community get-togethers for future events. We submitted articles in other business and non-profit newsletters, where we received recognition and ad space, as well as receiving donations from local businesses to support Guardian ad Litem and Speak Up for Kids Programs.

Our Volunteer Recognition Dinner, on February 20th, was quite a success. Over 100 volunteers came together to enjoy each other's company, wonderful food and recognition of their fellow volunteer's achievements. We all need to thank Ellen for such a fabulous event once again this year. So much planning goes into this evening and it is all in Honor of You the Volunteers.

Storybook Village was once again presented at Mounts Botanical Gardens on March 8th. There was a significant representation from many local social service agencies. foster agencies, face painting, caring canines, as well as the Bookmobile and BACA (Bikers Against Child Abuse). The bikers brought their motorcycles and leather vests to show to the kids while at the same time explaining what they can do for the children in the foster care system. To top off a great weather day, lots and lots of wonderful books were adopted by the children. What makes this day complete are the smiles on the faces of the kids as they choose one (or more) brand new special book(s) to take home. Thank you to all those who made this day happen, see you again next year.

Recruitment's job is not only to get the members of the community to volunteer their time and take on the role of Guardian ad Litem, but also to make people aware of what our actual needs are to do our jobs properly and successfully. We are always in search of new business leads, available sponsorships and financial grants, as well as fundraisers or community events where we can market Guardian ad Litem to the surrounding community. Any ideas you may have please contact Christie at the office. 561-355-9973. We have plenty of room on our calendar to do presentations, volunteer fairs or other community events. We just need your help to tell us where and when we can present our programs.

Thank you for all you have done, and we look forward to working with you on our future endeavors.

Christie Geltz

Ken Gotlib

DID YOU KNOW?

We are, despite everything going on, keeping up with our training hours!

Both staff and volunteers that advocate for children within the Guardian ad Litem Program are required to complete many hours of training a year to remain certified as a Guardian ad Litem. We utilize different ways to complete this requirement, by attending trainings in person, online webinars, or reading materials. During this time where our world has slowly stopped and in-person contact is limited, this is the perfect time to consider webinars or books to further your GAL training. Our program's "I Am for the Child Academy" at <https://florida-guardian-ad-litem-program.thinkific.com/> has many new topics added every month and all of the courses are free and available to you. The topics include report writing, educational advocacy, mental health treatment, human trafficking, sexual abuse, and DCF's family functioning assessments, just to name a few. There is something of interest for everyone!

For the book lovers out there, Ellen Kranzler hosts a book club several times a year. If you are interested in attending, she is reachable by phone, 355-4511 or at bibliophile6452@comcast.net. We do keep copies of the books at the West Palm Beach and Delray courthouse offices. You can also find them in your local public library. However, you do not have to wait for a book club; books are available to check out anytime. We can provide you with a list of suggested reading so you can begin to earn training hours right away. This list is available at galpbc.org at the bottom of the In-Service training tab.

Please continue to check our website at GALPBC.org to find in-person trainings you can attend. Though suspended for the moment, in-person training will resume as soon as it is safe and healthy for everyone to do so.

No matter what form of training you participate in, always add your training hours in Optima. If you need guidance with how to do so, your Child Advocate Manager will be happy to guide you through the process.

- **New additional information from DCF on available resources:**

- DCF new direction on contact with children and families as a part of case management duties [COVID-19: Methods for 30-Day Visits for Children, Youth, Young Adults Placed In-State Care](#)
- DCF Website for to date information: <https://myflfamilies.com/covid19/>
- Resource from USF Center for Child Welfare: [COVID-19: Helping Parents, Caregivers & Children--Tips for Child Welfare Workers.](#)

Sincerely,

Jackie, Shari, and Carol.



SPEAK UP FOR KIDS **OF PALM BEACH COUNTY**

Dear Friends of Speak Up & GUARDIAN AD LITEM:

We have certainly entered uncharted territory as it relates to COVID-19 and how it's affecting our nation and our community. Our lives have changed immensely, though, we hope, not irrevocably. My ask is that everyone remains in good spirits as much as possible, as the Speak Up for Kids team extends prayers for safety, calm, and comfort as well as good vibes for you and your families.

If you have children and are working from home, you are more than likely overwhelmed by keeping up with your workload, while simultaneously ensuring your children your complete and undivided attention, while they work on and submit their required assignments. All this as you are monitoring news of the virus, watching national and state press conferences, and closely watching your loved ones for any symptoms. But it is important that you take some time to just breath. Ensuring mental health is just as important to your well-being as washing hands, social distancing, and disinfecting everything. The CDC has set up a site specifically devoted to mental health at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html> which offers tips and resources for dealing with not only your anxiety but also that of your children.

For those struggling to find FREE or nearly-FREE activities to engage in while quarantined, Chatter Pack has put together a comprehensive list of resources with everything from virtual tours, online learning, geography, nature, and music. Visit <https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/list-of-online-resources-for-anyone-who-is-isolated-at-home?fbclid=IwAR00AEurL9InguCTjpr7jfOtIBDrYyEYUGEj - HMxL0SPHvbnArwL4mgEdg> for additional information.

At Speak Up for Kids, we are always looking for silver linings. There aren't many in this situation, but here is one: All those wishes for more quality time with your family have not fallen upon deaf ears. Each day you are blessed with a new adventure where you get to create memories that your normal daily schedule prohibited. Encourage others to seek silver linings by sharing resources as you come across them.

As the pandemic runs its course, please take all necessary precautions to protect yourselves and your loved ones. Social distancing is a difficult, necessary step right now, but more than anything this crisis has reinforced for me how strong we are as a community and how much we can depend upon one another. Please know that Speak Up for Kids is just a phone call, email, or Facebook message away if you need answers, or if you just want to vent. It is normal not to know what to do in this situation. We are playing it all by ear (listening to national, state, and local press conferences) making decisions, and communicating as necessary

Finally, remember to be kind. It has been greater than 100 years since we have experienced anything of this magnitude, so let's try to extend grace to everyone around us; our elected officials, our friends and family, our coworkers, even strangers. These are difficult times, but I know that when we emerge on the other side, we will be both individually and collectively stronger.

Thank you all for your service, dedication, and patience in standing on the front lines of advocacy.



Tonya Mc Collin Cajuste

"Love" – Leader of Volunteer Engagement
Speak Up for Kids of Palm Beach County, Inc.

tonya@speakupforkidspbc.org

954.610.9204

Reaching 100% Advocacy for Every Child abused, abandoned or neglected in our community.

GAL VOLUNTEERS OPINION PAGE



We are adding a new sub-column called:

“SHOUT OUT FOR OUR KIDS”

If you have a child that you would like to highlight because of something special they have achieved, accomplished. or done for someone else, simply nominate them to appear in our new column –

Shout Out for Our Kids!

I- Zara Brenner- nominated her teen-age girl Phoenix, who is a student at a Palm Beach middle school for a place on **Shout Out**. During the academic year in which she entered foster-care; Phoenix had to repeat the previous school year, as she had only attended approximately 60 days for the year. In her first year in foster-care, she received tutoring in math, and her Spanish grades were borderline. But due to Phoenix’s hard work, aided by a stable foster home and a school that stood behind her, she is scheduled for the 8th grade with all honor classes, including honors algebra and high school science. Way-to-go –

SHOUT OUT FOR PHOENIX!

II- Beth Zigler (CAM) – nominated one of her previous kids, Rayla, who has aged out and is presently the vice-president of the Brevard Youth Leadership Council and is scheduled to be president this coming May. She very often speaks in dependency court to the new Guardian ad Litem recruits. Rayla had two amazing Guardian’s, Diane Marks in Palm Beach, who assisted her in obtaining her driver’s license, letting her use her car with endless hours of driving practice and another Guardian in Brevard who assisted her in graduating from high school, applying to and attending college. A thank you to those tremendous GALs and a

SHOUT OUT FOR RAYLA.

III- Ellen Kranzler -nominated one of her curtesy cases from Broward County, Carlos. Carlos was moved back to his home county but was very determined to finish out his high school years here in Palm Beach Lakes High School. A senior member of the choir and very involved in the drama department. Carlos gets up every morning at 4 am to catch a bus, that takes him to the tri-rail, rides the train to the station, where he catches another bus that drops him off near the school and then walks to school. He is registered to attend Palm Beach State College in the fall and has been accepted into their college choir. **SHOUT OUT FOR CARLOS!**

Following the **STARFISH STORY Dinner**, I would like to highlight some of the stories submitted by a few of our Guardians.

GAL VOLUNTEERS OPINION PAGE

I –

[My Starfish story by Anna Valencia:](#)

I had the most wonderful experience in 2019... I received a case that included three toddlers and they were divided between three homes with strangers. I was especially drawn to a 2 ½ year old who could not speak, acted wild, looked wild with a mane that was long, uncut and unkept, and hit someone every chance he could.

I was also drawn to his sister who was 1 ½ years old and only said “No!” and would not be held in anyone’s arms for any length of time and climbed everywhere; another wild child who seemed so alone with so many adults around her. They were children with no training, no direction, no love and maybe no hugs. I visited and saw the vacant stares in their eyes, the response to quick commands to “stop that” or “don’t do that” without any sense as to why they were being scolded. One child was moved to another stranger.

But my story is about the two of them who were moved to relatives. And that’s when the miracle started... The two children moved to family changed before my eyes... They smiled, they tested everyone’s patience, they were taught and learned, they were loved, and most of all, they were hugged...I look at them now and see happy faces, beautiful beaming smiles, a sense of belonging and knowing they are loved. They are part of the community they live in, they go to church, they go to the park, and they play with their own toys and they are learning to share. Fewer tantrums, fewer No’s, no blank looks...they know they belong...And did I mention they give the BEST HUGS...

My part in this change was my biggest success in the five (5) years I have been a GAL. It took many meetings, reports, evaluations, doctor visits, sending memos to request changes, as well as constant patience, love and many more hugs; and it was all worth it. I did my part to make a difference to those two children! I love these children as if they were my own.

It is why I do it, and it is why I will continue to do it.

[II - My Starfish Moment by Mari Whittelsey:](#)

As a Guardian ad Litem, a little 2-year-old boy came into my life. From the first time I met him, I kept noticing that he appeared to be struggling with this new placement. He was not an exuberant or playful child, he barely made eye contact. Since I did not know him before this placement, I had no experience to fall back on. For the ten (10) months he was in this home, I never once heard him speak, he almost never smiled and never moved around freely. I observed him at group play at the day care. While he would play a game with me, stirring a cup and giving it to me to drink, he would only give a small smile and never interacted with the other children. At this time the court determined that he should be returned to his prior foster home.

I went to see him in his new placement, as I entered this home, he came running from across the room to hug me. He picked up my badge and I asked him if he remembered me, that my name was Mari. He said yes, which shocked me and then to my amazement, turned around and said “momma, it’s “Mani”, (mis-pronouncing my name). I did not know he could even speak. He then proceeded to bring me a photo album and started naming everyone in it. All this time running over to his care-giver, calling her momma and hugging her. When I left the home that day, I sat in my car and cried!

WHAT I DIDN’T KNOW I DIDN’T KNOW!

We must never assume and never give up on any child. What we say and what we do for a child matters every time. Changes may not come at a fast-enough speed; but it will come. We must always advocate for what is in the best interest of that child.

[Look for more STARFISH Stories to come. There will be additional stories printed in the next couple of issues of the Advocate.](#)

If you have a STARFISH STORY that you would like to add to our opinion page send it in to - bibliophile6452@comast.net.

UPCOMING EVENTS – APRIL BOOK CLUB CANCELLED.

15TH CIRCUIT PALM BEACH COUNTY GUARDIAN AD LITEM BOOK CLUB

THE BOOK FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 2020 IS:

GAL Book Club South CANCELLED

HAGEN RANCH RD
LIBRARY
14350 HAGEN RANCH RD,
DELRAY – 894 -7500
5:00 – 7:00 p.m.



GAL Book Club North CANCELLED

GARDENS BRANCH LIBRARY
11303 CAMPUS DR.
PALM BEACH GARDENS
626-6133 –
5:00 – 7:00 P.M.

WE WILL RESCHEDULE THIS BOOK FOR DISCUSSION FOR THE MONTH OF JULY.

BREAKING NIGHT – MY JOURNEY FROM HOMELESS TO HARVARD”

by Liz Murray

Liz Murray grew up in the Bronx, the daughter of two loving but drug-addicted parents. After losing her mother to AIDS and becoming homeless, Liz completed high school and won a New York Times scholarship while living on the streets. She later graduated from Harvard University and was awarded The White House Project Role Model Award, a Christopher Award, as well as the Chutzpah Award, which was given to her by Oprah Winfrey. Soon after, Lifetime Television produced an Emmy–nominated film about Liz’s life, Homeless to Harvard: the Liz Murray Story. “From runaway to Harvard Student, Murray tells an engaging, powerful motivational story about turning her life around ... In this incredible story of true grit, Murray went from feeling like ‘the world was filled with people who were repulsed by me’ to learning to receive the bountiful generosity of strangers who truly cared,” (Publishers Weekly)

RSVP - Ellen Kranzler – bibliophile6452@comcast.net – questions – 561-355-4511 //
561-704-4161

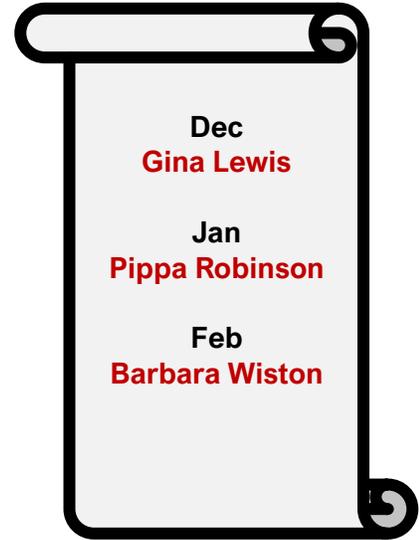
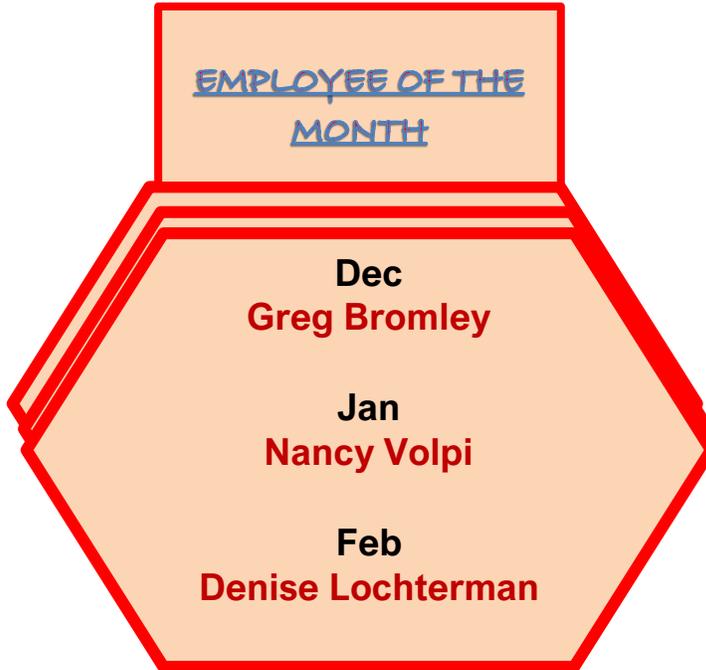
COPIES OF BOOK AVAILABLE FROM GAL LIBRARY – GAL OFFICE IN BOTH COURT HOUSES- DELRAY AND WEST PALM.

GALs of the MONTH

2019-2020



JL-TEAM



JM-TEAM



JO-TEAM



JS/JA-TEAMS

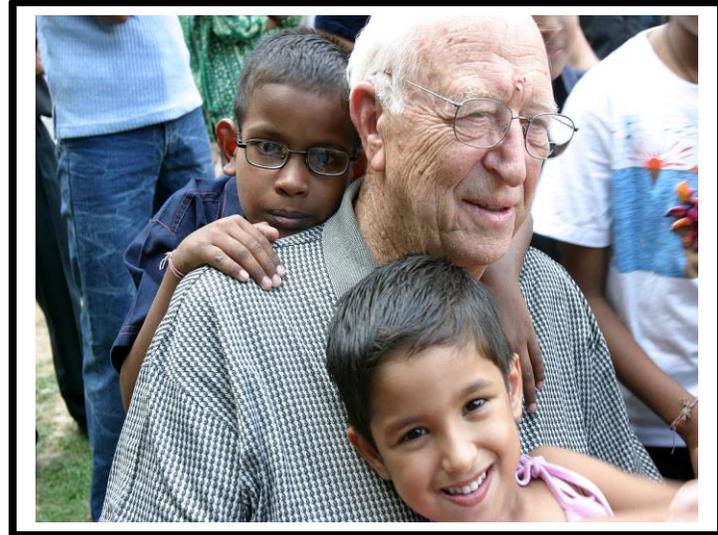


JK-TEAM

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL of the GUARDIANs OF THE MONTH
AND OUR HARD-WORKING GUARDIAN AD LITEM STAFF.**



**They need you !- tell your
CAM that you are ready for
another case.**



**GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM 15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
PALM BEACH COUNTY COURTHOUSE
205 N. DIXIE HIGHWAY, SUITE 4.1100, JUVENILE WING,
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Recruitment Desk : **Christie Geltz; Ken Gotlib; Peter Braun** - 355-6224

Speak Up for Kids of Palm Beach County - **Coleen La Costa** -Exec. Director - 561-408-7779
www.speakupforkidspbc.org