

# It Only Takes One Person to Make the Difference in a Child's Life

By Laurie Menekou



As adults, we have had enough life experience to know that storms, no matter how fierce, are only temporary. However, for a child who lives in the moment, a storm can feel like it will last a lifetime. "Be a rainbow in someone else's cloud," wrote Maya Angelou: for a child in need, a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is that rainbow, the silver lining, the hope for a better future.

At any given time in Broward County, there are more than 2,000 children

who have been removed from their homes due to allegations of abuse, neglect and/or abandonment. Most will enter the Dependency system for their own safety. These children are our community's most vulnerable. Within their short lives many will have experienced some of life's toughest lessons – trauma, loss, pain and heartache. For most, it will be at the hand of the one person who was supposed to be there to protect them and keep them safe.

## *A New Beginning*

A handful of Broward County's children, those fortunate enough to be navigating the legal system with a Guardian ad Litem volunteer, know their rainbow as Stephanie Sorrentino. Stephanie completed 30 hours of training to become a volunteer with Broward County's Guardian ad Litem Program. From the moment she completed her training (on July 30, 2012) until today, she has been and continues to be a zealous and compassionate advocate for twenty children.

## *What is a Guardian ad Litem?*

A Guardian ad Litem is a trained volunteer who works one on one with a child who has been removed from his or her home due to abuse, neglect and/or abandonment and placed in

