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**COLLEGE OF LAW PROFESSOR SELECTED
FOR FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM'S HIGHEST HONOR**

TALLAHASSEE—As co-director of the Children's Advocacy Center at the Florida State University College of Law, Professor Paolo Annino has had an enormous impact on the hundreds children for whom he is a champion and on the law students he trains to continue his work.

For his efforts, particularly on behalf of foster children, Annino recently was honored as Guardian ad Litem Advocate of the Year by the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office and Gov. Jeb Bush. In addition, Annino was presented with the Community Advocate Award from the Guardian ad Litem Office of the Second Judicial Circuit. He was selected from among the nominees of the state's 20 judicial circuits. All of the judicial circuits fall under the auspices of the statewide Guardian ad Litem Office.

Presented annually, the awards recognize members of the community who have gone "above and beyond" to support the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program and its efforts to make a difference in the lives of the abused and neglected children it serves.

Annino has worked with the Guardian ad Litem Program for 11 years. His focus on foster care stems from the sheer number of children in the system. Each year, anywhere from 9,000 to 10,000 children pass through the Florida foster care system and need advocates to protect their welfare. One goal of program is to appoint a guardian for every child in foster care.

“Although Mr. Annino’s advocacy is primarily confined to the Big Bend area, his passion for children and justice so inspires his students, they continue his good work on a state and national basis in both the courtroom and the boardroom,” said Marcia Hilty-Reinshuttle, director of the Second Judicial Circuit Guardian ad Litem Program. “Indeed, Mr. Annino’s influence can be felt far and wide.”

To date, Annino and his students have provided legal representation to more than 700 children. Currently, they are working on 60 cases, one-third of which are foster care cases.

“I’ve been studying the Florida foster care system for a number of years and the portrait of our system is painted primarily in gray,” says Annino. “However, there is a bright beam of light that shines through this gray portrait of our foster care system, and that is the Guardian ad Litem Program. Every year, a greater percentage of children in the foster care system are appointed Guardian ad Litem.”

For the past 25 years, the Guardian ad Litem Program has committed itself to giving abused and neglected children a strong voice in our court system. Since the creation of a statewide office in 2004, the program has made substantial progress towards increasing the number of children represented and generating better outcomes for children.

Founded at the law school in 1991, the Children's Advocacy Center trains second- and third-year law students in legal advocacy with an emphasis on intensive one-on-one and small group instruction. It represents children, persons with disabilities and victims of domestic violence. It also handles special education, Medicaid, foster care, delinquency, criminal, school expulsions, developmental services and supplemental security income cases.