The Children’s Rights Committee is pleased to announce the recipient of this year’s Child Advocate of the Year Award is Cathy Badal. She received the award at the committee’s spring CLE program on April 16, 2010, at PBI headquarters in Mechanicsburg.

Badal has been involved in the child welfare system for more than 18 years and currently serves as a guardian ad litem in Berks County. Previously, she served as a juvenile master for dependency for six years. In both capacities, she has been instrumental in effectuating extraordinary changes which have significantly impacted the lives of dependent children in Berks County. As a juvenile master, she understood the importance of knowing the history of each case and created a protocol of preparing an exhaustive Master’s Report for each child for every review hearing. Furthermore, she changed the customary process of terminating dependency cases for children who attained 18 to permit dependent adults to remain in the custody of Children and Youth Services so long as he or she is engaged in a course of instruction or treatment.

Having graduated summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Temple University and Dickinson Law School with honors, Badal has had her choice of professional careers. Although Badal has practiced with a private firm in the past in the areas of personal injury and worker’s compensation, she has chosen to return to the position of guardian ad litem, which she finds more gratifying and morally rewarding.

The committee received multiple nominations for Badal this year. She is described as a trail-blazer and tireless advocate for the children she represents, extraordinarily well prepared for every court appearance who will go the extra mile to meet anyone involved in the case to formulate the best possible outcome for her client, and a constant watchdog against children “falling through the cracks” of the system through meaningful oversight over the child while in placement and at home. Badal is also described as a faithful presence for the children she represents and incredibly persistent in her pursuit of justice. She is infinitely patient but passionate of her practice. She makes a personal connection with every child she represents by always including her client in the process and making them the central and most important aspect of every single case.

Badal’s nomination forms were supported by letters from child advocates, a solicitor, a master and a judge with a universal theme that she is an excellent, zealous advocate for her clients and an extremely skilled lawyer committed to see the right outcome for each dependent child she represents. We are pleased to select Badal as this year’s recipient of the Children’s Rights Committee Child Advocate of the Year Award!