

Mario Micheli, Esq., has joined nonprofit Defenders of Children as a part-time Consultant, in a role in which he will work with client-families seeking to protect children from child abuse, trauma and a denial of their rights.

V. Chris Monaco, PhD, has now joined the 501c(3) organization and will share the Family Consultant post with Micheli. Both positions are made possible by a grant from Arizona Community Foundation.

“With this addition to Defenders’ team, we are assured during the next year to offer sound guidance and family expertise to those who find themselves lost in the mazes that are the Child Protection system or family or juvenile court procedures,” says former staff attorney **David Lujan**, who remains their consulting attorney.

Micheli hails from Michigan where he received his Juris Doctor in 1988 from Wayne State University, following his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan. His experience as a foster dad turned adopted father brings a positive dimension to his work on behalf of abused and allegedly abused children. He is a licensed member of the State Bar of Arizona.

Dr. Monaco’s PhD in Counseling Psychology is from Arizona State University. She is mediator, life skills coach, adjunct professor currently at Glendale Community College and has worked to benefit traumatized children for much of her career. She was director of the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline for 7 years before entering her work as a mediator for URMe in Scottsdale.

Defenders of Children has served abused and neglected children and their “protective” (non-offending) family members for the last four years, having arisen out of its former affiliation with Justice For Children-AZ that was incorporated in Arizona in September 2000. **Executive director Donnalee Sarda**, herself a licensed counselor, has been with the agencies throughout the years and serves as program leader.

“We’re about to reach our 5,000th child and our 5,000th family member,” says Sarda. “More, our staff and volunteers have made it possible to leverage \$3 million in donated outside professional services from attorneys, psychologists, pediatricians and social service practitioners. Micheli and Monaco will work with those professionals to accomplish our number one goal of child safety -- one child at a time.”

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