

O.C. deputy district attorney has a mission for children



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columnist

Nat Glover tells the story about the little child chained to a bed for who knows how long before being discovered. "A post-man delivering mail happened to see him - an emaciated figure - through a hole in the curtain and reported it," Nat recalls. As an Orange County deputy district attorney, Nat has been tireless in his efforts on behalf of abused children. He

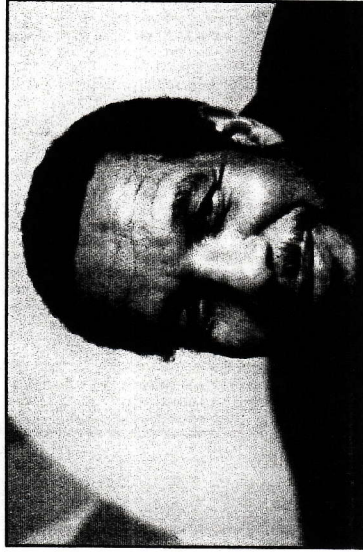
is vice president of the California Association of Professionals Against the Abuse of Children and was just named Children's Champion by the Court Appointed Special Advocates.

As a DA, Nat works with the Child Abuse Services Team helping to coordinate multidisciplinary child-abuse investigations. Each of the 1,000 children who walk through CAST doors each year have been reported to a child protective agency for suspected maltreatment. They arrive with a police officer or social worker, sometimes accompanied by a nonoffending par-

ent. Often they are bruised, battered and terrified. Some may have been beaten to an inch of their lives. Some may have been sexually attacked.

The year-old CAST facility in Orange, brightly painted in fantasy fun murals and chock full of donated kid games and toys, is geared to reduce the trauma for these children. Before CAST was founded in 1989, a child might be subjected to 15-25 interviews by numerous professionals investigating the alleged sexual abuse.

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JANINE SWIAKOWSKI/The Orange County Register

CHILD ADVOCATE: Nat Glover began his career as a probation officer and worked his way up to deputy district attorney.

WATCH: Nat Glover works for children who can't protect themselves

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At CAST, a trained social worker conducts just one oral interview, observed and videotaped through a two-way mirror by social services, law enforcement, medical providers and therapists. A volunteer advocate befriends the child throughout the investigation, which may include a genital examination.

Nat's job is to make certain that the interview is legally sufficient to stand up in court. Says Nat, "The objective here is to try to get to the truth - the truth indicates that someone must be punished, and sometimes the truth indicates they do not. This is a very serious allegation, and my job as

prosecutor is to see that justice is served - not just to prosecute - but to exonerate someone if that's what the evidence shows."

Nat obtains minimal information about each case. "So that we are not influenced, I just want the basic facts. We have no idea what these kids have been exposed to - they may have been told that they would be killed if they told. We must get the kid calmed down and use nonleading, sometimes tough questions to see what happened. We need the child to tell."

Sometimes allegations by one parent are made against the other. "You have to be careful in these family situations, maybe a divorce sit-

one will know. If we're starving, no one will know. We're just as good as anybody else - no better no worse. There were three of us kids, and at one point, the economics were so bad that we literally lived in a chicken coop."

It's not where you start, but where you finish, Nat says. Education was his way out. Nat has a bachelor's degree in sociology from California State University, Fullerton, and a law degree from Western State Law School. "Education is something no one can take from you - people can do lots of things to you, but they can't take away knowledge. Education will set you free."

Nat, a divorced father of three, began his career as a probation officer, moved on to become the first black male deputy sheriff for the county and eventually put himself through law school. He believes if you work hard, you can be anything you want to. His work always revolved around children's issues.

"I guess God has a mission for you," he whispers. "But you have to put it in the right

perspective. It can eat you up if you don't learn to deal with these cases. When I hear the things that happen to these children who can't protect themselves - well, if I don't help, then who?

"The public can do their part, too. For a lot of kids out there, abuse goes on a long time, and only by some turn of fate, does it get exposed. If someone has any information about a child being abused, they shouldn't turn their head. A simple anonymous call to the Child Abuse Registry might save a child's life." (714) 940-4747.

CAST and CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) train and supervise CAST volunteers to host "Pumpkins and Pancakes," a fund-raising Halloween celebration at South Coast Plaza on Oct. 29. The family breakfast includes entertainment, arts and crafts, carnival booths, magicians and more. For ticket information, call (714) 780-8733.

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