

Volunteer Attorney helps children find a home...

Seven years ago, a recently divorced young mother of two suffering with lupus made a difficult decision to move back to her mother's home.

Though the father of the children lived in the area and visited the children on occasion, it was the maternal grandmother who cared for the children as the young mother's health continued to decline. In May 2006, the young mother succumbed to the disease, leaving her children in their maternal grandmother's care.

Within weeks of the mother's death, the maternal grandmother was served with a temporary restraining order filed by the father of the children and they were removed from her home and placed with their father. The father, a criminal justice professional, alleged joint custody of the minor children pursuant to the couple's divorce. He also sought the protection of the court against the maternal grandmother alleging that she was a flight risk and he feared she would remove the children from the jurisdiction of the court.



Kimberly Parker, Esq.
Glaxo Smith Kline

The grandmother came to the **LANC-Durham Office** and **volunteer attorney Kimberly Parker**, (attorney with **Glaxo Smith Kline**, RTP) who had never appeared in court in North Carolina, agreed to accept the case. Parker was immediately immersed in the case defending the protective order. The case was further complicated by the fact that one child was adamant about not wanting to live with the father. The other child was torn between living with father and the grandmother. The court had awarded temporary custody to the father and the children were removed from the grandmother's home.

A hearing in the matter was set for mid-August so Parker spent hours interviewing witnesses who were familiar with the lives of the children over the past seven years. She filed an answer and counterclaim in the custody action and continued to prepare for the next hearing. Parker represented the grandmother at a hard-fought hearing and **ultimately the court granted temporary joint legal custody to the father and the grandmother**. Both children now spend most of their time with their grandmother.

Sharon Council, PAI Coordinator (Legal Aid of NC's-Durham Office) stated,

*"I was most impressed with the energy that Ms. Parker invested in this case. She rose to the challenge of a difficult, emotional case and helped her clients navigate the legal system to reach a successful result. **This case was another example of the impact that volunteer attorneys can make in the lives of our clients.**"*

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