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# Durham newcomer practicing law for free

By John Stevenson: The Herald-Sun, [stevenson@heraldsun.com](mailto:stevenson@heraldsun.com)

DURHAM – With a starting salary of less than \$40,000 a year, Legal Aid attorneys generally don't pretend to be in it for the money.

Then there is **Jeremy Browner**, a 2001 law school graduate of Hofstra University on Long Island.

He isn't making a dime.

Previously admitted to practice in New York and Ohio, Browner is working in **Legal Aid's downtown Durham office** for free as he waits to become fully licensed in the Tar Heel State.

That's the way he likes it.

"I'm so happy North Carolina granted me the ability to practice for free," Browner said Friday. "I'm told I'm the first attorney to do that [for Legal Aid]."

For Browner, it's easy to go without a paycheck. His spouse is an assistant professor of neurology at UNC.

"I luckily have a wife who's able to feed me and clothe me and put a roof over my head," he quipped.

Browner has previous experience with high-dollar firms in Ohio and New York, where he dealt with construction, aviation and business law, among other things.

However, he finds his free work to be rewarding in ways other than financial.

The function of Legal Aid is to help low-income people with various civil problems, including home foreclosures and seemingly insurmountable piles of consumer debt.

"There's such a great need for this, such suffering because of the economy," Browner said. "I really believe in it."

When foreclosure looms, Legal Aid can negotiate with lenders or refer clients to relief programs they might not otherwise be aware of.



Jeremy Browner

"We've helped save a lot of homes," said Browner. "Sometimes it's even in the best interests of lenders to renegotiate. Right now, I'm working desperately with one bank to do a loan modification. I'm working really hard, within the confines of the law, to help people keep their homes.

"I have some free time on my hands," Browner added. "Why sit at home all day and do nothing if I can be doing some good? If I can lend a hand to help people without much money and act as their ambassador to the court, I feel good about it."

Browner vows to continue volunteer work even after he receives a North Carolina law license.