
Spotlight on Legal Aid Access to Justice Campaign

Legal Aid of North Carolina (LANC) is a statewide, nonprofit law firm that provides free legal services in civil matters to low-income people in order to ensure equal access to justice and to remove legal barriers to economic opportunity. LANC is the fifth largest legal law firm in North Carolina and its 24 offices serve clients in all 100 counties. The LANC Winston-Salem office was the first of its kind in the entire state. LANC's statewide Access to Justice (ATJ) Campaign focuses on raising both funds and awareness so that LANC can provide legal assistance through its Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Project and Domestic Violence Advocacy Center, and continue to provide other civil legal services for senior citizens, children, people with disabilities, and veterans.

Since thousands of North Carolinians cannot afford to pay an attorney, Legal Aid attorneys such as Forsyth County Bar President-Elect Valene Franco help people with civil legal matters when they have no other place to turn. However, there is only one Legal Aid attorney for every 15,500 low-income

people in our state. In contrast, there is one private attorney for every 442 North Carolinians. Although the LANC Winston-Salem office handled over 1700 cases last year, 80% of the civil legal needs of the poor go unmet in this country.

The Forsyth County bar has proven its commitment to LANC's ATJ Campaign, already contributing more than \$36,000. However, there is still more work to do. There are over 1,500 attorneys practicing in Forsyth County, but only about 3% of the local private attorneys donate to LANC's ATJ Campaign each year. This contrasts with other large counties such as Mecklenburg, which has a 17% donation rate. Consider making a donation today to help ensure that low-income people in our community have access to high-quality civil legal assistance and representation to meet their basic needs.

Thank you to the following individuals, organizations and law firms listed below who have already given to the current ATJ Campaign!

Benefactor Level (\$20,000 and up)

Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice PLLC

Silver Sponsors (\$1,000 - 4,999)

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Ellen M. Gregg

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Winston-Salem Foundation

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Friend (up to \$99)

David T. Archer

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Karen E. Jackson

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Roddey M. Ligon

Employment Opportunities

Free Service - Employment Assistance for Attorneys in Need of Support Staff Legal Support Staff of Winston-Salem will share employment opportunities with their member of 150+ legal professionals.

Send all information to Donna Black at dblack@pharrlaw.com.

Experienced counsel and senior manager seeks position in Government Litigation Group or Municipality seeking legal counsel. Five years' experience defending clients in property tax appeals and general tax matters and five years' as counsel for a government agency. Recently relocated to North Carolina. Public and private sector practice experience. Formerly General Counsel of large state agency responsible for the oversight of property assessment for tax purposes and accountable for the certification of local budgets, rates and levies. Most recently provided economic development consultation/litigation work for large industrial/manufacturing clients with all tax matters. Contact: heather.scheel@gmail.com

Announcements

Steven D. Smith, formerly of Parrish Smith & Ramsey, is pleased to announce the opening of his new practice, The Law Office of Steven D. Smith, PLLC, and the association of Thomas J. Floeter to the firm. Tom is a 2009 graduate of UNC Law, and previously worked in the film and television industry as a construction specialist. The new practice is located at 4951 Indiana Avenue, Winston-Salem, NC 27106 Phone 336-760-2252. Fax 336-767-4887

Are You Ready for 3-5-10? Where will you be? Volunteer Now! Get ready for 3-5-10 and the NCBA's third annual 4ALL Statewide Service Day. Where will you be on Friday, March 5, 2010: Asheville, Cary (Spanish only), Charlotte, Greensboro, Greenville, Raleigh or Wilmington? We have a shift for you. Register now via the link below to secure your spot at one of seven call centers. And make sure to check out the [3-5-10 Training Manual](#) which includes two new sections - Tax and Workers' Compensation - before 3-5-10. This is the same manual that will be available for your reference on March 5, when volunteer lawyers, paralegals and law students join forces to provide free legal information to citizens from all across North Carolina. <https://4allnc.ncbar.org/participate/online-volunteer-application.aspx>

2009-2010 Officers

Forsyth County Bar Association

President **Clyde Cash**
President-Elect **Valene K. Franco**
Vice President: **Mary Craven Adams**
Secretary **Judge Denise S. Hartsfield**
Treasurer **C. Douglas Maynard, Jr.**

21st Judicial District Bar

President **Clyde Cash**
Vice President **Mary Craven Adams**
Sec./Treas. **C. Douglas Maynard, Jr.**

New Members of Ethics and Grievance Committee

(Terms Expiring June 30, 2012)

Alan Doorasamy
Joshua H. Bennett

Executive Director: James "Jim" T. Robinson

Email: jim@forsythlawyers.org

Executive Assistant: Sandra Dickstein

Email: sandy@forsythlawyers.org

Office Telephone: 336-760-1232

Office Fax: 336-724-2358

2135 New Walkertown Rd.

Winston-Salem, NC 27101

Announcements Continued

David D. Daggett and **Griffis C. Shuler** are pleased to announce the formation of **Daggett, Shuler, Koontz, Nauman & Bell, PLLC**. The newly formed firm will be operating under the trade name of Daggett Shuler, Attorneys at Law. The attorneys of Daggett Shuler include **David Daggett, Griff Shuler, John Koontz, Doug Nauman, Julie Bell and Chris Wilkie**. The firm handles personal injury claims including serious injuries, automobile accidents, workers' compensation and social security disability. Offices are located near five points at 2140 Country Club Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27104. 724-1234
www.DaggettShulerLaw.com

Office Space for Rent

The website version of the March Bar News includes a full-page of listings on Page 4. Go to www.forsythlawyers.org.

NC IOLTA Celebrates Over 25 Years of Service

Since its first grants were awarded in 1984, the North Carolina IOLTA program has provided more than \$60 million for legal assistance for at-risk children, the elderly, the disabled, and the poor in need of basic necessities. In addition, the program has helped lawyers connect with those who need their pro bono assistance.

Though current economic conditions seriously curtailed grants for 2010 to \$3.1 million —compared to the \$4.1 million in grants made in 2009— they still far surpass the \$200,000 in grants first made 25 years ago. (In addition, NC IOLTA now administers approximately \$6 million annually in state funds for legal aid that pass through the NC State Bar.)

Providing civil legal services to indigents historically accounts for 87 percent of grants awarded. In addition, the NC IOLTA program makes grants for programs designed to improve the administration of justice.

“IOLTA grants certainly help us fulfill our responsibilities outlined in the Rules of Professional Responsibility,” said former NC State Bar president Steve Michael, who successfully worked for mandatory IOLTA in North Carolina. “Providing access to justice is one of the big obligations we assume, and this is one method of fulfilling those obligations.” Michael said that the IOLTA board has done a good job over the years in selecting programs that have the biggest impact in providing access to justice. He said it is appropriate that the bulk of the grant money goes to legal services for the poor.

“IOLTA funding was invaluable to the Legal Aid Society,” says Susan Gottsegen, former executive director for the Legal Aid Society of Northwest NC. “Most of our other grants could only be used for specific programs, while IOLTA funds could be used for much needed general operating expenses.”

The Legal Aid Society of Northwest North Carolina (LASNNC) was the first legal aid program in North Carolina, founded in 1962 by the Young Lawyers Division of the Forsyth County Bar Association. LASNNC was twice awarded, along with the Forsyth County Bar Association, the American Bar Association’s prestigious Harrison Tweed Award. In July 2007, the LASNNC and Legal Aid of North Carolina (LANC) consolidated their operations in Winston-Salem to provide high quality legal services to even more clients and do so in an even more efficient manner.

“The stable funding and critical project support that IOLTA provides has been critical to protecting safety-net income such as food stamps, unemployment insurance, social security, and other disability benefits, which will be at the forefront of our work again in 2010,” said George Hausen, executive director of Legal Aid of North Carolina.

During this economic crisis, IOLTA funding has also supported the Mortgage Foreclosure Project unit, which is a resource and clearinghouse for foreclosure work across North Carolina. The LANC Mortgage Foreclosure Project (MFP), originally funded through a combination of IOLTA and outside grant funding, has saved the homes and the credit of over 500 families across North Carolina in the past two years.

“Over six years ago LANC recognized the need to provide additional resources to defend what we saw as the beginning of a crisis in the mortgage industry, and it was not easy to convince funders that this crisis was coming,” says Hazel Mack, Triad regional manager for Legal Aid of NC. “IOLTA was one of the first to hear our cry and respond by providing funding to defend against foreclosures. Because IOLTA understood the unfolding crisis, LANC was able to embark upon the first statewide mortgage defense

foreclosure project. In 2009 alone, the LANC-Winston-Salem Office served over 200 homeowners who faced foreclosures”.

“Though generally used for operating support, IOLTA grants have responded to specific needs, especially where projects improve overall efficiency and the ability to meet client needs,” said Evelyn Pursley, executive director of the NC IOLTA program.

“IOLTA was the chief benefactor of our technology system for the new Legal Aid of North Carolina organization in 2002,” said George Hausen. “This included the installation of a web-based, integrated, statewide case management system (CMS), state-of-the-art work stations and Internet/Intranet websites. Utilization of technology has greatly increased our ability to efficiently manage, document, report and communicate case data and information across the organization and consequently dedicate more time to assisting client and community outreach.”

The first proactive grant-making done by IOLTA itself came in 1992 when it offered grants to volunteer lawyer programs to ensure that VLPs were established statewide. IOLTA continues to provide funding each year for volunteer lawyer programs that put private practice attorneys together with clients who need pro bono services.

“LANC resources are very limited and we cannot represent all those who need it,” says Yvette Stackhouse, managing attorney of LANC’s Winston-Salem Office. “With IOLTA funding, our office is able to recruit private bar attorneys in our service area to assist us with many types of cases. Our biggest pool of private attorney volunteers is in representing our domestic violence clients. In 2009, their assistance in this area of law alone allowed us to represent over 60 DV victims in our six-county service area. The Volunteer Lawyers Program allows us to represent more clients and turn away less.”

“But there are also grants IOLTA has made to start up programs that further the administration of justice,” said Steve Michael. “Once the programs are up and running, the funds will come to keep them going.”

For instance, Pursley, recognizing a need for more collaboration, was instrumental in creating the Equal Justice Alliance as a forum for civil legal aid providers who receive IOLTA funding to discuss coordination of legal services and efforts to increase resources. That group now meets regularly. IOLTA grants were also instrumental in establishing the North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission in 2005. IOLTA funded staffing and activities of the Commission, including the hiring of a full-time director for the Commission and the Alliance. The Commission will receive funding through the State Bar beginning in 2010.

“Our (IOLTA) program has been and is still an active participant in determining how the problem of providing access to justice in our state should be addressed,” said Tom Lunsford, executive director of the NC State Bar. “Our board and our staff are appropriately and usefully involved in shaping policy and in rationalizing the delivery of legal services. Our philanthropy is active and responsible, not passive and disengaged.”

In honor of NC IOLTA’s 25th anniversary in 2009, the NC State Bar Journal published a three-part series of articles on NC IOLTA. The entire series of articles can be accessed on the State Bar’s website at: <http://www.ncbar.com/IOLTAarticles.pdf>.