

Legal Aid of North Carolina, Inc

Pittsboro Office



"The Pittsboro Post Gazette"

October 29, 2009

Kari L. Hamel became Managing Attorney of the Legal Aid of North Carolina (LANC) - Pittsboro Office on June 12, 2009. She has previously worked as a Domestic Violence Attorney in the Durham Legal Aid Office. She also provided legal services for Prisoners and as an advocate for the Mentally Ill. She is originally from Iowa.

The **Local Advisory Council (LAC)** met on August 27, 2009. The office is looking for attorneys from each of our six-county service area to serve on the LANC-Pittsboro Office's LAC.

The LANC-Pittsboro Office was selected by the **Chatham County Arts Council** to be their first "**Satellite Gallery.**" The LANC-Pittsboro Office held three "open houses." The first was on October 4, 2009. Local artist John Makowski lead a hands-on activity for the children. Each guest received a piece of art created by the artist to take home. Second and third open houses were held the following day, October 5, 2009 in the morning and evening.

LANC-Pittsboro Office conducted a "**Lunch and Learn**" series in July and August 2009 with the domestic violence agencies in its six-county service area. The managing attorney and staff attorneys

discussed their application process, deadlines for case acceptance, the types of other cases that can be accepted and ways to make the flow of information with the agencies more efficient and better serve clients.

The LANC-Pittsboro Office again participated in the **3rd Annual Project Homeless Connect** at the **Hargraves Community Center** in Chapel Hill on October 8, 2009. Staff was assisted by students from the UNC pro bono law program to interview potential clients on that day at the Orange County event.

Wills Project, Moore County:
On October 22 and 23 the LANC-Pittsboro Office partnered with the **UNC Center for Civil Rights** and the **UNC Law School Pro Bono Program**. The project involved preparation of wills and advanced directives for seniors and low wealth clients in two historic African-American communities with which the Center has developed long standing relationships. The goal was 40 clients at the two day project at the two locations in Jackson Hamlet and Midway. With the assistance of four pro bono attorneys and 26 law students, 76 legal documents were prepared over the two-day period.

The LANC-Pittsboro Office participated on October 22 at the **Chatham County Chamber of Commerce Expo**.

The LANC-Pittsboro Office has submitted a grant application to Carolina Meadows to create a **Medical-Legal Partnership** to serve clients in Chatham County whose medical outcomes would likely be better if their legal needs are addressed.

The LANC-Pittsboro/Sanford Office will **host a breakfast** for the agencies sponsored by **Lee County United Way** on November 12, at the United Way headquarters in Sanford. Managing Attorney Kari Hamel will present a PowerPoint presentation showing the services Legal Aid of NC provides to clients in the Lee County Area.

A Continuing Legal Education (CLE) program is scheduled for October 29, 2009 at the Dennis Wicker Civic Center in Sanford. The program is **free to attorneys who have volunteered** for the Pittsboro Office in past year or attorneys volunteering to do one or two telephone consultations in the next six months. If you would like to volunteer but cannot attend, contact Private Attorney Involvement (PAI) Coordinator **Debbie Herndon at 1-800-672-5834**.

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The following are notes from some of the 29+ Interns/ Volunteers who have worked at the LANC-Pittsboro Office in 2009.

Matt Lewis

This past summer I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work at the Legal Aid of NC-Pittsboro Office.

I graduated from Elon University in 2008 and I am currently in my second year at UNC-School of Law and plan on practicing in the Charlotte area after graduation. At UNC I am a member of the Holderness National Moot Court Team and Phi Alpha Delta Legal Fraternity.

Working at Legal Aid was a tremendous learning experience. From the first ten minutes I was in the office I was able to work directly with clients to learn more about their potential legal issues and work with staff attorneys within the office to determine what type of assistance Legal Aid might be able to provide them. I was able to work in areas of law such as family matters, landlord/tenant and unemployment securities. I cannot imagine a summer experience that would have better helped me develop and strengthen my practical lawyering skills; skills that I am certain will only equip me for success after graduation.

One of the main reasons I decided to go to law school is because I truly believe lawyers have a unique opportunity to help those in need unlike any

other profession; and my time in Pittsboro enabled me to see firsthand just how true that is.

JoAnna Shoaf

My summer experience at the Legal Aid of NC-Pittsboro Office taught me how to act and think like a lawyer.

As most lawyers know, law school focuses on the theoretical side of the legal field. Being able to understand and formulate legal arguments is necessary if one wants to be able to function as a lawyer, but it is not sufficient. At Legal Aid, I learned the practical side of being a lawyer. I learned how to interview clients efficiently, by narrowing my line of questioning so that I gathered quality information from clients and not a mass quantity of irrelevant facts. I also learned how to interact with a wide range of clients. I gained an appreciation for how important interpersonal skills are in an office like Legal Aid, where a lawyer will be dealing with clients from different backgrounds. I gained the confidence and experience to take a claim to court or try a case before an ESC judge. I also learned the smaller administrative workings of the courthouse, which included: who to talk to during court, where to go to get things signed, who should sign what, and what to have ready when the judge calls your client's name. My supervisor, Marie Hopper, was

very patient and understanding when I came to teaching me these procedures.

Although these administrative procedures may seem second nature to seasoned lawyers, it represents the unknown for a rising third-year law student, and I am glad I learned it now instead of during my first year of practice.

Finally, Legal Aid gave me the ability to explore different topics in the legal field, from unemployment and domestic violence to wills and powers of attorney. I spent my first summer of law school interning at the Attorney General's office in Raleigh, N.C., in the Torts section. While this was a good experience, it lacked the personal attention and guidance that I received at Legal Aid. It also lacked the opportunity I received at Legal Aid in learning how to take a case from the initial complaint all the way to a hearing or court experience. I am so grateful to have had this work experience and have already recommended the interning opportunity to multiple second-year law students.

This semester I am currently working with the UNC School of Law Juvenile Justice Clinic and am learning more about the criminal defense side. Schedule permitting, I hope to return to Legal Aid in the Spring for an externship.

(Intern notes continued on next page.)

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(Intern notes continued)

Jennine Brazell

I am a second year law student at the University of North Carolina (UNC) School of Law. I was born in Toronto, Canada, but have lived in North Carolina for the last 13 years. I attended UNC-Wilmington for my undergraduate education where I majored in Business Management and minored in Political Science. Following graduation, I moved to the Chapel Hill area to pursue my legal education.

This past summer, I did an internship at the Legal Aid of NC- Pittsboro Office. My time at that office was brief because I had to leave for Sidney, Australia to participate in a summer abroad program. Even though my time was short, my experience at Legal Aid was extremely valuable and a wonderful learning experience.

Interning at Legal Aid gave me the opportunity to see the law in action. It was very interesting to witness what I learned in the classroom come to life. Most importantly, I was able to observe just how hard practicing attorneys work every day. The lawyers in the office demonstrated tremendous dedication to their jobs. However, even with heavy workloads, they took the time out to patiently be wonderful mentors to all of the interns.

Working under that supervision of Danielle Briggs, I conducted research for pending

custody cases. The internship gave me the patience to expand and develop my legal writing skills. I was also given the opportunity to accompany Ms. Briggs to court in order to observe her in the courtroom. Through this internship, I was afforded these experiences and more. I am very grateful for the wonderful opportunity.

In my second year at Carolina Law, I am taking a wide range of classes from Administrative Law to International Banking. I recently made the Holderness Moot Court's National Team and am in the process of searching for jobs for next summer.

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LANC-Sanford Office Location:

503 Carthage St., Suite 305
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Hours: M, T & W
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.