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Providing free legal services in civil (non-criminal) matters to low-income people primarily in Davie, Forsyth, Iredell, Stokes, Surry and Yadkin Counties.



www.legalaidnc.org/WinstonSalem

A united front for Legal Aid in Winston-Salem

LANC, LASNNC consolidate operations

The Legal Aid Society of Northwest North Carolina (LASNNC) consolidated their operations with Legal Aid of North Carolina (LANC) in Winston-Salem on July 16, 2007.

The combined staff joined together in a new, larger office on the fourth floor of the Liberty Plaza at 102 West Third Street. All LASNNC staff and revenue streams were transferred to the LANC-Winston-Salem Office.

The expanded office now has a 28-member staff, including 13 attorneys, and continues to provide free legal services in civil (non-criminal) matters for low-income people in Forsyth, Davie, Iredell, Stokes, Surry and Yadkin counties.

The LANC-Winston-Salem Office represents clients in civil cases including domestic violence, evictions, government benefits, Social Security matters, educational issues, consumer issues, and mortgage foreclosure. LANC also provides community education and outreach in a variety of areas.

"This operations change will

benefit low-income people in Winston-Salem," said Cal Adams, Jr., a former chair of both organizations and an attorney with Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, PLLC in Winston-Salem. "It also makes economic sense for the legal aid

supporting and/or affiliate groups in North Carolina. LANC became the sole recipient in North Carolina of federal grants from the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). LANC was required to serve all 100 counties in North Carolina and opened an office in Winston-Salem in that same year.

"This consolidation of the staffs of two, high quality law firms is a positive step toward our mission to ensure equal justice in our community," said Hazel Mack-Hilliard, Triad regional manager for LANC (and former senior managing attorney for the LANC-Winston-Salem Office).

"The need to continue to provide life-altering solutions to critical legal issues is crucial to ensuring that all people in our community can survive, grow and prosper. The Winston-Salem community has supported Legal Aid and its clients for more than 45 years, and now we can move forward in an even more united manner to help people in our area."



The staff of the consolidated LANC-Winston-Salem Office.

Front row (l-r): Kenneth Love, Romany Hines, Linda Graham, Liza Baron, Charlie Hall, Gray Wilson, Dave Sobie; Middle row (l-r): Hazel Mack-Hilliard, Alicia Edwards, Jean Witherspoon, Valene Franco, Barbara Valenzuela (no longer at LANC), Jeanna McCullers, Nikki Worthy, Susan Gottsegen; Back row (l-r): Pridgen Amos, Stephanie Goldsborough, Harrietta Mickles, Shannon Hurley, Lisa Brace, Tracy Nicholson, Grisel Guerrero, Joanne Martin, Margaret Moll, Yvette Stackhouse, Samantha Davis. Not pictured: Louella Brannan, Casey Harding, Marcella Farmer.

By combining forces, we feel that the new Legal Aid staff can provide high quality legal services to even more clients and do so in an even more efficient manner."

In 2002, most of the Legal Aid organizations in North Carolina consolidated to form Legal Aid of North Carolina (LANC). The new, nonprofit law firm was the result of a multi-year planning effort by 15 federally funded, legal services programs and multiple

New Centralized Intake Unit serving the Winston-Salem area

Beginning May 14, 2008, a new service is being offered to those eligible for our services in Forsyth, Davie, Surry, Stokes, Iredell and Yadkin Counties.

Applicants for legal services in the Winston-Salem area can now also call our "Centralized Intake Unit's" (CIU's) toll-free telephone number, 1-866-219-LANC (1-866-219-5262).

Through the CIU, eligible clients may speak directly to an attorney to receive advice regarding a legal matter.


The CIU attorney can give advice regarding legal matters

that LANC handles, such as housing, consumer, employment,

those clients will be referred to a LANC office for further assessment.

The CIU is already providing legal service to eligible clients in over 50 counties in North Carolina.

The LANC-Winston-Salem Office is happy to now introduce this service to our area.

 www.legalaidnc.org	Centralized Intake Unit 866.219.LANC (toll-free) (866.219.5262)
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family and other civil law (non-criminal) matters. If the CIU attorney determines that more extensive service is necessary,

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LANC NEWS

is the newsletter of Legal Aid of North Carolina (LANC). Send comments to: *LANC News*, Legal Aid of NC, 224 South Dawson Street, Raleigh, NC 27601. Editor: Dock Kornegay; Executive Director: George R. Hausen, Jr., Esq. Legal Aid of North Carolina is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 law firm that provides free legal services to low-income persons in North Carolina through 24 field offices and five statewide projects.

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Update from Yvette...

New Beginnings...

R. Yvette Stackhouse, Esq.
Managing Attorney, LANC-W/S Office



A lot of good things have happened since our newsletter came out last year. The Winston-Salem Office of Legal Aid of North Carolina (LANC) has been going through an awakening period for the last few months. We have new staff members. We have moved to a new location. We have renewed old relationships and are developing new ones. We have assisted many more people with so many challenging legal issues – with clients having mortgage foreclosure woes leading the pack. But most importantly, we have learned through it all to expect that good things can happen.

Our “new beginnings” started last summer. You have already read about the two office staffs – **Legal Aid Society of Northwest North Carolina (LASNNC)** and **LANC** – that merged together in July 2007 (*see page 1*) and our move to new offices two months later. All of these changes have been good for our office staff, but more importantly, they have been good for our clients. By merging the two staffs of LASNNC and LANC, we are better able to serve our low-income clients and serve more of those clients. They aren’t as confused about where to go for help because we are all in the same location. We’ve combined resources to become a more efficient and effective legal services organization in serving our clients located in Forsyth, Davie, Stokes, Surry, Yadkin, and Iredell Counties.

Our **Private Attorney Involvement (PAI)** has really increased. In celebration of the volunteer attorneys’ service and dedication, we honored them all at a reception in March (*see page 4*). The PAI program allows our volunteer attorneys to do different types of cases and to be available for special projects, such as the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA). This project helps those persons who are eligible to receive thousands of dollars of

earned income tax credits (EITC). Some of those volunteer attorneys had previously only done certain kinds of client cases, but agreed to do something new with the VITA project (*see article below*). In addition, a number of private attorneys are making commitments to help people save their homes as our community suffers through this mortgage foreclosure crisis.

Another “new beginning” for our office is the addition of a family law unit. Before the LASNNC staff merged with LANC, our local LANC office did not have one. We now tackle issues regarding domestic violence and custody issues connected with domestic violence. In Forsyth County, the **Safe on Seven (SOS) program** allows domestic violence victims to be served in one area on the 7th floor of the Forsyth County Hall of Justice. It’s a valuable one-stop shop for those most vulnerable (*see page 3*). More importantly, many of those domestic violence clients are now receiving additional information and/or legal assistance for other matters, such as housing and consumer issues, as they try to rebuild their lives from devastation to hope. We see it all work together every day.

The **“Central Intake Unit” (CIU)** has arrived to our service area. What this means is that every person in our area who qualifies for our help has an opportunity to speak directly to an attorney about the issues that LANC handles. Contact information appears in the article about the CIU on page one.

Finally, this is a new beginning for me too. I am now the Managing Attorney of the Winston-Salem office and am very excited to serve our clients in my new capacity. The former managing attorney, Hazel Mack-Hilliard, is now the Regional Manager for the Triad area.

Yes, this is a time of “new beginnings” for the Winston-Salem office of Legal Aid of North Carolina. All of us are benefiting: our clients, our staff, and our community. It’s all good!!!



Another VITA tax season has come and gone...

Not only does Legal Aid of NC (LANC) provide legal representation to the underserved populations of our state, but its 24 offices also provide many non-legal services to their communities, including tax preparation. For taxpayers who qualify for the **Earned Income Credit**, we provided volunteers to help them fill out their income tax return forms free of charge.

Each year, many taxpayers who qualify for the Earned Income Credit either neglect to claim it or are serviced by a costly tax preparer, which results in the taxpayer receiving significantly less in their return than they are entitled.

This year, LANC’s **VITA (“Volunteer**

Income Tax Assistance”) project helped clients save more than \$750,000 in refunds and fees. The LANC-Winston-Salem Office alone accounted for at least \$100,000 of those refunds.

Statewide, LANC was able to assist taxpayers who received their first refund in several years, help misclassified workers understand their rights, and provide assistance for other issues, including filing for “injured spouse” status for married couples.

We are excited with the results we saw this year and look forward to even greater success next year. We encourage all taxpayers who have a family income of less than \$40,000 to

(Continued on page 3)

HEEC Unit Update

Housing, Education, Employment, Consumer Unit
Liza Baron, Managing Attorney



The HEEC (Housing, Education, Employment, Consumer) unit has been as busy as ever. The HEEC unit's attorneys and paralegals have been working to help our clients with subsidized housing evictions, cases where landlords refuse to repair unfit conditions, illegal padlockings, unemployment compensation hearings, car repossessions, bankruptcies, expungement of criminal charges, and of course mortgage foreclosures. Our caseload of mortgage foreclosures has increased significantly over the recent months, as foreclosures are on the rise in our service area and across the state and the nation. One of the larger and more unusual cases in our office at the moment is a Superior Court case we filed on behalf of six Section 8 tenants who complained of serious sexual harassment by their landlord.

HEEC staff also participated recently in Winston-Salem's second annual Project Homeless Connect, which is a joint effort by many nonprofit agencies to offer services to homeless people and people facing other housing-related crises in an attempt to help resolve their housing problems and other issues. We met with and advised 11 people on housing-related issues that day, and scheduled six for additional follow-up services.

The HEEC unit staff also runs three of our

office's six legal clinics that are free and open to the public:

- ♦ **Landlord/Tenant Clinic**, which is held every Wednesday, where we advise non-subsidized tenants on how to represent themselves in eviction court, and on landlord/tenant law generally;
- ♦ **Exemption Forms Clinic**, which is held every other Thursday, where we help participants fill out forms to protect their property from being seized to satisfy a judgment against them; and
- ♦ **Re-entry Clinic**, which is held every fourth Tuesday, where we offer information and resources on housing, jobs, and other areas to those who have been incarcerated.

With seven attorneys and three paralegals, the HEEC unit is the largest of the three units in our office. Recent months have seen us joined by new staff attorneys **Casey Harding**, **Jeanna McCullers** and **Kenneth Love**. They have all hit the ground running and are already achieving great results for our clients. Though she handles all of the types of cases that the HEEC unit sees, Casey specializes in mortgage foreclosure prevention cases. Jeanna successfully prevented a disabled middle school student from being suspended from school for actions that he did not commit. Kenneth has spent the past seven months helping to coordinate our VITA project (*see page 2*) in which we helped prepare income tax returns for our clients.



Legal Aid of North Carolina

As the only Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funded program in North Carolina, Legal Aid of NC (LANC) provides free, community-based, civil legal services in all 100 counties of North Carolina to those whose income falls below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines.



LANC provides legal representation and counseling in civil (non-criminal) cases only.

Because of limited resources, LANC's cases are generally limited to those that impact clients' basic needs, including housing, access to medical care, protection from domestic violence, consumer protection and subsistence income.

LANC receives funding from LSC (50%), the NC General Assembly (17%), and IOLTA (Interest On Lawyers' Trust Accounts; 12%). The remaining funds come from Title III Funds for Older Americans, United Way, local governments, individual attorneys, foundations and other grants.

LANC offices also recruit and coordinate private attorney (*pro bono*) volunteers through local volunteer lawyers programs (VLP's).

For additional information on LANC and its offices, visit the LANC website, www.legalaidnc.org.



Family Unit Update

Valene K. Franco, Managing Attorney



The Family Law Unit is pleased to highlight our involvement in the **Safe on Seven Center (SOS)**. Forsyth County received a grant from the US Dept. of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women, to create an integrated team for the prosecution of criminal and civil domestic violence cases and improve victims' access to community services. Previously, victims had to seek services at multiple locations throughout the community. The Center helps mitigate the difficulties victims face as they navigate the legal system. The overriding focus of the Center is victim safety

and offender accountability. SOS is a multi-agency service center for victims of domestic violence. The Center is located on the seventh floor of the Forsyth County Hall of Justice and provides a "one stop shop" by bringing together key service providers, such as law enforcement, victim advocates, legal advocates and social services.

Clients of the Center are able to obtain legal advice, counseling, referrals and protective orders as well as information concerning their court cases. The on-site partners in addition to Legal Aid include the District Attorney's Office, Family Services, Clerk of Court, Sheriff's Office, the Department of Social Services, NC Department of Community Corrections, Winston-Salem Police

Department and the Winston-Salem State University Center for Community Safety.

SOS is one of very few similar centers in the nation and our LANC paralegals play an integral role in the Center's day-to-day operations. We staff the Center with two of our paralegals, **Harrietta Mickles** and our bilingual family law paralegal **Gricel Guerrero**. Our paralegals are generally the first persons to greet and assist all victims accessing the Center. Our family law staff attorneys (**Pridgen Amos**, **Stephanie Goldsborough**, and **Shannon Hurley**) provide direct legal representation, counsel, and advice to the Center's clients regarding 10-day 50B and 50C order hearings.



Tax Season (Continued from page 2)

visit us next year "to get all the money that is coming to you."

For some, the Earned Income Credit was as much as \$4,716, and we witnessed tax refunds of as much as \$6,500. While each person's refund depends completely on his or her particular circumstances, in every case we are able to e-file tax returns which equals a quick refund payment and no costly fees.



Thanks to our VITA volunteers
Our thanks to those in Winston-Salem who volunteered for the LANC VITA ("Volunteer Income Tax Assistance") Project this year:

Frannie Brannan
Peter Marzullo
Louise Harris
Robin Shea
Barbara Knotts

Susan Ryan
Hada Haulsee
Mike Drye
Liz Arias
Natalie Crater
Laura Miller

Alison Ashe-Card
Alton Absher
Martin Majorel
Jeanette Matthews
Olga Larraga



Thank you!!!

On Thursday, March 6, 2008, the Winston-Salem office of Legal Aid of North Carolina held a reception to **recognize and celebrate the pro bono efforts of our local attorneys.** The reception was a rousing success! Janet Ward Black, President of the NC Bar Association, gave a touching speech extolling the virtues of *pro bono* work and related how this work allows us to be ambassadors for the legal community. Awards were given out to **Reginald Combs** for the most housing/consumer cases taken; to **Richard Crouse** for the most family law cases taken; to **Katherine Bosken** as our *pro bono* attorney of the year; and to **Kilpatrick Stockton** as our *pro bono* law firm of the year.



Katherine Bosken
Kilpatrick Stockton, LLP
"Pro Bono Attorney
of the Year"

In addition, the following *pro bono* attorneys received a certificate and a token of our appreciation:

Amy Allred
Cal Adams
Chad Brown
Bertram E. Brown
Susan Brotherton
Joseph P. Clark
Lisa Costner
Mary N. Craven
J. Calvin Cunningham
Bryan E. Gates
Deborah M. Glass
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Robin Shea
Paul Shepard
David C. Smith
Robin J. Stinson
Cecil R. Summers
Robert Tally
Henry P. Van Hoy, II
R. Michael Wells, Sr.
R. Michael Wells, Jr.

*The Winston-Salem Office of Legal Aid of North Carolina provides free legal services in civil (non-criminal) matters to low-income people in the six counties surrounding Winston-Salem, including: Davie, Forsyth, Iredell, Stokes, Surry and Yadkin Counties.
Visit our website at: www.legalaidnc.org/winstonsalem*



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