



THE *Heart* OF THE TRIANGLE

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Legal Aid of North Carolina Wants You to Know Your Rights

by Judy Liu, MPH

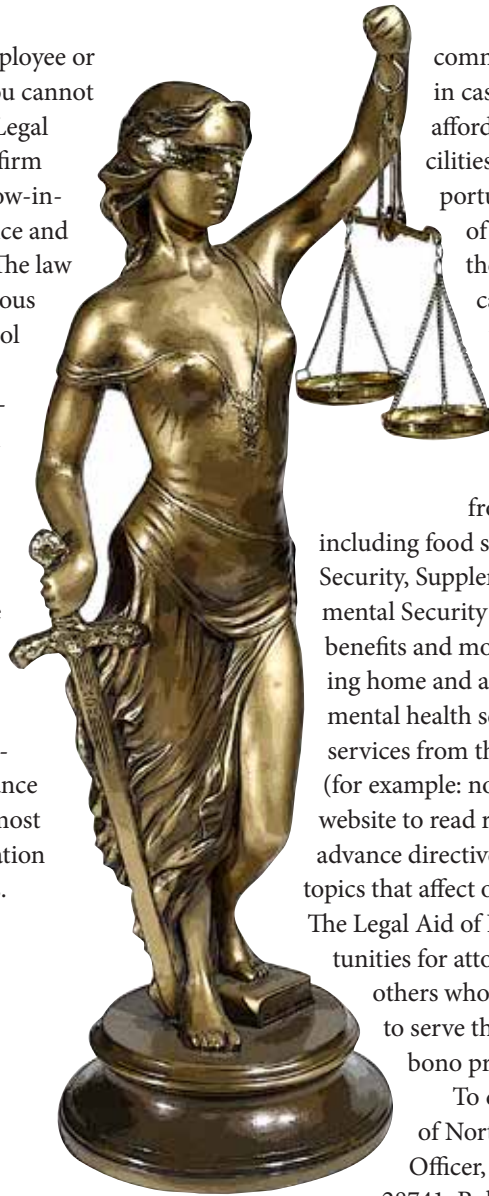
Do you know your rights as a consumer, employee or parent? Do you have a dispute in which you cannot afford adequate legal representation? The Legal Aid of North Carolina is a statewide, nonprofit law firm that provides free legal services in civil matters to low-income people in order to ensure equal access to justice and to remove legal barriers to economic opportunity. The law firm offers legal counsel and representation for various types of cases. They handle domestic disputes, school disputes, employment disputes, tenant rights and many others. They provide free legal help to low-income residents in civil cases involving basic human needs, including safety, shelter, income and more.

The Legal Aid of NC's free do-it-yourself legal clinics educate people about their rights and empower them to handle certain basic legal issues without the help of an attorney. Participants receive guidance and the legal forms needed to walk out of the clinic and into the courthouse. Clinics are hosted monthly or quarterly at Legal Aid offices and at churches, community centers and other locations throughout the state. All clinics are free. Advance registration is required due to space limitations at most locations. Participants receive general legal information only. No specific advice is given on individual cases.

Following is a list of free clinics:

- Child Custody and Visitation
- Criminal Record Expunction
- Employee Rights
- Health Care Powers of Attorney and Living Wills
- Simple Divorce
- Tenant Rights

The Legal Aid of NC helps clients improve their



communities by providing limited services in cases involving the development of affordable housing, essential community facilities, education and job-readiness/job-opportunity programs. They also help victims of domestic violence obtain custody of their children and help parents or other caretakers secure custody of children who are exposed to violence, sexual abuse and other dangers.

They represent people in cases involving denial, termination, reduction or overpayment of benefits from many federal and state programs, including food stamps, Medicaid and Medicare, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Supplemental Security Disability Income (SSDI), veterans' benefits and more. They handle cases involving nursing home and assisted-living discharges, state-funded mental health services, child-care subsidies and other services from the N.C. Department of Social Services (for example: non-Medicaid transportation). Visit the website to read relevant articles regarding the need for advance directives, class action lawsuits and current topics that affect our local community.

The Legal Aid of North Carolina has volunteer opportunities for attorneys, law students, paralegals and others who want to donate their time and talents to serve those in need. Learn about their pro bono programs at <http://www.legalaidnc.org>.

To donate, make your check to Legal Aid of North Carolina and mail to: Development Officer, Legal Aid of North Carolina, P.O. Box 28741, Raleigh, NC 27611.

Natural Awakenings supports Triangle area non-profits by offering a free full-page feature article each month. It is a very visible platform from which an organization can tell its story and detail the services it offers. Please let us know if you would like for your non-profit organization to be considered for inclusion in an upcoming issue. Call 919-342-2831 or email TrianglePublisher@NaturalAwakeningsMag.com.