

North Carolina's Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) December 31 Deadline is Thursday

The Low Income Energy Assistance Program gives families a one-time vendor payment to help pay their heating bills. To be eligible, families must meet all of the following: an income test, be responsible for its heating bills and include a US citizen or an eligible alien.

To apply for the program the following information is needed: name, date of birth, and social security numbers for each household member; household's income; savings and checking accounts; and property, stocks, bonds, and other assets. Applications will be taken for disabled persons receiving services through the Division of Aging and Adult Services or households containing a person age 60 and above from December 1 through 31 of each year or until funds are exhausted. Applications on all other households will be taken from January 1 through March 31 or until funds are exhausted.

For more information contact Anson County Department of Social Services at 704-694-9351.

Do You Need a Coat or Blanket? Would You Like to Donate?

The Faith-Based Center of Hope continues their "Warm Coats, Warm Hearts" program. They have distributed coats to several of the churches and schools in Anson County.

Blankets for the elderly are also available.

Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church is the pick up site, or you can deliver donated items there too. Just call to schedule it.

To donate coats and blankets or to request help, please contact Vancine Sturdivant at 704-848-4412 or Ester Lindsey at 704-848-8452.

On International Migrants Day, Migrant Farmworker Advocates Release Video

Entitled: Isolated by Force: Denying Migrant Farmworkers Access to Services

In recognition of International Migrants Day, a day designated by the United Nations to celebrate the role of the migrant and to promote the protection of the rights of migrant workers and their families, the Farmworker Unit of Legal Aid of North Carolina joins the Transnational Legal Clinic of the University of Pennsylvania to announce the release of a new video, *Isolated by Force: Denying Migrant Farmworkers Access to Services*.

Migrant farmworkers in North Carolina and across the United States labor and live in isolation, housed in employer-owned and operated labor camps. Employers, often aided by local law enforcement, regularly deny workers access to medical, legal, and other social service providers. There is no federal law governing access rights; instead, the right of access is in an uneven and patchwork system of state statutes, judicial opinions, and administrative guidance.

Even in North Carolina, where an opinion letter by the Attorney General supports the rights of migrant workers to receive visitors at their camps, those rights are regularly denied.

"Last year, an employer in Bladen County tried to prevent legal aid advocates from speaking with workers at a camp where there were suspected labor law violations. Despite being shown the Attorney General's opinion allowing access to migrant labor camps, the employer called the sheriff to report that we were trespassing. When we tried to visit the same camp a few weeks later, we encountered a locked gate and were prevented from talking to the workers," said Caroline DiMaio, attorney in the Farmworker Unit of Legal Aid of North Carolina.

Another example took place in May, when an employer carrying a gun in Sampson County approached a group of health outreach workers who had come to the camp to do health assessments and promote the services in their clinics. Despite many of them being dressed in scrubs and carrying medical equipment, the employer asked if they were prostitutes and told them they were illiterate because they "couldn't read the no-trespassing sign." He said he had called the cops and told them to leave the premises. As they drove away, they noticed the sheriff's car pulling into the drive.

Service providers across the country report similar practices, where farm owners and camp operators subject them and the workers to harassment and threats of violence, and threats or actual arrest carried out by local law enforcement.

"Over and over again, our partners and staff continue to be denied access to the homes of the workers who we are trying to serve. Even when we are explicitly invited, employers bar entry, at times with the threat of violence, adding to the culture of intimidation and fear that farmworkers experience," said Julie Pittman, paralegal at the Farmworker Unit of Legal Aid of North Carolina.

Isolated by Force, produced by the Transnational Legal Clinic, calls attention to the devastating impact this has on migrant farm workers' rights under international law, including the right to freedom of association, freedom of assembly, basic workplace rights, and the right to be free from forced labor and human trafficking. It also recognizes the rights of the service providers themselves to security in person and not to be subjected to arbitrary arrest. The video calls on the United States to protect migrant workers' and their advocates' basic human rights by guaranteeing unrestricted access to workers living in isolation on employer-owned and operated labor camps.

Today, as the world celebrates migrants and their contributions to local communities and the global economy, "Isolated by Force" serves as a reminder of the work the United States government has to do to guarantee migrant workers' human rights, and calls upon the United States to ensure service providers access to workers in employer-controlled housing, and investigate the actions of law enforcement and others who interfere with the right to access migrant labor camps.

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. Learn more at www.legalaidnc.org and find them on Facebook and Twitter.

The Farmworker Unit is a statewide project of Legal Aid of North Carolina committed to providing high quality civil legal services to address the special legal needs of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in North Carolina. Learn more at www.farmworkerlanc.org and find them on Facebook in English and Spanish.

Learn more about International Migrants Day at www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday/.

Storytime Every Wednesday at Partnership for Children

The Anson County Partnership for Children offers Storytime in the Early Childhood Resource Center each Wednesday, from 10 to 10:30 a.m. for children ages 3 to 8. For more information call 704-694-4036.

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704-681-5776

Raffle in Support of the Anson County Animal Shelter Please Enter to Win Great Prizes and Help Animals

Help support the Anson County Animal Shelter by purchasing a raffle ticket. There are prizes from several businesses in Anson County, Bojangles, IGA, KFC, Lady Bug Restaurant, Lacy's, H.W. Little & Company, Tractor Supply and La Fogata. One ticket costs \$1 or you can get 6 tickets for \$5. The drawing will be held on December 31.

Tickets can be purchased at the Animal Shelter or at the Anson County Health Department. For more information call 704-994-2738 or 704-694-5188.

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