



A coalition of 23 nonprofits groups has called on Congress to protect public access to the high-tech information highways now under construction.

Working with people

## Winston-Salem family advocate retiring

*Sarah Austin retires this month after a long career at Family Services in Winston-Salem where she rose from family counselor to chief executive. Her lessons and accomplishments have piled up along the way.*

By SUSAN GRAY

### Winston-Salem

If she could do it all again, she would be retiring now from politics rather than social work.

"But that wasn't an area that women went into at that time," says Sarah Young Austin, 67, dressed casually in a beige pants suit and dragging on a Carlton.

Austin steps down as chief executive officer of Family Services Inc. in Winston-Salem on July 31, ending

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nearly half a century of commitment to social work.

Her words must shock Forsyth County residents. For Sarah Austin - a tough-talking, chain-smoking, big-hearted family advocate - embodies social work.

She joined Family Services, a nonprofit counseling agency for families grappling with adoption and child-rearing problems, as a family counselor in 1951. By 1984, she had worked her way up to chief. Along the way, she picked up a masters degree in social work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and heaps of coveted honors, including the Irvin B. Sperry Award and the state social worker of the year award.

UNC alumni even coined a phrase in her honor: The Sarah



Sarah Young Austin is stepping down after 31 years with Family Services in Winston-Salem.

Photo by Susan Gray

Austin approach to social work. Translation: Tireless commitment, professional leadership and political savvy. And School of Social Work graduates continue to seek her out for advice and jobs.

But Austin simply smiles and shrugs her broad shoulders at these accolades.

"I just love the contacts and the people I work with and being able to help who ever I can," she says, smiling and tapping ash from her Carlton into a large ceramic ashtray on her desk. "God knows, this many years in social work, I've always worked with excellent people. And that's the secret. We all pool together rather than against each other."

That's vintage Austin. Down-to-earth, direct.

Laughter - a deep throaty variety from pack after pack of cigarettes -

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## Letting the sunshine in Nonprofit lobbyists support state's new reporting rules

*Nonprofit lobbyists in North Carolina generally are supportive of a proposed state law that would extend reporting requirements for lobbying activities. But a similar change in federal lobbying laws is being criticized by nonprofit groups as too burdensome.*

By BARBARA SOLOW

As a lobbyist for the nonprofit Public School Forum of North Carolina, Jo Ann Norris knows she has few resources at her disposal than representatives of for-profit organizations.

So when her organization was mistakenly cited in newspaper articles last year as among the 10 biggest spenders on lobbying the General Assembly, it rankled.

Norris, who is associate executive director of the forum, says she meticulously reports every lobbying-related expense and meeting - to a degree that other more well-endowed organizations may not.

"The Public School Forum spent \$24,000 on lobbying last year," Norris says. "When I look at folks

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like Glaxo [which spent close to \$67,500], I wonder what is going on" with newspaper reports about lobbying.

The Secretary of State's Office - which handles registration of lobbyists in North Carolina - does not have breakdowns on how much of the approximately \$5.4 million spent on lobbying last year was on behalf of nonprofits.

But under a proposed new law, that type of information would become more readily available to the public.

Senate Bill 398 would amend the state's existing lobbying law to require:

- Paid lobbyists and their client organizations to register with the state and pay a \$75 fee. Currently, only the lobbyists must register.
- Increased disclosure of lobbying activities and expenses.
- Inclusion of fees paid to lobbyists and the names of legislators they contact in reports filed with the Secretary of State.

The bill would not apply to unpaid lobbying activities or so-called "goodwill lobbying" that does

not involve discussion of specific legislation. The last change in the lobbying law was made in 1991.

State Sen. Fountain Odom, the measure's primary sponsor, says the purpose of the new rules is to increase public access to information about lobbying activities.

"There ought to be as much sunshine in the process as possible so that people can decide whether a particular group or individual has influence," he says. "North Carolina politics has been known for a long time as being very squeaky clean and we want to continue that."

The proposed state law appears to have the general support of nonprofit lobbyists and good government advocates who say it will provide a more accurate picture of who spends what to influence whom.

"The legislature is awash in money," says Patricia Watts, executive director of Common Cause/North Carolina. "Anytime we can get meaningful disclosure about who is spending what and why a lot of nonprofit agendas are blocked, it's a good thing."

By contrast, attempts to tighten federal lobbying rules have been

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## Rewriting the rules North Carolina has new nonprofit law

Tar Heel nonprofits, take note: The state has just passed a new Nonprofit Corporations Act.

The new law, which took effect July 1, is designed to provide the public with more information about nonprofit organizations.

The measure requires nonprofits to file annual reports with the Secretary of State's office that include their address, a description of activities, a list of officers and directors and whether or not the organization has memberships.

The reports are separate from those that must be filed annually with the Internal Revenue Service.

The new law also provides for new kinds of partnerships between nonprofits and other groups. For example, it includes provisions for mergers between nonprofit and for-profit companies.

David Massey, general counsel to the secretary of state, says the law will "give the public a better idea of what's going on" in the nonprofit sector and will "put nonprofit law closer to the evolved state of business law."

The measure is the first major overhaul of the Nonprofit Act since it was passed in 1957.

While they agree with the need

to update the rules, staff members of the North Carolina Center for Nonprofits have some concerns about the new law's effect.

"While it's very pro-forma in terms of the information required, the failure to complete those [annual report] forms will result in organizations being administratively dissolved," says Leslie Takahashi, program associate for the center. "Those are very serious consequences."

And while the state plans to mail out notices about the new rules to nonprofits on the anniversary of their incorporation, the N.C. Center is worried that some may fall through the cracks.

"The way they are going to contact nonprofits is to contact their registered agent," Takahashi says. "That may be someone who is no longer with the organization. We've been trying to alert the state to the fact that nonprofits are different from business corporations."

She invites anyone with questions about the new law to contact the N.C. Center at (919) 571-0811. Information is also available from the Secretary of State's Office at (919) 733-5150.

### BRIEFLY

#### Land Loss project receives Kellogg grant

The Land Loss Prevention Project has received a \$993,140 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to administer a statewide partnership of farmers, agricultural organizations, universities and community groups that will work to ensure the economic vitality of Tar Heel farming.

#### Center on philanthropy receives grant

The Indiana University Center on Philanthropy has received a grant of \$5.7 million from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to continue its mission to improve the understanding and practice of philanthropy. The center supports education and research on the nonprofit sector and nonprofit fundraising.

#### Asheboro hospice to expand

The Center of Living Hospice of Randolph County has won state approval for a new in-patient and residential facility in Asheboro. The new facility will provide care for 16 terminally ill patients. Center of Living was founded in 1981 by a group of Randolph County physicians.



#### Rex Hospital publishes history book

Rex Hospital in Raleigh has published a book marking its 100th birthday. "Rex Hospital: A Centennial Celebration," is a 112-page book with more than 150 photographs from the hospital's past. The hospital has also opened a history exhibit near the main lobby.