

# For widely traveled dean, 'it was time to come home'

Posted: Sunday, Dec. 07, 2008

[COLUMNISTS »](#)

[Amy Baldwin](#)



Amy Baldwin writes about Charlotte-area newcomers in her New Around Town blog and Living Here columns in the Observer. She also is editor of the annual Living Here magazine. She grew up in suburban Dayton, Ohio, but was a newcomer in three other places - Birmingham, Ala.; Lexington, Ky.; and New York City - before moving to Charlotte in

2003. She likes barbecue, preferably pulled pork, but passes on sweet tea. Her favorite college basketball team is still to be determined.

[Amy's blog](#)

[E-mail Amy](#)

(704) 358-5179

---

Charlotte – a melting pot of newcomers – is brimming with accents from all over the globe. Gene Clark's is subtle and hard to figure out. That's because the Wichita native lived in Australia for 30 years.

Clark, 60, dean of the Charlotte School of Law, moved to Charlotte in January 2006. His early impressions? "It's a very vibrant city (that) combines the best of Southern charm and friendliness with a can-do sense of everything," he said during an interview from his office at the school off Wilkinson Boulevard, just west of uptown.

Clark said he's been struck by how Charlotte embraces partnership. He has too, serving on the Board of Visitors of Johnson C. Smith University.

Previously, Clark was dean of the faculty of law, business and arts at Charles Darwin University in Australia's Northern Territory. His international career has taken him to China, Thailand and the South Pacific.

But "it was time to come home," Clark said. Parents and other family members were getting older. And he and wife Pat had two daughters in college in the States. Charlotte was also perfect because Pat has family in North Carolina.

Clark is proud of the school, which ushered in its first class in August 2006 and moved into its brand-new building this past August. The school will graduate its first class in May.

Clark believes the Charlotte School of Law is unique. All faculty members have experience practicing law; at some law schools it's more like one in five with hands-on experience, he said. All students – there are currently 291 – are required to do pro bono work and externships before graduating. So far students have donated more than 5,000 hours of service.

Clark, who lives in the SouthPark area, says he devotes most of his time to the school. If he's lucky, he said, he goes to the Harris YMCA on the weekends, "but not often enough."

Got a question or comment about Living Here? Let me hear it. [abaldwin@charlotteobserver.com](mailto:abaldwin@charlotteobserver.com), 704-358-5179.