



Justice in Action

VIRGINIA LEGAL AID SOCIETY



DAVID B. NEUMEYER
Executive Director

2011–12 was a difficult year for low-income people and for legal aid programs, including Virginia Legal Aid Society, that serve them. VLAS funding was reduced 20% as Congress cut our federal money and revenue from the Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Account program declined to a trickle. As a result, we could not afford to fill two vacancies in our attorney staff. One of those vacancies was in our one-lawyer office in Emporia, where we are closing our full-service office of 35 years and will operate only a satellite office with an intake phone and lawyers driving from distant offices when a case requires them to be present. With two fewer lawyers and one less office, VLAS can help fewer clients with extended-service problems; we continue to give legal advice to almost everyone who needs it, but many applicants need more than advice.



MICHAEL R. DOUCETTE
President, Board of Directors

The two bright spots in this picture are the courage and hope displayed daily by our clients, and the generosity displayed by our funders and donors. Strong local funding enables us to keep three full-time lawyers in Lynchburg and the same in Suffolk, where we just received an important grant renewal from the Obici Healthcare Foundation for our Medicaid Access Project. Such local support keeps our work and our programs serving more people and allows our skilled lawyers to keep developing long-term solutions for the toughest problems in our clients’ lives.

We thank you again for continuing to make this work and these results possible.

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The top signature is "David B. Neumeyer" and the bottom signature is "Michael R. Doucette".

ABOUT VIRGINIA LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Virginia Legal Aid Society (VLAS) is a nonprofit law firm that provides legal information, advice and representation in civil cases to low-income individuals and families. Since 1977, VLAS has been the only institutional provider of such services in Central, Southside and Western Tidewater Virginia. VLAS attorneys and paralegals use legal skills to solve problems in health care, public benefits, housing, family relations, advance directives, consumer, education, and employment. Our mission is to resolve serious legal problems of low-income people, promote economic and family stability, reduce poverty through effective legal assistance, and to champion equal justice.

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Greg Hairston, Managing Attorney
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434-634-5172

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David Neumeyer, Executive Director
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Kate Sigler, Director of Administration
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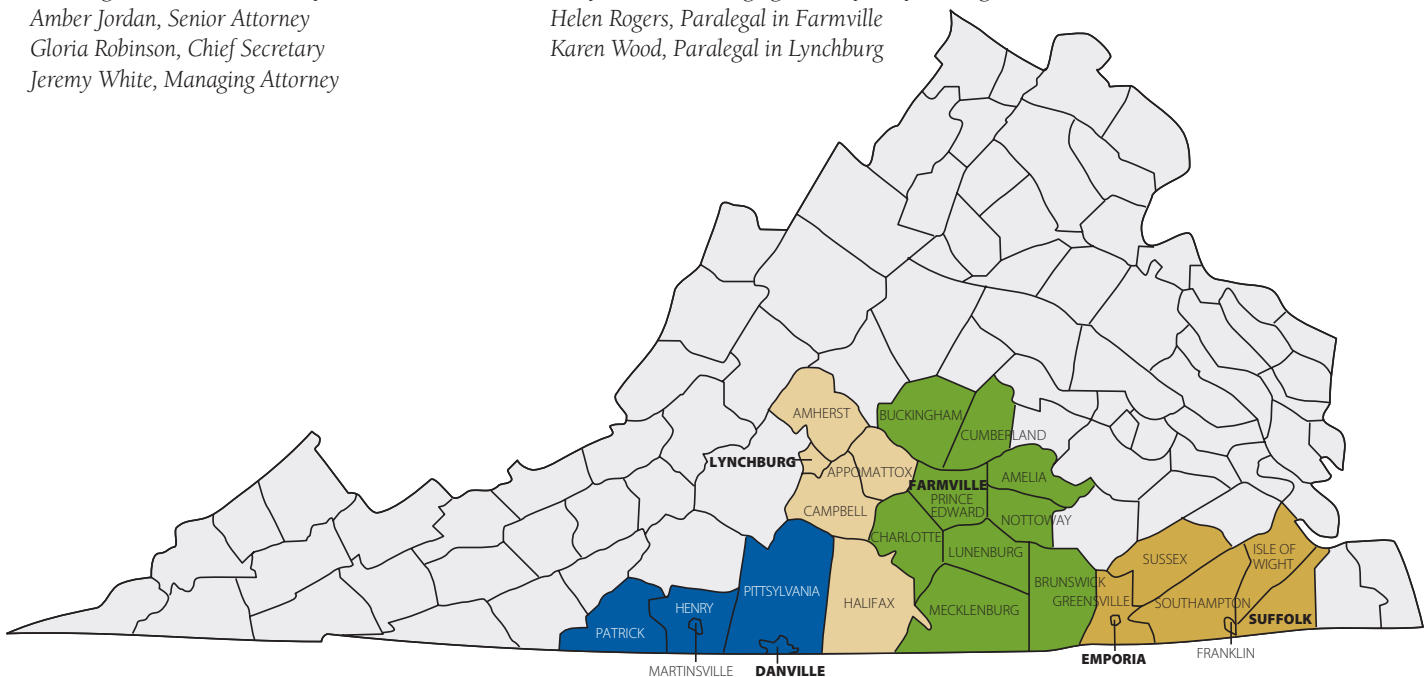
LAWLINE INTAKE AND ADVICE HOTLINE

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Leslie Dodson, Supervising Attorney in Farmville
Sherri Loftis, Paralegal in Danville
Melody Martinez, Paralegal in Lynchburg
Larry Nordick, Managing Attorney in Lynchburg
Helen Rogers, Paralegal in Farmville
Karen Wood, Paralegal in Lynchburg

VLAS Service Area

Our service area includes twenty rural counties and six small cities encompassing 10,200 square miles and an eligible population, at 125% of the federal poverty level, of approximately 129,000. VLAS serves this area through a network of five service offices, one administrative office, and a toll-free intake and advice hotline, known as LawLine, serving the entire area.





“Don,” a 57-year-old Brunswick resident, had worked his entire life until November 2011, when he had to have brain surgeries on two occasions due to an ongoing medical condition. Complications followed the surgeries resulting in two strokes, leaving Don with extreme cognitive impairments and rendering him permanently disabled. He no longer had the means to support himself and meet his housing expenses, food, or medical coverage.

Don contacted VLAS, with his son’s assistance, for help in obtaining Social Security Disability benefits. VLAS obtained assessments from Don’s neurosurgeon explaining the severity of his impairment, as well

as testimony from his son regarding his inability to adequately care for himself. With our assistance, Don was able to obtain disability income. Don currently receives \$698 a month in Social Security Income benefits. He will receive back benefits from November 2011 for income lost during this time period. He is now eligible for Medicaid, which will ensure his continued medical coverage. VLAS’s intervention ensured Don remained in his home and will have his medical needs taken care of because of the Medicaid coverage obtained.

Client’s name and picture changed for confidentiality.

Danville residents “Fred and Jackie Dunn” moved in with Fred’s grandmother in order to care for her increasing health needs. Fred continued to work to provide for the financial needs of the household, as well he and his wife assuming the primary caregiver roles for his grandmother. After some time of residing with his grandmother, she passed away. Payments were still being made on the home at the time of her death, in the grandmother’s name. Fred and Jackie worked out an arrangement with the bank allowing them to continue paying on the loan and stay in the home.

The Dunns continued making payments on the home, until Fred lost his job and was unable to continue the payments. When the Dunns received their tax return, they sent the bank a check in an attempt to catch up on the payments. The loan was not in Fred and Jackie’s name and the bank returned the check.

Fred and Jackie feared losing the home and contacted VLAS. Our attorney attempted to contact the bank to clear up the misunderstanding, but foreclosure proceedings had already been initiated. In the meantime, Fred found a new job. VLAS filed an action in Circuit Court asking for the foreclosure to be stopped and for the bank to allow the Dunns to place the loan in their names. The foreclosure of the home was ceased the morning it was scheduled to be sold, because of VLAS’s intervention and action. We were able to negotiate a settlement with the bank that allowed Fred and Jackie to assume the responsibility of the loan, allowing them to keep the home.

Client’s name and picture changed for confidentiality.



VLAS serves clients whose household incomes are below 125% of the federal poverty level, currently about \$23,900 annually for a family of three, or below 200% of the federal poverty level if the households have health- or work-related expenses.

VLAS serves clients with legal problems in the following areas:

Public Benefits: Social Security Disability & SSI, Unemployment Insurance, Food Stamps (now called SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Health Care Benefits: Medicaid, Medicare, FAMIS, private health insurance

Housing: landlord disputes and evictions, subsidized and public housing, mortgage foreclosures, hazardous conditions

Family: divorce, child custody and visitation, child support, domestic violence appeals

Consumer: collections and repossessions, garnishments and exemptions, illegal or unfair sales practices, consumer credit violations, utilities, payday and car title lending, car warranties

Education: special education rights, student discipline

Advance Directives: simple wills and living wills, general powers of attorney, medical powers of attorney



Photo by Andrew Wilds

Donna Smith and daughters YiKima and YiKia, a VLAS client family.

■ **LawLine** provides screening, assessment, referrals, information and legal advice to most applicants during their first contact with VLAS. Six paralegals and two attorney supervisors provide this service from 9:00 am–3:30 pm M-Tu-Th-F every week. Callers needing extended service, such as drafting a document or filing a lawsuit, are referred to a local VLAS office. *All areas.*

■ **Housing Improvement and Preservation (HIP)** provides advice and representation in evictions, foreclosures, correction of hazardous conditions, and renovation or construction of affordable housing. *Lynchburg and Danville offices; funded by United Way of Central Virginia, Lynchburg Retail Merchants Foundation, and the City of Danville CDBG Program.*

■ **Strengthening Families with Children (SFC)** strengthens low-income families with children by increasing and preserving financial resources, maintaining or obtaining safe and affordable housing, increasing access to health care and education, and increasing stability for families in transition. *Lynchburg, Emporia, and Suffolk offices; funded by Franklin-Southampton Charities, Greater Lynchburg Community Trust, Cities of Lynchburg, Suffolk & Emporia, Camp Foundations, Pruden Foundation, Suffolk Foundation and Community Action Coalition of Virginia.*

■ **Crisis and Income Protection (CIP)** assists families and individuals in cases that increase or preserve income, or provide crisis relief related to housing and domestic violence. *All areas; funded by Walmart Foundation, United Way of Danville-Pittsylvania, Dominion Resources and the Beazley Foundation in Suffolk.*

■ **Senior Citizens Legal Assistance** provides advice and representation to senior citizens in social or economic need. *All areas but Emporia, Greensville and Sussex; funded by Piedmont Senior Resources, Central Virginia Area Agency on Aging, Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia, Southern Area Agency on Aging, and Lake Country Area Agency on Aging.*

■ **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** Program recruits volunteer accountants and creates clinics at which low-income Virginians eligible for the EITC can receive assistance in preparing their tax returns. *Lynchburg.*

■ **Private Bar Involvement (PBI) Program** involves approximately 180 attorneys in providing pro bono representation to VLAS clients, most often in divorces and advance directives. *All areas.*

■ **Financial Freedom**, a financial budgeting and consumer awareness project presented as a series of classes, and through one-on-one mentoring, to educate low-income individuals on making good financial decisions. *Danville; funded by the Danville Regional Foundation.*

■ **Community Legal Education** provided by VLAS involves regular presentations by attorneys and paralegals to community groups, senior nutrition sites, tenant organizations, inmates, and service clubs such as Kiwanis and Rotary chapters. *All areas.*

■ **Health, Education, Advocacy, Law (HEAL) Project**, is an innovative medical-legal collaboration designed to ensure that families' and individuals' basic needs for food, safe housing, income, nutrition, family stability, and health insurance are met so that physicians can be more effective in preventing and treating health problems. The project trains health care providers to identify poverty-based barriers to maintaining a patient's health; connects medical and legal professionals in jointly solving obstacles to improved health outcomes; and provides direct, proactive legal assistance to patients experiencing problems. *Lynchburg; health partner, Lynchburg Family Medicine Residency.*

■ **Medicaid Access Project (MAP)** is a project to assist disabled adults to quickly obtain Medicaid coverage. We focus on adults who have not applied for federal disability benefits or have not been denied in the last twelve months, and assist them to qualify for Medicaid benefits within 90 days of application using a little-known state process. Most disabled adults who obtain Medicaid or Medicare do so through the federal disability benefit process, which normally takes two to three years. *Suffolk; health partners include Sentara Obici Hospital and Western Tidewater Free Clinic. Funded by Obici Healthcare Foundation.*

In 2011–12, the following attorneys provided legal services to our clients without charging a fee. We thank them for their time, effort and skill!

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 Robert Jones
 Jeanette Ojeda
 Joshua Pretlow
 Frank Rawls

For providing other pro bono legal assistance to VLAS, we thank John E. Falcone, Lynchburg

Program-Wide Pro Bono Facts & Figures: 2011–12	
Cases Completed	159
Attorneys Agreeing to Accept Cases	190
Attorneys Handling Cases	103
Hours of Service Provided	558
Value of Services Provided	\$112,225



Panelists from the May 11, 2012 Ethics CLE co-sponsored by VLAS and Lynchburg Bar Association: Judges R. Edwin Burnette, John Cook and Ellen White, and retired partner of McGuire Woods in Richmond, John Oakey

The VLAS Pro Bono Task Force and the Lynchburg Bar Association co-sponsored a Continuing Legal Education (CLE) seminar on Ethics in May 2012. The CLE promoted the establishment of mentor/mentee relationships throughout the service area and more than 40 attorneys participated in the seminar.

VLAS gratefully acknowledges the support of those who contributed to the 2011–2012 Annual Campaign for Equal Justice (July 1, 2011–June 30, 2012) or designated contributions to VLAS through United Way.

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Shannon & Mike Valentine, Lynchburg
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in memory of Alice Blumenson*
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*In honor of Bill Quillian's 99th birthday &
in honor of David Neumeyer*
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 Franklin Riddle, Danville
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 Anonymous (5)
 Anonymous
In honor of David Neumeyer
In memory of Theodore A. Majette

Matching Gifts

Duke Energy Foundation, Princeton

In-Kind

The following volunteers dedicated their time to the United Way's "Day of Caring" 2012 by providing building and grounds maintenance.

SunTrust Bank

Martha Brooks
 Lynn Drennan
 Joyce Eckel
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 Laura Grovesenor
 Dennis Howard
 Sherry Kinceley
 Patrick Richardson
 Bruce Scrivener
 Lucy White
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Genworth

Sandra Allen
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 Constance Owuor

VLAS initiated a Bar Campaign in the Lynchburg service area in May, 2012, asking local attorneys to financially support VLAS. Pledges were made over a two year period, raising **\$48,547**. A total of **51 attorneys** contributed to the campaign.

VLAS thanks the Lynchburg Bar Campaign committee and the support of the Lynchburg Bar

*Chair: Robert C. Wood III, Esq., Lynchburg
John R. Alford, Esq., Lynchburg
Michael R. Doucette, Esq., Lynchburg
William P. Harris, Esq., Lynchburg
Joseph C. Knakal, Jr., Esq., Lynchburg
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Up to \$99

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Sally Steel, Esq., Rustburg
William F. Quillian, Esq., Lynchburg
Melissa Waugh, Esq., Lynchburg
Beth E. Wortman, Esq., Forest



Photos by Andrew Wilds

“In America it is critical that courts be open to all citizens regardless of their ability to pay, and every lawyer should accept the responsibility to afford all citizens equal access to our courts because it is inherent to our profession as officers of the court.”

—ROBERT C. WOOD III, ESQ.

VLAS attorneys and paralegals closed **4,142** cases, providing legal help to **10,082** men, women and children throughout our service area. VLAS attorneys and paralegals recovered for our clients **\$816,104** in benefits, claims and damages, and saved our clients **\$843,044** by preventing the collection of unjust claims.



L-R: David Neumeyer, Noelle Prince Shear, Bill Shear, Rhonda Knight

■ In July, 2011, **Obici Healthcare Foundation** awarded VLAS \$75,000 to help improve Medicare and Medicaid access through the **Medicaid Access Project (MAP)** in Suffolk, Franklin, Southampton, and Isle of Wight.

■ In September, 2011, donors **Noelle Prince Shear and Bill Shear** entertained supporters at a “friend-raiser” at their residence in the Farmville area.

■ In support of the **Strengthening Families with Children Program** in Franklin, Southampton and Lynchburg, VLAS was awarded during 2011–12: \$25,000 from **Franklin Southampton Charities**, \$7,000 from **Greater Lynchburg Community Trust**, \$15,000 from the **Camp Foundations**, \$10,000 from the **Pruden Foundation**, and \$7,500 each from the **Community Action Coalition of Virginia** and **Suffolk Foundation**.

■ In March, 2012, the **Beazley Foundation** awarded VLAS \$15,000 to help fund our **Crisis and Income Protection (CIP) Program** in Suffolk.

■ In May, 2012, Lynchburg private attorney **Melissa Waugh** received the annual VLAS-Lynchburg Bar Association Pro Bono Award for providing exemplary volunteer services to both our clients and our Pro Bono program.

■ In June, 2012, VLAS was awarded a grant of \$30,000 from **The Walmart Foundation’s State Giving Program**. The grant is designed to support the **Crisis and Income Protection (CIP) Program** throughout the twenty-six counties and cities in Central, Southside and Western Tidewater.

■ VLAS welcomed new members to the Board of Directors: **Thelma Hinton** of Suffolk, **Robert C. Wood III, Esq.** of Lynchburg, and **Marc A. Schewel** of Lynchburg.

2013-2017 STRATEGIC PLAN

The VLAS Board of Directors has approved a new Strategic Plan for 2013–2017. VLAS underwent an independent evaluation of its advocacy, intake, fundraising and technology services and efforts; received survey feedback from more than 600 low-income individuals; and received comments and recommendations from more than 300 professionals and community members.

More than 20 community forums were held in the service area with community leaders, social service professionals, and volunteers to discuss community needs. The new Strategic Plan is a collaborative effort by staff, board, and community members.

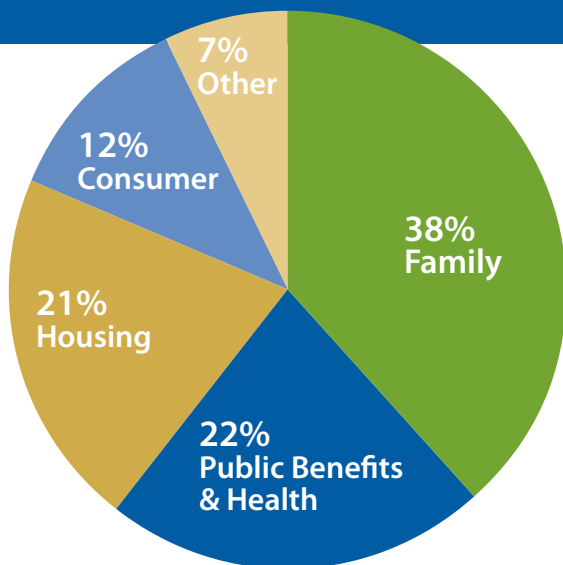
The 2013-2017 Strategic Plan contains three goals for VLAS:

- VLAS will provide the best legal services possible by:
- meeting the most pressing needs of the low-income population in south-central Virginia;
 - increasing the effectiveness of our legal advocacy; and
 - increasing our financial stability.

The full plan with goals, objectives, and strategies can be found at vlas.org.

Number of People Helped by Case Type

Family	3,876
Public Benefits & Health	2,248
Housing	2,084
Consumer	1,165
Other (Wills, Education, Employment)	709
TOTAL People Helped	10,082



95%

OF CLIENTS SURVEYED WERE SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF HELP PROVIDED BY VLAS

CLIENT QUOTES

“Your service will be of great help to my children, and knowing that I have peace of mind now.”

“It was fast and informative. I felt like a person and not a case file. Very respectful staff.”

“My lawyer continuously encouraged me and gave me hope about my rights and my case. I now know that Legal Aid really works.”

2011-12 SERVICES BY OFFICE

	CASES CLOSED	PEOPLE HELPED
Lynchburg Area Office		
Amherst	137	329
Appomattox	62	157
Campbell	198	473
Halifax	162	387
Lynchburg City	719	1622
Danville Area Office		
Danville City	518	1180
Henry	189	428
Martinsville City	170	363
Patrick	40	95
Pittsylvania	228	501
Emporia Area Office		
Brunswick	79	186
Emporia City	115	279
Greensville	12	38
Sussex	49	120
Farmville Area Office		
Amelia	41	89
Buckingham	76	168
Charlotte	71	201
Cumberland	40	113
Lunenburg	45	110
Mecklenburg	147	359
Nottoway	81	190
Prince Edward	185	903
Suffolk Area Office		
Franklin City	116	271
Isle Of Wight	86	187
Southampton	69	189
Suffolk City	430	966

VLAS has experienced success with the MAP program in 11-12, and one success story was featured in the Obici Healthcare Foundation 2011 Annual Report.

In It For Justice: Virginia Legal Aid Society Helps Small Business Man Win The Battle For Benefits

The Medicaid Access Project uses legal skills to obtain Medicaid or Medicaid coverage at the earliest possible point for disabled adults. VLAS assists clients in two ways:

1 Helps those clients who have not previously applied for disability, or have not been turned down in the last year, to apply first for Medicaid coverage through a little-used state program of Medicaid for the disabled (decisions are commonly made in less than six months) and then assists clients to apply for disability income after having applied for Medicaid.

2 Assists clients who have been turned down for disability to reapply or to appeal their denials and represent them at hearings before Administrative Law Judges, if necessary.



“IF NOT FOR LEGAL AID, I KNOW THAT I’D HAVE BEEN IN A HOMELESS SHELTER OR WORSE.”

VLAS Attorney Randi Blumenson (left) helped Stanley Byrd navigate legal obstacles that prevented him from receiving Medicaid benefits.

Stanley Byrd was laid off of work two weeks before learning of his cancer diagnosis, and now he had no insurance. Two surgeries and twelve rounds of chemotherapy later, Mr. Byrd was facing mounting medical bills exceeding \$1 million, and he could not afford to pay these soaring costs. He was referred to the Western Tidewater Free Clinic for continued treatment.

The Free Clinic often refers patients that may be eligible for Social Security Disability and Medicaid to the Virginia Legal Aid Society for eligibility assistance. Mr. Byrd shared his plight with Randi Blumenson, a Virginia Legal Aid Society attorney.

Armed with medical records from the Free Clinic and two denials from the Social Security Administration, Ms. Blumenson’s plan was to take the case to a judge for a decision. The judge made an “on the record” decision to approve Mr. Byrd’s application.

Byrd admits he had reservations about utilizing a “free attorney” to apply for Social Security Disability benefits and Medicaid. “I was lost and had no faith. I never thought I would get help.” However, Ms. Blumenson explained she had been helping other people in this same predicament for more than 20 years. Her background and confidence compelled Mr. Byrd to “give her a shot.”

A grant from the Obici Healthcare Foundation to the Virginia Legal Aid Society allowed Ms. Blumenson to work with Mr. Byrd from the beginning and walk him through every step of the process. For Stanley Byrd, the Virginia Legal Aid Society was a lifesaver—literally. “If not for Legal Aid,” he said, “I know that I’d have been in a homeless shelter or worse.”

When the good news finally came, both Mr. Byrd and Ms. Blumenson were overjoyed. He was able to obtain retroactive Medicaid to pay off his medical bills and receive a monthly income. Mr. Byrd was relieved to know he was no longer a burden to his family.

Though the process took a year, and the case is officially closed, Ms. Blumenson remains in touch with Mr. Byrd. Although Mr. Byrd is in remission, he still faces a long road to recovery and has Ms. Blumenson to thank for getting him to the point. “I can’t thank her enough.”

VLAS does not charge clients any fee for legal information, advice or representation. Financial support from institutional grants and individual and corporate contributions make our services possible.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTERS
Governments

- Legal Services Corporation of Virginia, Richmond
- Legal Services Corporation, Washington, D.C.
- Amelia County
- Appomattox County
- Buckingham County
- Campbell County
- City of Danville
- City of Emporia
- City of Lynchburg
- Pittsylvania County
- Prince Edward County
- Southampton County
- City of Suffolk
- Sussex County

Corporations and Foundations

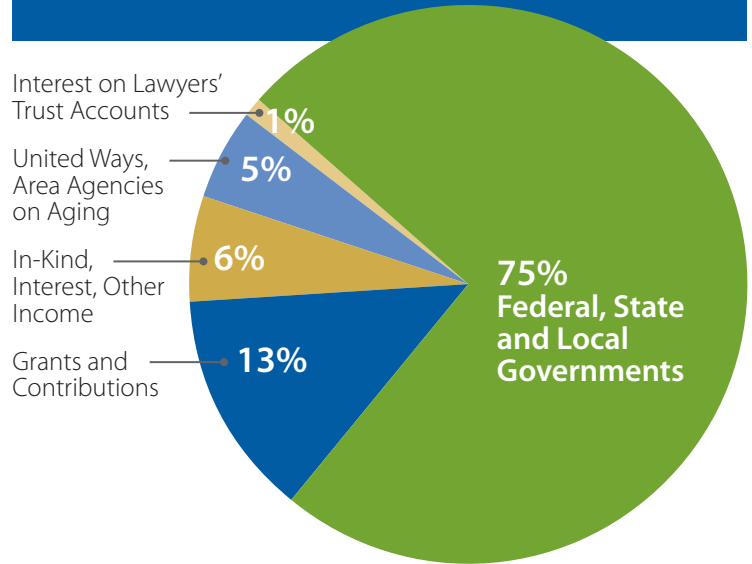
- Beazley Foundation
- Birdsong Corporation
- Camp Foundations
- Community Action Coalition of Virginia
- Danville Regional Foundation
- Franklin-Southampton Charities
- Greater Lynchburg Community Trust
- Lynchburg Retail Merchants Foundation
- Obici Healthcare Foundation
- Pruden Foundation
- Suffolk Foundation
- Walmart Foundation
- Wells Fargo Foundation

United Ways and Area Agencies on Aging

- United Way of Central Virginia
- United Way of Danville-Pittsylvania County
- Franklin Southampton Area United Way
- United Way of Prince Edward County
- Central Virginia Area Agency on Aging
- Lake Country Area Agency on Aging
- Piedmont Senior Resources
- Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia
- Southern Area Agency on Aging
- Southern Area Agency on Aging

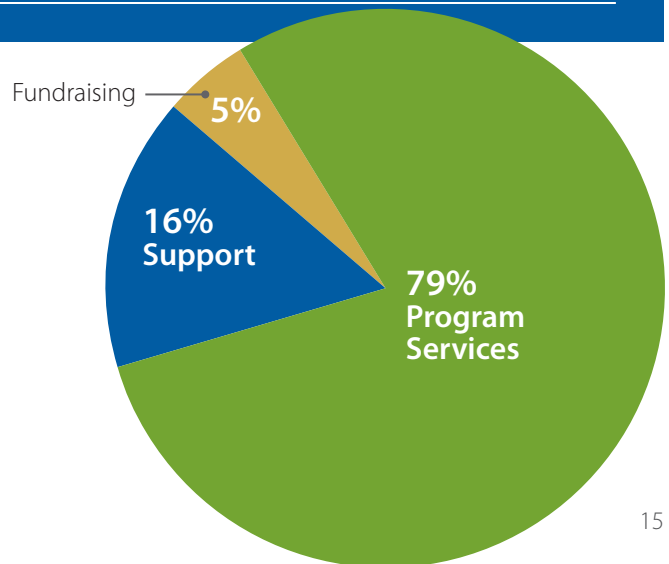
Revenues (July 1, 2011–June 30, 2012)

Federal, State and Local Governments	\$2,136,764
Grants and Contributions	\$377,557
In-Kind, Interest, and Other Income	\$171,294
United Ways and Area Agencies on Aging	\$152,071
Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts	\$26,910
TOTAL	\$2,864,596



Expenses (July 1, 2011–June 30, 2012)

Program Services	\$2,326,761
Support	\$465,786
Fundraising	143,019
TOTAL	\$2,935,566





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Chair, and Rhonda Knight,
Director of Development

*For more information on how you
can support VLAS, please contact
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