Noelle Prince Shear and her husband, Bill Shear, have supported VLAS as donors for several years. In 2015 our Executive Director, David Neumeyer, and Director of Development, Rhonda Knight, asked Noelle and Bill if they would chair a Capital Campaign Committee, raising funds to pay for VLAS’ new office in Farmville. This building purchase marks the completion of a strategic goal to own all of our service offices. Noelle and Bill agreed to this challenging leadership position and their dedication, along with Rhonda Knight’s expertise, brought a tremendous goal to fruition.

Here is what Noelle had to say regarding her support of VLAS, and why legal aid is important to her as a donor and volunteer.

“I feel very strongly about issues to do with justice. I’ve felt that all my life, and I don’t know exactly why. I think it’s partly my character and partly my upbringing, and since I’ve been married my husband I have continued to support a number of national organizations that are involved in the cause of justice. I have no recollection about how I became aware of Virginia Legal Aid Society, but I was very happy to find the organization because I’ve always felt that we want to make some kind of difference where we are. In this community, from the moment that I drove into Prince Edward County, the effects of history were so palpable here and it took me a while to learn what had gone on. I certainly, over the years, became familiar with that. I taught in the schools as an artist in residence, so I felt that we needed to contribute to something locally that serves a big portion of our community, the foundation of our community. So those were my sentiments when we started to contribute.

“All you have to do is see homeless people (to see an example of the effects of injustice). You’ve taken people out of society, and they are unable to make a contribution to society. But the injustice of it is that if we don’t have security for one person, ultimately we don’t have security for any of us. Morally, it is to me completely unconscionable that we separate and we don’t respect the lives of other people. I guess continued on page two
Legal Aid Helps

continued from page one

I have really strong moral principles. How can anyone look at another human being who is suffering and not feel some compulsion to do something? And how can an individual who is just a member of the community support someone in a legal case? We need a professional organization of professional, qualified legal staff to help them.

“There’s a structural problem in our legal system, and what is allowable legally in many instances should not be allowable. But if cases are won for [legal aid] clients as well then precedents are established which can be the basis for new judgments, hopefully, to the benefit of poor clients. It is an area far from my expertise, but I do recognize from the reading I’ve done that there’s a real structural problem through which generations continue in poverty. That completely undermines our democracy.

“In terms of community, in the process of working on this campaign I’ve been so heartened because there have been some very small contributions from people who have benefited from legal aid services, and then there have been people who have been key players in the community who have given. To see these individuals equally in their own capacity, and not necessarily proportional to their own circumstances, making contributions heartens me tremendously. Because those are the inconspicuous ways that we are weaving people together, the consciousness we’re developing through this.

“I’ve learned how important creating connections is to increasing visibility. It’s been a real learning experience in that way. Legal aid now finally has visibility in its location, but it’s so behind-the-scenes in its work, and the clients are behind-the-scenes. Getting the word out, creating visibility in this way is part of what I feel my mission is. It’s humbling to me. I need to openly, respectfully keep reaching out. I’m not all that outgoing as a person, I’m pretty introverted. I can dance, I can perform, but I am learning to reach out to others. It’s been a benefit to me, it is something that I do feel passionate about and I’m grateful for VLAS, too. It has been enriching, I’ve learned a lot; I’ve connected to so many people with whom I would have ordinarily thought I had no basis for connection but I’m very appreciative of that. I feel I’ve really deepened friendships as well and I couldn’t be happier about that. Thank you.”
Foreclosure Averted for VLAS Client

Ella contacted VLAS for assistance with foreclosure proceedings. She had suffered a stroke which made it difficult for her to perform everyday activities such as walking and writing. As a result of her stroke, Ella was forced to travel out of state to stay with her sister, who helped her receive medical care during her recovery. The client’s two children were living in her house but did not make payments on the mortgage while the client was in the hospital and living with her sister. As a result, the bank moved to foreclose her home.

Ella learned of the foreclosure upon her return to her home months later, near the time of foreclosure. With less than a week before the scheduled foreclosure sale, the client contacted our office for help. An attorney for VLAS quickly contacted the trustee handling the foreclosure and requested a cancellation of the sale until the client could renegotiate the terms of her loan through the USDA. After brief negotiation, the trustee agreed, and our attorney then assisted the client in contacting the USDA to determine her eligibility for a refinancing. Due to Ella’s physical limitations, our attorney found it necessary to provide extensive assistance for the client in applying and filling out paperwork for a new loan. The attorney also helped the client to compile lengthy documentation proving her income and submitted them to the USDA. USDA recalculated Ella’s payments based on this proof of income, and approved the client for a new loan at a reduced the monthly payment. As a result, the case was successfully closed after several months, and the client was able to remain in her home.

Client name and photograph have been changed for confidentiality.

FINANCIAL PARTNERS

Governments
Legal Services Corporation of Virginia, Richmond
Legal Services Corporation, Washington, D.C.
Amelia County
Appomattox County
Buckingham County
Campbell County
City of Danville
Lunenburg County
City of Lynchburg
Pittsylvania County
Prince Edward County
Southampton County
City of Suffolk
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VLAS would like to acknowledge the support of those who contributed to the 2014–2015 Annual Campaign for Equal Justice (July 1, 2014–June 30, 2015) or designated contributions to VLAS through United Way.

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For more information on how you can support VLAS, please contact Rhonda Knight at 434-455-3085 or rhondak@vlas.org.
Please remember us in your will.

DONATE ONLINE
networkforgood.org
VLAS attorneys, paralegals and volunteer “pro bono” attorneys closed 2,978 cases, providing legal help to 6,778 men, women and children throughout our service area. VLAS attorneys and paralegals recovered for our clients $2,347,217 in benefits, claims and damages, and saved our clients $928,111 by preventing the collection of unjust claims.

2015 Capital Campaign for Farmville Office

This year, VLAS was pleased to conduct a capital campaign to raise funds for the purchase of our newest service office at 217 E. Third Street in Farmville. We received a challenge from Mary Morton Parsons Foundation to raise $100,000 in matching donations, bringing the total funds raised to $200,000. The 2015 Capital Campaign proved a huge success through the tireless efforts of the Capital Campaign Committee, led by volunteers Noelle Prince Shear and Bill Shear of Farmville, and VLAS Director of Development Rhonda Knight. Funding came from the Mary Morton Parsons Foundation; the Walter J. Payne Foundation; the Marietta McNeill Morgan and Samuel Tate Morgan, Jr. Foundation; many individual donors, and members of the committee.

The VLAS Capital Campaign Committee included community leaders from throughout the nine-county service area of the Farmville office. Through the support of these leaders and donors, VLAS has now met a strategic goal to own all of its service offices. After 34 years of renting an office on High Street, the purchase of this building is a further commitment to and investment in providing legal aid to those in need in Amelia, Cumberland, Buckingham, Prince Edward, Nottoway, Lunenburg, Charlotte, Mecklenburg, and Brunswick counties. We are grateful to all of our donors and supporters who made this year’s campaign a tremendous success!

Number of People Helped in 2014–15 by Case Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Type</th>
<th>Number of People Helped</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>3,347</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>1,821</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Benefits &amp; Health</td>
<td>932</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL People Helped</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,789</strong></td>
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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.

For more information on how you can support VLAS and its activities, please contact Rhonda Knight at 434-455-3085 or rhondak@vlas.org.

L-R: Rhonda Knight, David Neumeyer, David E. Whitus (Mayor of Farmville), Mike Doucette (former President of VLAS Board), Jessie M. Woodson-Johnson, Bill Shear, and Noelle Prince Shear cut the ribbon at new Farmville office.

The purchase of this building is a further commitment to and investment in providing legal aid to those in need in Amelia, Cumberland, Buckingham, Prince Edward, Nottoway, Lunenburg, Charlotte, Mecklenburg, and Brunswick counties.
PRIVATE ATTORNEY SUPPORT

In 2014–15, the following attorneys provided legal services to our clients without charging a fee. We thank them for their time, effort, and skill!

**Lynchburg Service Area**

- John R. Alford, Jr.
- Mark B. Arthur
- George Bagwell
- M. Kevin Bailey
- Philip B. Baker
- Sarah W. Bell
- David B. Bice
- R. Patrick Bolling
- E. Sterling Byrd-Roberts
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- Janet Early
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- Clarence Brooks
- E. Grier Ferguson
- Christopher Malone
- Jeannette Ojeda
- Andrew Paige
- Frank Rawls
- Barrett Richardson
- Martin Speroni

**Program-Wide Pro Bono Facts & Figures: 2014–15**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Cases Completed</td>
<td>132</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Volunteer Attorneys</td>
<td>187</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Volunteer Attorneys Completing Cases</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hours of Service Provided</td>
<td>245</td>
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<td>Value of Services Provided*</td>
<td>$61,250</td>
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*AVERAGE RATE = $250/HR.*

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**2014–15 STAFF & PRO BONO SERVICES BY OFFICE**

**LYNCHBURG AREA OFFICE**

- **Amherst**: 123 cases, 286 people helped
- **Appomattox**: 55 cases, 125 people helped
- **Bedford County**: 5 cases, 11 people helped
- **Campbell**: 159 cases, 362 people helped
- **Halifax**: 146 cases, 326 people helped
- **Lynchburg**: 577 cases, 1,316 people helped

**DANVILLE AREA OFFICE**

- **Danville City**: 408 cases, 949 people helped
- **Henry**: 133 cases, 326 people helped
- **Martinsville**: 92 cases, 210 people helped
- **Patrick**: 34 cases, 63 people helped
- **Pittsylvania**: 148 cases, 385 people helped

**FARMVILLE AREA OFFICE**

- **Ameila**: 22 cases, 60 people helped
- **Brunswick**: 45 cases, 96 people helped
- **Buckingham**: 61 cases, 134 people helped
- **Charlotte**: 54 cases, 117 people helped
- **Cumberland**: 31 cases, 68 people helped
- **Lunenburg**: 38 cases, 88 people helped
- **Mecklenburg**: 58 cases, 109 people helped
- **Nottoway**: 55 cases, 117 people helped
- **Prince Edward**: 176 cases, 352 people helped

**SUFFOLK AREA OFFICE**

- **Emporia City**: 57 cases, 133 people helped
- **Franklin City**: 53 cases, 112 people helped
- **Greensville**: 3 cases, 8 people helped
- **Isle of Wight**: 74 cases, 142 people helped
- **Southampton**: 35 cases, 79 people helped
- **Suffolk City**: 311 cases, 776 people helped
- **Sussex**: 14 cases, 27 people helped
“The promptness of the whole service, along with the respect and how I was treated as if my case was the only case. My paralegal was great, and made all the difference in the world. Thank you!”

“Everyone was so nice and went out of their way to help.”

“It benefited me and my household financially. The service provided by Pamela Fortune gave me the knowledge concerning employment laws here in the state of Virginia.”

“It made a great difference in my life by giving me peace of mind and brought closure to the problem. I am so grateful for your service.”

“My ex-husband was determined to keep my kids from me. Now I have custody and child support.”

“It showed my family that there are people that care. Thanks from the bottom of our hearts.”