



RAPPAHANNOCK LEGAL SERVICES

ALL ABOUT RLS



MISSION

Quick! What are the last three words of the Pledge of Allegiance? Next time you say that pledge, pay attention, especially to those important last three words...they are the mission statement of Rappahannock Legal Services, Inc.....JUSTICE FOR ALL!

In 2012, RLS will be celebrating 39 years of working for equal justice. Since 1973, we have been proudly providing free, high-quality civil legal services for low-income citizens in 16 counties and the City of Fredericksburg. We are the only agency that offers this service.

Our dedicated, experienced staff help clients fight for their rights in many different types of cases, such as housing (landlord/tenant, foreclosures, etc.); family law (domestic violence protective orders, child and spousal support, custody); consumer (debt collection, payday loans, etc.); unemployment benefits; and immigration issues (for victims of crime and domestic violence).

UNMET NEED

Did you know that across Virginia, Legal Aid offices turn away two out of three eligible clients, due to lack of resources? Although there is one private attorney for every 283 Virginians, there is only one Legal Aid attorney for every 5,121 poor Virginians. In the last four years, the need for our services has increased over 53% due to the difficult economy, while donations and grants have dropped by 20%, also due to the downturn. With more clients in need and fewer resources, RLS is in the same boat as many other nonprofits today... doing more with less.

Article continued on Page 2



Rappahannock Home Repair Coalition (RHRC)

Local nonprofits working together for the common good.

In an effort to meet the need for affordable safe housing in the Fredericksburg Area, several nonprofit organizations have formed the *Rappahannock Home Repair Coalition (RHRC)*; the members are *The Greater Fredericksburg Area Habitat for Humanity*, *Rebuilding Together Fredericksburg*, *The disAbility Resource center*, *Rappahannock Area Agency on Aging* and the *Central Virginia Housing Coalition*. Our mission is to collaborate to enable low-income people to live in safe, healthy homes by providing repairs and modifications they cannot afford. This is a new coalition but we have already identified our first potential group project, and we are eager to see how we can make a positive change in this homeowners life. We have also begun assisting homeowners in need, by applying for a FHL grant that can be used for weatherization or accessibility issues. To date, we have had five approvals and continue to help walk new applicants through this program. For more information contact any of the above agencies, or Jason Tickle at The Greater Fredericksburg Habitat for Humanity offices at 540-891-5009.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

RAPPAHANNOCK LEGAL SERVICES	2 / 3
HUD AWARDS NEW FUNDING FOR COC	3
SALVATION ARMY'S HEATSHARE PROGRAM	4
2012 POINT IN TIME SUMMARY	5/6
MICAH'S STEP FORWARD PROGRAM	7
SAVE THE DATES	
disABILITY RESOURCE CENTER WORKSHOP TO BECOME A CONSUMER-DIRECTED ASSISTANT	8

RAPPAHANNOCK LEGAL SERVICES

Our three offices handled over 1,550 cases last year with only six attorneys. One attorney in our Tappahannock office serves seven counties in the Northern Neck and Upper Middle Peninsula. Two attorneys in our Culpeper office serve the five counties of Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock. Two attorneys and one part time attorney cover the five counties served from our Fredericksburg office.

HOW TO APPLY TO RLS

How can a potential client apply for our services? Our intake is handled by our sister organization, Legal Services of Northern Virginia (LSNV), which operates a toll-free hotline (866-534-5243) and a walk-in intake in Fredericksburg (on the second floor of the office building housing our office). Intakes are accepted from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM and 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM, Mondays through Thursdays. Since this hotline is servicing not only all of our 16 counties but also all the counties served by LSNV, please prepare for a wait of up to a half hour to speak with an intake specialist on the hotline. There is also an online application process at www.lsnv.org (click on "intake application").

Clients are screened during intake for three criteria: 1) **income eligibility** (up to 125% of the Federal Poverty Limit, or about \$23,000 per year for a family of three); 2) **subject matter** (We don't handle all legal matters. For example, we handle no criminal cases, personal injury or real estate cases); and 3) **conflict of interest** (we are ethically banned from representing one party after presenting the opposing party).

HOUSING HELP AT RLS FOR PLANNING DISTRICT 16

In our Fredericksburg office, we are fortunate to have one attorney representing housing clients. Daniel Turczan, an Iraqi and Afghanistan War veteran, practices in the courts of the City of Fredericksburg, Stafford, King George, Caroline and Spotsylvania Counties. He has been mentored by the legendary Bill Botts, former Executive Director of RLS and a tireless advocate for tenants and homeless clients fighting for equal justice.

Daniel knows first-hand what a recent study has shown: poor people who are represented by an attorney are more likely to stay in their residence than those who go into court alone, often facing an attorney representing the landlord. The Boston Bar Association Task Force on the Civil Right to Counsel just published a study on The Importance of Representation in Eviction Cases and Homelessness Prevention. The study, which was rigorously designed with randomized sampling and controls, etc., found that:

Two thirds of the tenants who received full representation by attorneys were able to stay in their homes, compared to only one third who lacked representation.

Even for those represented tenants who moved, they were better able to manage their exit on their own timetable and their own terms. Full representation therefore allows more than two thirds of the tenants to avoid the destabilizing consequences of eviction, including potential homelessness.

Represented tenants also received almost five times the financial benefit (e.g., damages, cancellation of alleged past due rent) as those without full representation.

Here's the link: <<http://www.bostonbar.org/docs/default-document-library/bba-crtc-final-3-1-12.pdf>>

The problems we see our housing clients facing are varied. For example, fees that are specifically excluded by law are routinely assessed by landlords. Landlords use outright deception to cause tenants to take actions that abrogate their rights under the law. Housing developments are typically able to retain attorneys who can shape leases or corporate policies that are highly favorable to their interests and which often countermand rights guaranteed to tenants.

Most of our clients are unsophisticated and are unaware of the precarious position they are put in by these actions. Over time these practices place a heavy burden on the backs of tenants to the benefit of their landlord. In one of our cases, questionable or illegal fees were routinely assessed to our client's account, which resulted in him overpaying his landlord by \$3,770.00 over a three year period. RLS was able to negotiate with the attorney of the landlord to reduce their claim against him. While trivial to some, this amount represents nearly four months of wages for a gentleman who happens to be raising a daughter on his own.

RAPPAHANNOCK LEGAL SERVICES

Article continued From Page 2

Unfortunately the only time these practices come to light is when a landlord files an eviction case against a tenant. Even then, without an attorney, the tenant may simply accept that they have no other option than to comply with the landlord's demands. In January, Daniel represented one client who was told an outright lie by his housing development. The client was promised that if he paid his rent arrears, a relatively small sum of \$120.00, that his landlord would stop all legal action against him. Despite receiving that rent, the landlord failed to live up to his promise and continued with the eviction. The tenant only found out about this when he was given notice by the sheriff that in three days he would be ousted from his apartment. The gentleman then approached us for help when he realized the gravity of the situation. We were able to halt the eviction which required little more on our part than filing a motion with the implication that we would expose this fraud to the court. As a result, a family of six, which includes four minor children from one to thirteen years of age, will have a roof over their heads until the natural expiration of their lease.

Times are hard. Nonprofits struggle along with the clients they are assisting. But the most important part of the mission of RLS remains easy to define. Everyone deserves equal access to justice and fair treatment under the law, regardless of income.

For more information, please contact our office at (540) 371-1105 or check out our website at www.rapplegal.com.



HUD AWARDS NEW FUNDING FOR TWO LOCAL HOMELESS PROGRAMS



On March 13, 2012, U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Shaun Donovan announced that for the third year in a row, the Fredericksburg Regional Continuum of Care (CoC) will receive new federal funding for local homeless programs.

Thurman Brisben Center will receive \$36,804 to provide permanent housing assistance for twelve homeless households over a one year period through its new FISH program. Targeted rental assistance will be provided for at least five homeless households with children, two chronically homeless families, two veterans, and one unaccompanied youth.

Micah Ecumenical Ministries will receive \$27,848 to provide permanent housing assistance through the Journey Program. Rental subsidies will house seven persons, including one veteran, who have been continuously struggling with homelessness for a year or more or who have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years (HUD's definition of chronically homeless).

Both agencies will leverage other resources to ensure that the newly housed clients will have stability in their residence and work toward financial independence over the subsidy period and beyond. The grand total of \$213,507 in federal CoC funding was awarded (two new and three renewal applications) to the Fredericksburg Regional CoC through the 2011 competition.

HeatShare Program

These are hard times in our economy. Many people face unemployment and higher costs for necessities, such as medical and utilities. A great number of families are fighting financial hardship this spring. The Columbia Gas and Salvation Army are working together to benefit the community through the HeatShare Program. Columbia Gas Company customers, employees, and shareholders along with company donations assist delinquent customers who have exhausted other forms of financial help or who have special hardships. Columbia Gas customers can contribute to fuel funds monthly by adding the donation amount to their monthly gas bill payment. Some customers contribute \$10 or \$15 each month. Donations made directly to Columbia Gas are matched and later granted to the Salvation Army to assist their clients.

HeatShare is an emergency assistance program for customers of Columbia Gas only.

Eligibility is primarily based on income. (see table below).

There must be an emergency that has caused the bill not to be paid.

The customer must either be without service or have a disconnect notice.

The customer must live in Planning District 16.

The maximum assistance amount available during the current phase is \$400.00.

Other important factors:

HeatShare must be used as a "last resort" — clients must try other public resources first, e.g., Energy Assistance or County Emergency Assistance such as crisis, cooling and heating.

Assistance is limited to once every 12 months.

Budget counseling and case management services are available.

*The application deadline is August 30, 2012 or until all funds are exhausted.

Fuel Fund Income Guidelines

Family Size	Maximum Monthly Income	Maximum Annual Income
1	\$1,588	\$19,058
2	\$2,145	\$25,743
3	\$2,702	\$32,428
4	\$3,259	\$39,113
5	\$3,817	\$45,798
6	\$4,374	\$52,483
7	\$4,931	\$59,168
8	\$5,488	\$65,853



***HeatShare Fuel Fund Income Guidelines are based on 175% of the Federal Poverty Income.**

Clients may contact Lizette Arce with the local Salvation Army office in Fredericksburg at **540-373-3431 ext. 205**, to inquire about this program.

2012 POINT IN TIME SUMMARY

On January 26 and 27, 2012, members of the Fredericksburg Regional CoC conducted its local PIT count of the homeless population. Over a 36-hour period, service providers and volunteers visited soup kitchens and outdoor locations to gather information from people who are homeless and near-homeless in Fredericksburg area. School Homeless Liaisons from the region also coordinated with the CoC to calculate the number of school aged homeless persons. Over 182 individual survey questionnaires were completed. After a review of the surveys and removal of duplicates, 142 unique surveys were available to evaluate homeless adults living in Planning District 16 on the night of the count. An additional 39 surveys were completed by adults who were not homeless the night of the count, but are considered at-risk of future instances of homelessness. In addition to counting homeless individuals and families, the survey also provides information on the needs and characteristics of the population to better provide services in the future. Getting homeless persons to provide personal information can be challenging, but in 2012, the CoC was able to offer incentives for completing the surveys through the generosity of the community. These gifts included free FRED Bus tickets donated by FREDericksburg Regional Transit, toiletry kits donated by the Salvation Army, free gift cards for phone minutes, food, and a service fair offering intake and referral information from various CoC agencies and the U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) was sponsored by Micah Ecumenical Ministries.

<u>Fredericksburg Regional CoC-2012 Point-In-Time Count Results (Schedule K) January 26, 2012</u>				
	Sheltered			
Persons in Households with at least one Adult and one Child	Emergency	Transitional	Unsheltered	Total
Number of Households	14	12	2	28
Number of Persons (adults and children)	49	30	5	84
	Sheltered			
Persons in Households with Only Children	Emergency	Transitional	Unsheltered	Total
Number of Households	0	0	0	0
Number of Persons (unaccompanied children only)	0	0	0	0
	Sheltered			
Persons in Households without Children	Emergency	Transitional	Unsheltered	Total
Number of Households	51	0	58	109
Number of Persons (adults only)	51	0	58	109
	Sheltered			
All Households/ All Persons	Emergency	Transitional	Unsheltered	Total
Total Households	65	12	60	137
Total Persons	100	30	61	193

Part 2J Homeless Adult Sub-Populations			
	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
Chronically Homeless Individuals	17	29	43
Chronically Homeless Families (Total Persons in Households)	5 (11)	2 (5)	7 (16)
Veterans	10	5	15
Severely Mentally Ill	28	11	39
Chronic Substance Abuse	19	6	25
Persons with HIV/AIDS	3	2	5
Victims of Domestic Abuse	18	4	22
Unaccompanied Child (Under 18)	0	0	0

The 2012 PIT Survey included two questions to help identify the jurisdiction in which a respondent was housed before becoming homeless. The first question asked for a specific zip code of the person's last previous fixed address and a follow up question asked for the actual jurisdiction name. Some respondents answered both questions. Some only chose to provide the jurisdiction name. Ten adults (with no children) did not indicate a zip code and therefore their response defaulted to a Fredericksburg address. For this reason, a footnote has been added to the table below which clarifies that these individuals could have actually lived in Spotsylvania or Stafford Counties, but had a Fredericksburg mailing address.



Homeless Population by Previous Fixed Address	HUD Homeless Adults	HUD Homeless Children	HUD Homeless Subtotal	% of HUD Homeless Subtotal	HEARTH Homeless Adults	HEARTH Homeless Children	HEARTH Homeless Subtotal	% of HEARTH Homeless Subtotal	Grand Total of HUD + HEARTH Homeless	% of HUD + HEARTH Homeless
Caroline	6	4	10	5.18%	0	36	36	4.42%	46	4.56%
Fredericksburg*	39	14	53	27.46%	5	47	52	6.38%	105	10.42%
King George	3	0	3	1.55%	0	101	101	12.39%	104	10.32%
Spotsylvania	33	19	52	26.94%	1	380	381	46.75%	433	42.96%
Stafford	29	13	42	21.76%	0	238	238	29.20%	280	27.78%
Other VA	17	6	23	11.92%	4	1	5	0.61%	28	2.78%
Outside VA	10	0	10	5.18%	2	0	2	0.25%	12	1.19%
Total	137	56	193	100.00%	12	803	815	100.00%	1008	100.00%

2012

Homeless Population by Previous Fixed Address	HUD Homeless Adults	HUD Homeless Children	HUD Homeless Subtotal	% of HUD Homeless Subtotal	HEARTH Homeless Adults	HEARTH Homeless Children	HEARTH Homeless Subtotal	% of HEARTH Homeless Subtotal	Grand Total of HUD + HEARTH Homeless	% of HUD + HEARTH Homeless
Caroline	9	6	15	7.85%	0	44	44	6.39%	59	6.70%
Fredericksburg*	24	0	24	12.57%	8	45	53	7.69%	77	8.75%
King George	11	1	12	6.28%	1	64	65	9.43%	77	8.75%
Spotsylvania	39	15	54	28.27%	0	279	279	40.49%	333	37.84%
Stafford	33	16	49	25.65%	1	245	246	35.70%	295	33.52%
Other VA	19	3	22	11.52%	2	0	2	0.29%	24	2.73%
Outside VA	15	0	15	7.85%	0	0	0	0.00%	15	1.70%
Total	150	41	191	100.00%	12	677	689	100.00%	880	100.00%

6 *A Fredericksburg mailing address could be located in portions of Stafford or Spotsylvania Counties. To access the full report, please visit www.fredcoc.org.

Step Forward Program

Micah's employment services for disadvantaged individuals with multiple barriers to employment.

Micah's newest program, called Step Forward, assists employable guests in transitioning back into the job market. Services begin with technical assistance in job search and resume building, and they extend to job placement and support. Since the program started in January, it has placed 11 people directly and 1 indirectly into permanent jobs. Another four have been placed in sheltered employment—where they actually work for Micah, complete various janitorial or landscaping jobs and develop their skills. The program is partnering with Goodwill, Virginia Employment Commission, Rappahannock Area Agency on Aging. It also works with a growing base of local businesses, such as Rosner Automotive, GCA, PBM, Trolley Stop Deli and Royal Hair Studio and Southern Auto Body. While these partners are offering jobs to people who might otherwise remain unemployed, they are reaping the benefits of a prescreened, pre-trained labor pool and ongoing supports, which make their permanent employee successful.

How can you support Step Forward?

- Volunteer as a driver to get people to and from work
- Donate work appropriate clothing/shoes
- Talk with us about how your business can partner with Step Forward
- Give money to support program services.

**For more information,
contact 540-479-4116.**

SAVE THE DATES

**VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS
ANNUAL CONFERENCE & SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON**
May 16, 2012—May 18, 2012
Virginia Beach, Hilton
3001 Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, VA 23451
www.vahcdo.org

2012 COALITION FOR HOMELESS VETERANS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
May 30, 2012 —June 1, 2012
Grand Hyatt Washington DC
1000 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001
www.ncvh.org

NAMI VIRGINIA & VCEH HOUSING STABILITY AND MENTAL ILLNESS SUMMITT
Creating Housing for Hope and Recovery
July 22, 2012 —July 23, 2012
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Downtown Richmond
555 East Canal Street, Richmond, VA
www.vceh.org

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENDING HOMELESSNESS
July 16, 2012– July 18, 2012
Renaissance Washington DC Hotel
999 Ninth Street, NW Washington, 20001
www.endhomelessness.org





The disAbility Resource Center of the Rappahannock Area, Inc.

409 Progress Street, Fredericksburg VA 22401

540-373-2559 (Voice) 540-373-5890 (TTY)

1-800-648-6324 (Voice or Relay) 540-373-8126 (Fax) Website: www.cildrc.org



Workshop to Become a Consumer-Directed Assistant

Job or career? It's up to you! The disAbility Resource Center is sponsoring free workshops for people who want to learn more about becoming a Consumer-Directed Assistant. A Consumer-Directed Assistant helps an individual with a disability with supports needed to live in the community. The workshops will be held on the following dates:

April 14, 2012, 12:30-2:30, Hope Community Church, 121E. Culpeper St., Culpeper, VA

May 11, 2012, from 9:30-11:30 at the disAbility Resource Center, 409 Progress Street, Fredericksburg, VA

Registration is requested by contacting Kim Lett, 540-373-2559 or klett@cildrc.org.

The Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living, through a grant from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities titled "Improving and Expanding Consumer-Directed Services" is working across Virginia to develop a workforce of Consumer-Directed Assistants and to establish an electronic Consumer-Directed Assistant Directory.

A Consumer-Directed Assistant is a rewarding and meaningful career of serving others. It offers flexible hours and on the job training, requires no specialized or costly education or degree, and provides a person with an opportunity to build valuable skills while earning pay.

To become a Consumer-Directed Assistant, a person must be 18 years old, have a Social Security number, pass a Criminal Background check, and pass a Child Protective Services check if working with a child.

To learn more about the workshops and this rewarding career, contact Kim Lett at the dRC.