

# The News - Herald

Monday, December 26, 1983

For Hertford County and the Blount-Chowan Area

Local Edition 3 Parts; Elsewhere 2 Parts

# Williams plans to make Legal S

By MIKE VOSS  
Staff Writer

AHOSKIE — "My clients are my family," says Marcus Williams about his view on his current relationship with those who seek his services as director of Legal Services of the Coastal Plains.

Williams began the directorship Nov. 4 of this year after working with Legal Services in Minnesota.

For Williams, a native of Lumberton in the lower part of N.C., it was the opportunity to return to his home state and the opportunity to head the Legal Services in an 11-county area. "I just saw an announcement somewhere," he says on his learning of the opening left vacant by the resignation of former director John Garland who left the area for private practice in the nation's capital.

Born in Lumberton, Williams first attended an all-black high school and then attended an integrated high school where he became head of the student government. Attending UNC, where he majored in political science and also studied economics, Williams was attracted to law and upon graduating from UNC he was accepted into the University of Minnesota's law school.

Williams perceives the role of providing legal services to the poor as "an instrument to empower the poor," and an "opportunity for poor people to address many unmet legal needs".

Williams feels in many instances such needs are not recognized by those who are in need of his organization's services. "Unfamiliarity with the law," responded the director on why some of the clients walk in the Legal Service's door. According to Williams, the

"hectic day-to-day survival" can obscure the need for legal help. "We are here to make sure the picture is made clearer and to do what we can," says the new director.

## Engineer sele

WINTON — After a brief closed-door session at their last meeting the commissioners agreed they would employ Craig Morgan as the engineer for the Carver Park Project.

It was explained that a formal contract could not be entered into until funds are freed to start work. The action was a preliminary and will be finalized when the first portion of the Community Development Block Grant monies are received.

The board also filed application for the first installment of the funds.

On another matter, Mrs. Gwen Coleman reported the U.S. Department of Agriculture will not deliver commodities for distribution until February.

She listed what will be sent and said it would not be enough to satisfy the demand but could make it possible for most eligible applicants to get something.

There have been problems with distribution in the past when commodities fell short of need, resulting in some altercations among recipients.

The Social Services director said members of First Baptist Church in Murfreesboro and the Catholic sisters will help with the distribution of the next shipment.

"We're hoping other churches will participate," she suggested.

The commissioners assured her they would continue to seek places as distribution sites to make picking up



### *New director*

Marcus Williams, new director of Legal Services of the Coastal Plains, explains the procedure he must undertake to become a licensed attorney in N.C. Williams is a graduate of the University of Minnesota's law school and has previously worked with Legal Services in Minnesota. Williams is a native of the state and hails from Lumberton, south of Fayetteville.

## Town auto tags

Town tags will go on sale in three of incorporated towns in Hertford County and Aulander Jan. 3.

Automobile owners in Ahoskie are reminded that tags this year will be \$5 each, not the \$1 the town has charged for so many years. Failure to display the tags by Feb. 15 could bring a ticket to the car owner.

Murfreesboro automobile owners will be paying \$5 for decals but next year will receive tags for their money.

Winton and Aulander car owners will still be able to purchase town tags for \$1 each.

Cofield, Como and Harrellsville will not have town tags for sale, according to announcements from the town clerks.

# Services 'more accessible'

"We are here to provide them with high quality legal representation," emphasized Williams. Williams commented on plans in progress to make legal services for

those in need more "accessible." After the first of the year, there are plans to install a toll-free number in the 11-county area served by Legal Services. There is also a provision in Williams'

plans to have the private bar become more active and involved in Legal Service's programs.

(See WILLIAMS, Page 3)

## Selected for

the items easier for those eligible to receive commodities.

"It was really hard on the people the last time because it was a cold day and some of them had to stand outside for quite a while," she reported.

Several sites were discussed and research will continue with an eye toward a selection before the distribution period.

In a report on the Lewistown Project, Bill Little said there were up to 10 more rehabilitation contracts to be put out for bids.

He informed the board the water system is complete except for lettering signs to be done. He added that Murfreesboro officials are considering invoking a penalty clause against Taylor Iron Works.

He indicated he did not know the status of their possible action at this time but the damages could be \$200 a day. The tank was scheduled to be finished by Aug. 15.

The road into the tank has not yet been paved and a letter from Bob Graham Boney and Associates, the engineer, said if it had not been completed by mid-December, it would be done in early spring.

Several commissioners said it was their understanding the paving company will maintain the road until paving is completed.

The only other action taken was permission for county manager Allen O'Neal to begin drawing up an af-

## Williams plans

(From Page 1)

Responding to a question on the type of work done by his staff, Williams noted all cases handled by Legal Services were civil. Disability, unemployment compensation, employment related claims (such as discrimination), housing matters, land loss and workman's compensation are areas in which his staff would be involved.

"Land loss among the poor, especially in northeastern North Carolina, is a major problem," informed Williams. Along with the previously mentioned areas, Williams says his office will "tackle an array of other problems that come in."

The new director says he will have a lot of direct contact with different elements in the county in an effort to remove the "bad taste" some clients and observers have experienced with Legal Services in the past. "I intend to be publically visible," he noted.

Williams, though not yet licensed to practice law in N.C., says he is in the process of submitting the required forms and fulfilling other requirements to obtain his license. Once he has his license, Williams said he would be in

the courtroom, not tucked away in his office.

The campaign to make Legal Services more visible and accessible is not intended to compete with private practice. "We want to remove the competition factor with private practice," said the 30-year-old director.

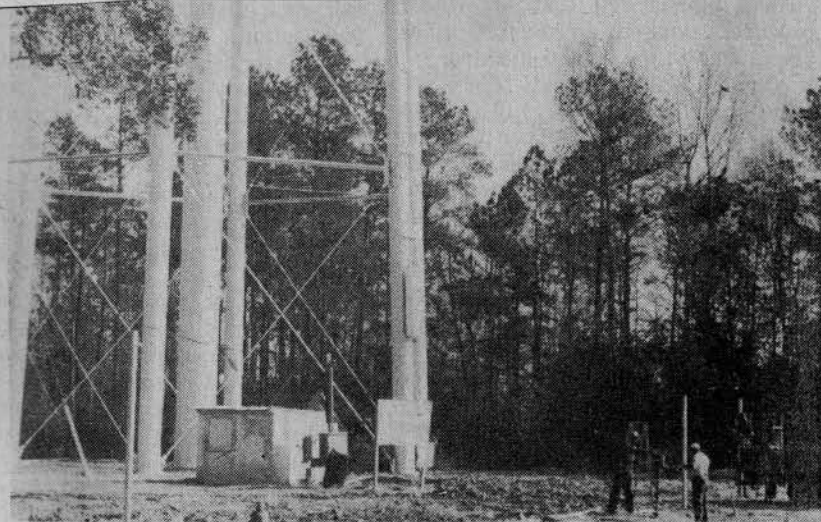
"When people don't have anything else to give you, they will give you a part of themselves," offered the attorney. "People are what life is all about."

## Tags on sale Jan. 3

Those who have to purchase tags may do so at the town hall in their respective town.

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Jennifer Moore photo

### Almost done

The new water tank, part of the Lewistown Project, is nearly complete. Fencing has been installed around the facility and the county commissioners were recently informed that the lettering was all that remained to be done. Scheduled for completion in mid-August, Murfreesboro has indicated it may invoke the penalty clause, which provides for a \$200-per-day levy, against Taylor Iron Works as the installers did not meet the contract completion date. The water system will become part of the town's system upon completion.

# The News - Herald

Wednesday, July 24, 1985

For Hertford County And The Roanoke-Chowan Area

Local Edition 4 Parts; Elsewhere 2 Parts

the date to open bids on a new street sweeper with a front end loader and okayed specifications for a new 1,000

budget.  
The hitch came when Councilman Jack Hassell wanted the fire station

town and I think we should consider it before we go ahead," he stated.  
"Once we add on to the building,

1,000 feet to the present facility "would cost one-third more than you think," citing heat, electrical work,

town could do the parking area work with its own equipment and labor.  
"Mr. Hassell, we didn't just pull

# Legal Services expands programs for improved se

By MIKE VOSS  
Staff Writer

AHOSKIE — This past weekend's open house at Legal Services of the Coastal Plains was three fold in its intent — a chance to meet new staff members, provide economic development information and it provided a forum for the priority statement.

The open house, held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, gave visitors the opportunity to meet four new attorneys, three para-legals and four support staff. The new staff attorneys include managing attorney Phyllis Pickett, George Givens of Gaston, Larry Wittenberg of Durham and Vernice Howard of Murfreesboro. Pickett was formerly at Cape Fear Legal Services in Wilmington.

A temporary attorney is expected to join the staff in August.

Marcus Williams, executive director, says the event also gave the public a chance to review the organization's priority statement for the current year. The statement specifies the types of cases Legal Services will take and what guidelines will be followed.

Legal Services provides assistance in civil matters and does not get involved in criminal matters.

The introduction to the priority statement says:

"We will accept only cases which meet the definition of 'critical legal needs.' To wit, primary problems generally unique to poor persons, relating to basic survival need areas, and which are capable of legal solution for which there generally are no alternatives. We will accept cases in the following categories if a client meets income, assets and residency eligibility

criteria and if the case is not ruled out during group case acceptance by any of the factors set forth below in Part II."

The areas in which cases can be accepted are consumer-finance, government benefits-income maintenance, housing-real property,

family, employment-economic development, health and miscellaneous-individual rights categories.

Legal Services provides legal assistance and representation to those who have limited funds and are not knowledgeable in legal remedies or requirements in meeting basic survival skills.

The open house also gave exposure to Legal Services' economic development program, which included information about four how-to-workshops to be held at Roanoke-Chowan Technical College in the near future.

Legal Services' economic development plans call for the community to identify potential economic potential in the community through analysis of its current assets.

Five interns are working at the Legal Services' office this summer, including two area residents, Toni Liverman and Lori Boone. Liverman will be attending Campbell University's Law School this fall. North Carolina Central University law student Elton Vaughan, Duke University's John Keller and Marva Cox are the three remaining interns.

The internship program provides summer employment for mostly community people noted Williams.

With the acquisition of the new staff members, Williams says the "atmosphere here has stabilized."

Before Williams took over as executive director in October 1983, there were documented problems within the organization and public relations problems on the outside according to past published reports.

Williams says because of the changes Legal Services has "more legal clout than in the past."

Legal Services is stressing economic development among those who benefit from the organization's services. Developing the economy is



## Legal services open house

Legal Services of the Coastal Plains held an open house Saturday to acquaint the public with their office and the services they provide. About three dozen interested citizens dropped in for a tour of the building,

located on Maple Street in Ahoskie. Executive director Marcus Williams, left, discusses the register with staff members Faye Lewis and George Givens.

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# improved service

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Legal Services is stressing economic development among those who benefit from the organization's services. Developing the economy is

one way to meet the basic survival needs emphasized in Legal Services' priority statement says Williams.

For the community to develop, "it has to come from within" pointed out Williams.

"The whole idea of economic development is for people to become independent," said Williams.

The emphasis on economic development is a way for Legal Services to "reach out into the community" said the director.

Williams said he was not greatly concerned with the number of visitors to the open house, "as long as they realize we're here (for them)."

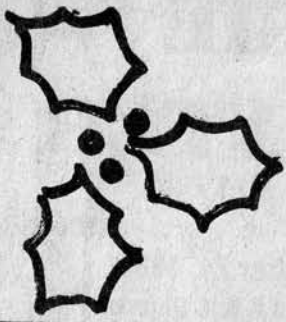
Although the future of Legal Services is cloudy because of federal budget concerns, Williams says he expects a frozen budget and says he does not expect any reduction in services for next year.

When asked about the long-range future of Legal Services, he replied, "Who knows?"

Williams says he hopes the open house provided exposure of the organization's aims and goals and the public has become more aware of the role Legal Services plays in the community.

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# Merry Christmas

## The News - Herald

Vol. 75 No. 153

Monday, December 23, 1985

For Hertford County And The Roanoke-Chowan Area

Local Edition 2 Parts; Elsewhere 2 Pa

### Grant will assist small farm owners

AHOSKIE — The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation has awarded a \$74,800 grant to Legal Services of the Coastal Plains to initiate a land advocacy project.

The purpose of the land advocacy project is to "provide landownership information to small family farmers of limited resources in order to prevent further involuntary loss of farm land in the 11 northeastern North Carolina counties serviced by Legal Services of the Coastal Plains."

The grant is to be expended over a two year period. Marcus W. Williams, executive director of

LSCP, anticipates the hiring of one full-time and one part-time attorney "to coordinate an educational outreach network, to litigate and negotiate on behalf of small landowners and to investigate the feasibility of a rural land bank and/or community land trust." Williams added, "We are extremely appreciative of the compassion, generosity and understanding displayed by the leadership of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. They have provided the wherewithal to address some of the acute rural land problems of our indigent clients."

In articulating the concern for

land loss, LSCP's application to the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation enunciated the crisis faced by many farmers. "The persistent decline in the number of farms held by small family farmers of limited resources in Northeastern North Carolina reflects a national trend towards increasingly larger farms owned by a significantly wealthier, less diverse, and more elite group of individuals and corporations," noted the application.

The document continued, "The average size of farms in the United

(See REYNOLDS, Page 11)



Man burned in S...

# Reynolds gives \$74,800 to Legal Services

(From Page 1)

States more than doubled between 1950 and 1982, while the number of farms decreased by more than half in the same time period. The figures are even more dramatic in North Carolina, where the number of farms fell from 301,000 in 1950 to 88,000 in 1982, a decrease of 70.8 percent. This 213,000 farm decrease is attributable mainly to the steady loss of farms owned by poor family farmers with small acreages.

"Minority farmers have been particularly hard hit by the pattern indicated in these figures. Most calculations of the extent of the problem estimate the current national land loss rate among blacks at between 6,000 to 9,000 acres each week. The rate of loss for blacks is

consistently more than double the comparable for whites. In 1981, the Division of Policy Development predicted that 'there will be no black-owned farms' in North Carolina by the year 2,000. This event will be particularly devastating to North Carolina because this state has the most minority landowners and the largest amount of minority owned land in the nation. A similar fate threatens native American farmers, who have also suffered a disproportionately high rate of land loss.

"Thus, the trend in this state and in the rest of the nation reflects the potential loss of a way of life for thousands of limited resource family farmers, as well as the virtual exclusion of minorities from the

agricultural sector of the national economy. The loss of small farms to corporate farmers and outside speculators constitutes a highly significant alteration of the social structure, displacing poor and minority farmers from the only means of existence they know," says the application.

The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation was established in 1936 as a memorial to the youngest son of the founder of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. In that year the brother and two sisters of Z. Smith Reynolds provided that their inheritance from his estate would go to the establishment of a trust for the benefit of the people of North Carolina.

The Foundation, drawing on the income from the Zachary Smith

Reynolds Trust and the W.N. Reynolds Trust, has now made 1,927 grants totalling more than \$124,000,000 to more than 945 recipients in all of North Carolina's 100 counties. Major attention has been given to education and health care, with increased interest in

recent years in improving the criminal justice system in North Carolina, in strengthening grassroots advocacy groups and in youth programs, family planning, cultural activities, rural life, the handicapped, minority and women's issues.

## Thieves rob Belk

MURFREESBORO — Thieves made off with an undisclosed number of watches and pieces of luggage in a robbery at Belk-Tyler sometime between 9 p.m. Thursday and 8 a.m. Friday.

Manager Bobby Brown reports he is still working with the insurance company to determine the dollar

amount of the theft.

The robbers came in from the roof through the heating system to gain entry to the building, Brown said. The store is located on Main Street.

Police Chief Ed. Harris, Sgt. Pete Peele and sheriff's Deputy Wesley Liverman are conducting the investigation into the incident.



# *Monday*

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# The News - Herald

For Hertford County and The Roanoke-Chowan Area

Vol. 77 No. 59

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25 Cents

# Law suit against LSCP settled

AHOSKIE — An \$830,000 libel suit against the Legal Services of the Cosatal Plains has been settled out of court.

Marcus Williams, interim executive director of the LSCP office in Ahoskie, has accepted a post as executive director of the Legal Services of the Cape Fear at Wilmington, but said he was happy this came about before his transfer.

The suit was filed about a year after he arrived in the Ahoskie office. It was brought by an unsuccessful applicant during the search for a new director.

"I was pleased at the result of the strong defense we presented in the suit," Williams said. "When the final disposition came about, it was a settlement which did not deplete any of the resources of the program that were earmarked for services to clients."

Williams said the insurance company settled the claim out of court but would not divulge how much the complainant received.

The legal action was filed by Phillip Wright, a legal services lawyer in Snithfield, who charged the office staff in Ahoskie with circulating an unfavorable letter characterizing him as "snobbish, klanish and obnoxious."

The attorney also claimed that the

(See LAW, Page 14)

# Law

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(From Page 1)

employees of LSCP were not in favor of him because he was a white male.

The letter, a copy of which was sent to to Richard M. Taylor Jr., director of Legal Services of North Carolina in Raleigh, said, in part, "It is the feeling of the staff that because we are a predominantly black program, Phillip displayed an air of superiority which conflicts with the basic principles established by the Legal Services Corporation."

The letter also referred to the attorney's (Wright) personality as it related to blacks and "Phillip's total disregard and lack of respect for the support staff." The letter also contended that during staff introduc-

tions Wright acted "as if the staff had 'Bubonic Plague' and he was afraid to shake hands."

Named as defendants in the suit were Legal Services of the Coastal Plains and 14 of its staff. Williams and six members of the board were also listed as defendants.

"The suit," Williams noted this week, "was in development and discovery for 18 months."

At the time the suit was filed Wright was employed by East Central Community Legal Services in Smithfield.

Williams did say that the amount of the settlement by the insurance company was a nominal — one that had been offered to the plaintiff early in the first stages of the matter.

The News-Herald

Friday, May 15, 1987

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# Legal services head moves to Wilmington

By RAMONA GOODE  
News Editor

AHOSKIE — Physically, Marcus Williams has left Ahoskie but he remains the executive director of the Legal Services of the Coastal Plains.

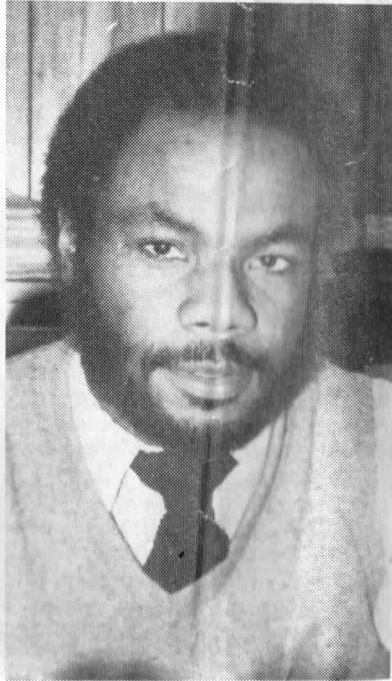
Williams took over as director of the Legal Services of the Lower Cape in Wilmington May 1 but has been returning periodically to continue managing the LSCP in Ahoskie until a permanent person can be found.

Coming to Ahoskie Nov. 4, 1983 and "inheriting several problems," he said he was happy with the office now and the things that have been accomplished during his tenure.

When he took over as executive director of the LSCP, according to Williams, the office was running a \$50,000 deficit. "In the last three years, we have operated with a surplus," he said, with pride. "I would encourage this to continue."

Williams said he would like for the community to work together to maintain the quality of service. "The client should always come first," he emphasized.

Williams said he is pleased that,



Marcus Williams

since he became executive director of the Ahoskie facility, the office has been made more accessible to the

people, a toll-free help line has been installed to "the 11 counties in our service area and we conduct satellite intake in Elizabeth City and Roanoke Rapids."

Most importantly, Williams said, "We have recruited some splendid and competent people. I am happy to report that all those individuals in our office who were struggling to pass the bar exam have done so while working for us. All those we have who should be are legal attorneys." He also noted that, in his opinion, the quality of the work has improved.

The subject of the controversy over moving the office from Main

## Zoning

(From Page 1)

was going to live there, "It would be different. But he's renting" it out. Marty Davis and his wife, as well as Mrs. Gene Davis, also attended the hearing.

Weibley noted the home is not in conformance as it now sits but if it is turned it would be. Mitchell concurred.

Jones offered a motion to deny the variance as the trailer now stands "but it can be approved if the trailer is moved 90 degrees (the long way)

Street to its present location on Maple Street was raised and Williams was asked if this had had any affect on the services or the number of clients served.

"We had to locate where the clients were," he said. "We know there is a safety factor involved and we want the senior citizens and those who are physically challenged to feel safe. We have been fortunate that no incidents have occurred since we have been there.

"The people know we are there to help and have not harassed us. We do not want to bring more hardship into their lives," he stated.

Williams said he was moving so he

and does come in compliance with all side, front and back footages." The board accepted the motion.

On another matter, the request to approve a subdivision preliminary plat for Brookview Subdivision was not accepted "until all requirements are in compliance."

Stuart Pierce Jr. had asked for approval of the whole plat, consisting of 49 lots. Pierce's wife and his secretary were advised there are certain ordinances on the books and until they are changed, the lots would have to be in compliance.

It was noted lots 1, 5, 6, 10, 22 and 40

could continue to grow professionally and be near his parents who live in Lumberton. He expects to be back in the area on occasion.

"When the monitors came through recently, we received one of the most favorable reports in the state," he said. "It was our first in-depth evaluation."

In closing he encouraged the community not to accept mediocrity. "If the school system needs help, the community should act as a committee of one and change it."

Williams said he would be back in the area — perhaps in a few years — enlisting the help of the people but he would not elaborate.

were not suitable for septic tanks but they could be if some work was done to them.

Weibley said there were three options open to the board: deny the request; name a specific period to bring the lots up to standard with the authority for him to okay the request in the board's name; or hold the matter in abeyance. This last "would not help him much," the chairman commented. The board chose the first option.

Mitchell was advised to submit to Pierce in writing a list of all the requirements.

## RCH constructing new Imaging Center

The News-Herald

Friday, May 15, 1987

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