

The News - Herald

Monday, December 26, 1983

For Hertford County and the Roanoke-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.



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.

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)

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."

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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

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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

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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)."

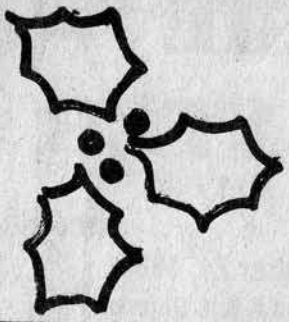
Although the future of Legal Services is cloudy because of federal budget concerns, Williams says he expects a frozen budget and says he does not expect any reduction in services for next year.

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.

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.

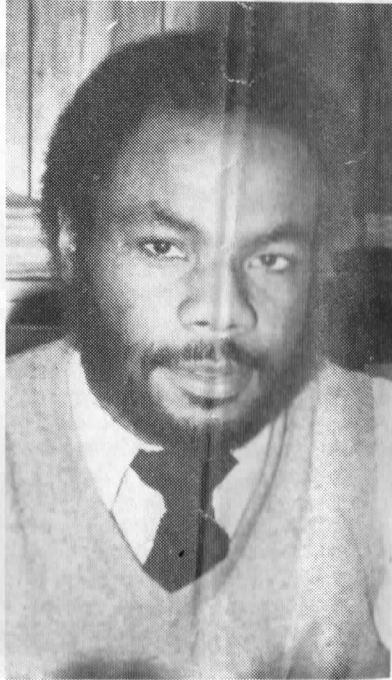
Williams took over as director of the Legal Services of the Lower Cape in Wilmington May 1 but has been returning periodically to continue managing the LSCP in Ahoskie until a permanent person can be found.

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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Sunday Star-News / Sunday, May 24, 1987

1C

Legal Services going 'high profile'

By Dan Headrick
Staff Writer

As handshakes go, the grip of Marcus Williams last longer than most. He holds on an extra moment, fixing his gaze as he introduces himself, extending the introduction as if nothing beyond hello mattered.

But Williams' handshake carries an agenda. The new 33-year-old director of Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear said he intends to "energize" the legal community and "raise the profile" of the agency that provides free civil legal service to the poor within a seven-county region of Southeastern North Carolina.

Williams, a Lumberton native who was Legal Services director for



Williams

the past 3½ years in Ahoskie, replaced Lisbon Berry, who retired last month as director of the Lower Cape Fear office.

What Legal Services, a non-profit corporation endowed through a federal grant, is all about is basic survival needs — fair housing, employment, equal credit opportunities, Social Security for the elderly, the poor, the powerless and disenfranchised.

Those who the agency naturally comes into conflict with are unscrupulous lenders and employers, rapacious merchants and slumlords. Williams said they'll all be hearing from him and his staff fairly soon.

"I don't have any inhibitions about approaching people," Williams said. "I think we have to put these individuals on notice that we have resources available."

The resources are a \$570,000-a-year budget (barely enough to sus-

tain the agency, Williams said) and a modest staff — six "intrepid" lawyers, two paralegals, four secretaries and two receptionists — representing more than 99,000 potential clients over 5,320 square miles.

Williams said he'd like to try to galvanize the established legal community, the long-time private practitioners of influence and local political clout, into supporting the notion of offering more free services for those clients who need them. So far, Williams said, he has gotten encouraging responses from some of the lawyers with whom he has met.

Legal Services in North Carolina recently underwent an evaluation "unprecedented" by the intensity of its scrutiny, Williams said, and one he thinks is part of the Reagan administration's policy of "trimming the fat from these programs that they say have 'outlived their usefulness.'"

The Wilmington office was com-

mended for the level of legal experience of its staff, but the draft report indicated that the agency's "presence" in the community could be elevated, Williams said.

While serving in Ahoskie and responding to the report there, Williams was at the same time making the transition to his new post and faced with the task of responding to the Wilmington agency report that he inherited.

The report on the Ahoskie office cited Williams, then executive director, as "committed, meticulous in his attention to detail, and very professional. He was without question the program's best asset."

The report largely behind him, the next step now, Williams said, is "to deal with clients and the people taking advantage of our clients . . . the full panoply of protections they enjoy as citizens. I hope we can deal with the political winds whichever way they blow."

THE WILMINGTON

***NEW HANOVER *BRUNSWICK *PENDER *COLUMBUS *ONSL**

JOURNAL



Dedicated To The Political And Economic Emancipation Of Black Americans

25 Cents Per Copy

Wilmington, N.C., Thursday, July 2, 1987

On Streets Each Thursday

26 Pages To

Profile: Marcus W. Williams

By Deborah M. Sanders
Journal Staff Writer

While growing up in Lumberton, North Carolina as the son of a second grade school teacher and a salesman, Marcus W. Williams said he was instilled with a "strong work ethic."

"After being in such an environment, hard work is naturally a part of your being," he said.

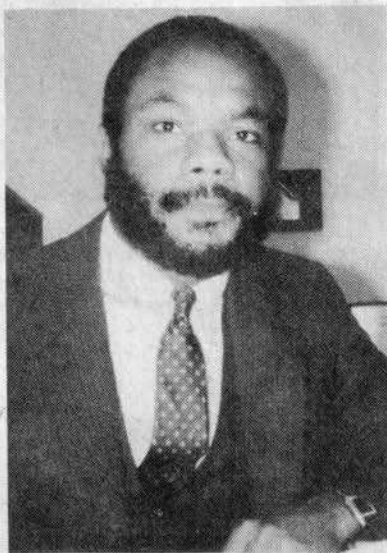
This work ethic was manifested during Williams' informative years throughout his enrollment at Lumberton Senior High School, where he excelled as Student Body President, an inductee of the National Honor Society and in athletics.

His passion for excellence did not stop at high school, but was demonstrated via his college education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he received a bachelor's degree in political science in 1975.

This commitment to academic excellence made it possible for him to earn such distinctions as the Order of the Golden Fleece, Order of the Old Well, the Dean's List, and numerous other awards; plus, receive a scholarship to attend law school at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

As a young law student, Williams set his sights on a career with legal services agencies, which are non-profit agencies funded by the federal government to provide legal services to individuals who cannot afford to hire a private attorney.

He was employed in numerous positions with Legal Assistance of Ramsey County, which is now called



Marcus W. Williams

Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, Inc.

Williams said he favors working
(Continued on Page 13)

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Citizenship
Use And Spend
Both Wisely

■ WILMINGTON

Wilmington Star

Price twenty-five cents / Wilmington, N.C.

Thursday, June 23, 1988



Staff photo by Joe Swift

Airy Stalworth's home sits in front of the shack she used to live in.

Airy Stalworth loses her home

By Dan Headrick
and Clifton Daniel
Staff Writers

It's quiet at Airy Stalworth's house. The windows are dark and covered with dust and a padlock seals the front door. The side door is nailed shut from the inside. Weeds and grass grow tall in the sandy yard; gone is a once-bountiful vegetable garden and the chickens that lived in a pen nearby.

It is also quiet at the McCoy Boarding Home in Brunswick County where Mrs. Stalworth, an 89-year-old widow, sits in a wheelchair, waiting to return to her empty house.

"I want to go home," she said Wednesday with tears in her eyes. "I've got my chickens to take care of."

For Airy Stalworth, though, going home may take more time than she's got.

She denies doing it. She doesn't remember signing the deed.

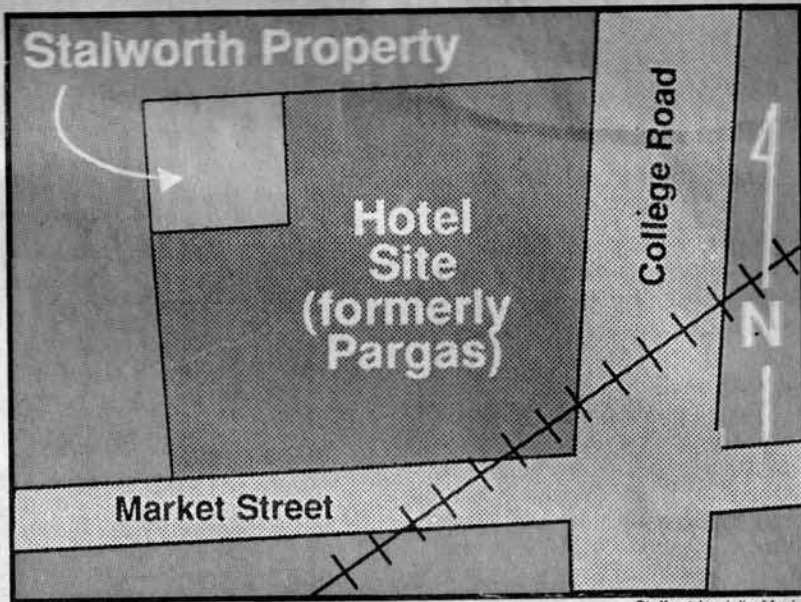
But Airy Stalworth's scrawled signature appears on a warranty deed dated May 31 conveying all her rights, title and interest in her house and one-acre tract at 5333 Market St. to Sherman L. Davis of 1003 S. Fifth Ave. Davis is executive director of the Cape Fear Area Opportunities Industrialization Center.

No money changed hands, according to the deed. No title search was executed. Airy Stalworth, by all appearances, has given her home away.

Davis would not say why he accepted Mrs. Stalworth's property.

"I am not going to discuss this whatsoever," Davis said Wednesday. "I am not going to discuss this publicly. It'll be handled in the court system. I am not going to make any comments about nothing."

On June 9, citing that deed among other evidence, the New Hanover County Department of Social Ser-



Staff art by Julie Macie



File photo

HAPPIER DAYS: Airy Stalworth celebrates on Christmas Eve, 1986, the day she moved into her home. Sherman Davis stands on the right.

Please see AIRY, 9A

and seal, or if corporate, has caused this instrument to be signed in its authorized name by its Board of Directors, the day and year first

Airy Stalworth
AIRY STALWORTH (WIDOW) (SEAL)

With this signature, Mrs. Stalworth signed away her home.

Airy

Continued from 1A

vices petitioned to have Mrs. Stalworth declared incompetent to manage her own affairs.

Andrew Waters, the Wilmington lawyer who prepared the deed, said Wednesday, "I was at the hospital at the time she signed it. Was she lucid? Yes. Was she competent to convey it? Yes. No question in my mind."

Mrs. Stalworth and her husband, Garfield, bought the land in 1946 for \$100. Stalworth, a veteran of World War II, died in 1952 and is buried in Wilmington National Cemetery.

In November 1986, Mrs. Stalworth asked Davis' agency, OIC, to insulate her home. At the time she was living alone in a ruined shack with a pile of garbage rotting in her front yard.

In a much publicized act of volunteerism and good will, businesses donated building materials. Volunteers cleaned up the property and built Mrs. Stalworth a new house. She moved in on Christmas Eve, 1986.

Davis was at the center of the activity and received much of the credit.

However, Robert Brunson, president of the Inner City Optimist Club, whose members provided the physical labor to build the Stalworth home, said club members ended business dealings with Davis after the Stalworth project.

He said Davis would not provide them with an account of the services and materials donated to build her new house. He added that he and other members were led to believe that their labor would continue to benefit the poor after Mrs. Stalworth's death.

"It was our understanding that after her death, the property would revert to a homeless family in the county," he said. "In no way did we understand that Sherman Davis or the OIC would get it."

Even so, Mrs. Stalworth, who admits her memory "gets all tangled up sometimes," does not seem to remember that Davis coordinated the effort to build her house. She insisted Wednesday that she paid for its construction herself.

Davis is also executive director of the Northside Neighborhood Housing Council, which was created by the OIC. He ran into problems with the city of Wilmington in January 1987 when questions arose about the northside agency's use of \$42,000 in federal funds to build houses in the Brooklyn neighborhood.

The money, intended for loans to rehabilitate houses, went instead for salaries and overhead. The city severed its contract with the agency in June 1987.

Mrs. Stalworth lived in her new

home until March, when she fell and broke her hip. She was taken to New Hanover Memorial Hospital.

The Social Services petition filed June 9 aims to have a jury declare that she was not competent to sign away her property on May 31.

On April 11, Dr. Charles L. Nance Jr. certified that Mrs. Stalworth "was constantly disoriented" and "in need of total personal care," the petition states. She "appears completely unaware of money or financial matters."

On May 11, according to the petition, Dr. Rolf Fisscher of Southeastern Mental Health Center diagnosed her as suffering from "primary degenerative dementia" — the onset of senility.

On June 2, the petition states, two days after the deed conveying her property to Davis was signed, Mrs. Stalworth told social worker Mikell Kent-Guy during a conversation at New Hanover Memorial Hospital that she never executed any deed or property conveyance.

"Airy Stalworth was adamant that she had made no conveyance of her property to anyone and that she would not do so as it was contrary to her wishes," the petition states.

Thomasina McCoy, the owner of the boarding home where Mrs. Stalworth has been staying since she was released from the hospital June 16, said Davis placed her there indefinitely.

A hearing to determine Mrs. Stalworth's competency is scheduled for July 5. A 12-member jury is to hear the case. If she is declared incompetent, the execution of her deed to Davis could be invalidated. She has no children, no near relatives nor next of kin. She has a house, an acre of land and a bank account that may hold as much as \$50,000, according to the incompetency petition.

For years, friends collected her mail and helped cash checks she received from the Veteran's Administration and Social Security, the petition says. The petition also lists Davis among three people who have assisted Mrs. Stalworth "in her personal and financial matters."

The property is valued at \$15,070 for tax purposes, but would be worth more based on current market value. It is in the corner of a large tract of commercial property at Market Street and College Road that is the site of a proposed hotel.

Davis said he was aware of the proposed hotel development.

Real estate developer Stanley Rehder, who put the hotel deal together in February, said Wednesday that he had tried to buy Mrs. Stalworth's land on behalf of his clients, Wilmington Hotel Associates, for \$10,000.

"She could take that money and put it in the bank, use it as she wanted, and the hotel people would have given her lifetime rights to live in her house on the property, tax-free, rent-free, for as long as she needed to or for as long as she lived.

"We didn't make the deal because the Social Services people came in and said that if she had that money, it would be considered an independent income, and they would have to cut her off from her monthly public assistance," Rehder said. "She needed that money. We didn't want to hurt her, so we just backed off."

Rehder said the hotel developers "would still love to have the property, but we haven't had any contact with Mrs. Stalworth in months. We decided just to do without it unless she died or put it on the market."

Airy Stalworth said Wednesday that she simply wants to go home.

According to the Social Services petition, "She does not want to go to a nursing home but rather wants to go to her home and plant her garden."

Business Editor Bernadette Hearne contributed to this report.

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Project's tenants get legal aid

By James Drew
Staff Writer

Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear has agreed to represent Houston Moore Terrace tenants in their dispute with the Wilmington Housing Authority about its decision to vacate the housing project during a \$3 million renovation project.

"We are assessing the cases, and our agency's position is to protect the tenants' rights as enshrined in their lease agreements," said Marcus Williams, executive director of the agency. "We also are monitoring the movement process."

Tenants plan to meet Tuesday with J. Alan Jones, executive director of the housing authority, to discuss their concerns. Jones is on vacation this week.

Housing officials originally hoped the 36-year-old complex at 1601 S. 13th St. could be refurbished without temporarily relocating all tenants.

But earlier this month, contractors removing walls in vacant units and working on plumbing systems determined that renovation work would cause severe hardships. The housing authority decided to temporarily relocate all tenants.

The housing authority has said tenants can return to Houston Moore Terrace in nine months to a year as the brick buildings are refurbished. Tenants will receive \$200 to cover moving expenses, Jones has said.

But tenants, many of whom have children, have questioned why the housing authority didn't announce the decision to vacate the apartments before school started. Housing manager Melanie Johnson said she contacted tenants as soon as she learned of the decision.

"We have been told that some type of rehabilitation of the premises had been on the drawing board for quite some time," said Williams, who is working on the issue with staff attorney Mal Maynard. "The logistics of the relocation warrant some concern."

Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear is a quasi-independent federal agency that receives funding from the Legal Services Corporation through Congress. Tenants will not be charged for their representation.

Lorraine Ramsey, who has lived at Houston Moore Terrace for 14 years, said tenants plan to present their grievances in writing to Jones at next week's meeting. A representative of Legal Services plans to accompany them.

Ms. Ramsey said some tenants have rejected temporary housing assignments made by the housing authority in the past week.

"Some people are saying they want something that is nice, and they don't want to move to something worse," she said. "Our concerns will be addressed next week. . . . We think we can work something out that will please the housing authority and the tenants."

Tenants of 30 units are preparing to move out of Houston Moore in the next two weeks, Mrs. Johnson said.

Most are expected to move to vacancies at Hillcrest, Robert R. Taylor Homes, Charles T. Nesbitt Courts, Creekwood South and Robert S. Jervay Place, while others have applied for subsidized housing in the private market. Those who are moving to Jervay Place consented to the move, she said.

At a Sept. 7 tenant meeting, several tenants said they didn't want to move to Jervay Place because the complex at 902 Dawson St. and Houston Moore historically have been rivals and they feared violence would erupt.

"No one is being made to go anywhere if it would be inconvenient, if we can help it," said Mrs. Johnson.

THE WILMINGTON

*NEW HANOVER *BRUNSWICK *PENDER *COLUMBUS • ON

JOURNAL

VOL. 62 NO. 44

25 Cents Per Copy

Wilmington, N.C., Thursday, January 5, 1989

On Streets Each Thursday

Stalworth Gets Her Property

le

Out-Of-Court Settlement Is Reached About Deed; Door Is Left Open In The Will Matter

By Deborah S. Murray
Journal Staff Writer

In an out of court settlement Wednesday morning Sherman Davis decided to convey Airy Stalworth her land back by signing a warranty deed.

The settlement came about 9:50 Wednesday morning. The trial was suppose to start at 9:30 that morning, however Marcus Williams, executive director of Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear, the agency representing Mrs. Stalworth's interest in the case, said he received a call Wednesday expressing Sherman Davis' intentions to settle out of court.

Offering his explanation as to why the defendant decided to settle out of court Williams said the realization of litigation probably had something to do with it since a jury was picked Tuesday and the trial was scheduled to begin Wednesday.

(Continued on Page 2)

Out-Of-Court

(Continued from Page 1)

As part of the settlement, the defendant is expected to pay for deposition costs of approximately \$3,400 and court costs of approximately \$150.

Williams said yesterday, prior to the Journal's presstime, that a deed was to be executed before noon Wednesday conveying Mrs. Stalworth's property back to her immediately.

"Merry Christmas Airy Stalworth," Williams said expressing the case has been a long and hard battle.

"I'm so happy I could shout," said Goldie Ortiz a long time friend of Mrs. Stalworth. Currently, Mrs. Stalworth is a patient in Fannie Norwood Memorial Home located on South 15th Street, recovering from injuries.

Helen Kelly Hinn, who talked to reporters shortly after the settlement was made said that two guardians will be appointed to take over the proper administration of Mrs. Stalworth's estate, as part of the settlement.

The issue of the will is still an open question in the case, according to Marcus Williams, which can be addressed by appealing the in-

terlocutory ruling of the judge or by future heirs litigating the issue. All of the evidence is being preserved and it would just be a matter of counsel reviewing it to formulate a case, he said.

Back in 1986, Mrs. Stalworth was found living in a squalid semi one-room shack without plumbing and electrical wiring. Her electricity was supplied by an extension cord which was connected to an electrical outlet somewhere in the vicinity of her yard.

Davis spearheaded a well publicized campaign to have a house built for Mrs. Stalworth, which was completed sometime around December 1986. Numerous businesses, churches, and non-profit organizations contributed to the effort supplying labor, appliances and furniture to the cause.

On May 31, 1987, Mrs. Stalworth signed a deed and a will in Davis' favor in the presence of a New Hanover Memorial Hospital nurse, Dr. Hurbert Eaton, Sr., a physician, Artis Bryant, who served as notary, Andrew Waters, an attorney and Davis.

Mrs. Stalworth, who was recovering from a broken hip in the hospital at the time that she signed the papers, later denied conveying her property to Davis.

To protect Mrs. Stalworth, who was later found incompetent to handle her affairs in a hearing initiated by the New Hanover County Department of Social Services, Ms. Hinn was appointed guardian ad litem for Mrs. Stalworth and initiated a suit against Davis through Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear.

The original suit initiated by Ms. Hinn was an attempt to rescind the will and deed signed by Mrs. Stalworth.

The complaint against Davis was later amended to allege that Davis' intentions were to defraud Mrs. Stalworth to her land and property since she was told at the time she signed the documents that he would only inherit her property after her death. The deed that Mrs. Stalworth signed May 31 however, conveyed her property to Davis immediately.

Wilmington Morning Star / Thursday, November 23, 1989

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Proposed group would boost inner-city business

By Hunter Kome
Staff Writer

Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear is trying to put together an organization that would help create and support inner-city businesses.

The organization would have a board of directors and be independent from any existing agency or group, said Marcus Williams, executive director of Legal Services.

Legal Services is working for a group of people interested in establishing the community development organization,



Williams

he said. The agency is applying for start-up money from the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center.

"We're just providing technical assistance," Williams said. "I'm going to shield the organizers at this point in case this is not successful. But it's not anything secret. If we don't succeed this time we're not giving up."

The city of Wilmington is working with a dozen banks in an effort to create a CDC that would provide loans to support inner-city revitalization, either of housing, businesses or both.

But the organization described by Legal Services would not conflict with that effort, mainly because the two have different sources of funding, Williams said.

The city's CDC would get its money

from the banks. The organization Legal Services is trying to put together would get its funding from grants and donations.

City Councilman Luther Jordan, who has pushed for the creation of the city's CDC, said he supports the Legal Services approach as well. Most banks have not come to the community reinvestment table willingly, Jordan said, but have been forced by the federal Community Reinvestment Act.

So the city should welcome any effort to find money for community reinvestment, he said.

"I think Legal Services has a good idea," Jordan said. "I'm playing on both teams."

The organization described by Legal Services would focus on supporting busi-

nesses, Williams said. Eleven other such community development organizations exist across the state, all funded by the Rural Economic Development Center, he said.

"I feel it's going to take a multi-faceted approach to cure some of the blight we have in our communities," Williams said. "The good part is having those other 11 community development corporations out there that have already plowed the turf, so to speak."

Plans the organization might tackle include setting up a business that would provide unemployed people with day work, such as painting or mowing; or creating a business incubator that would help fledgling businesses get started, Williams said.

**Fund Raiser Launched
For Charles Rooks**

Nelson Mandela: Free At L

THE WILMINGTON

***NEW HANOVER *BRUNSWICK *PENDER *COLUMBUS *ONSL**



JOURNAL

A Local Institution: An Outgrowth Of R.S. Jervay, Printers, Founded In 1901.

VOL. 63 NO. 52

25 Cents Per Copy

Wilmington, N.C., Thursday, February 15, 1990

On Streets Each Thursday

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Group Working To Provide Housing, Jobs In Community

The Wilmington/New Hanover County Community Development Corporation has been developed in an effort to increase the amount of decent and affordable housing in Wilmington and New Hanover County along with increasing job

opportunities through the development of a small business incubator.

Areas expected to be targeted under the proposal include the portion of Wilmington from Greenfield to Nixon Street and 17th Street to the Cape Fear River; the Scotts Hill area and the area of Wilmington embracing Greenfield Street and Third to Sixteenth Streets.

Seven individuals from diverse backgrounds have been chosen to serve on the corporation's board of directors. The board members are: Luther Henry Jordan, James McQueen, Jacqueline Morris-Goodness, Allene Drain, James Webb, Jacqueline Skinner and Richard Snyder.

The non-profit corporation is charged with such tasks as improving communications between minorities and low-income citizens with the broader community at large; enhancing the economic welfare, education and social levels of disadvantaged citizens throughout the City of Wilmington and New

(Continued on Page 3)

Key To Head ges Consortium

awareness of their collective role in the economic development of the state," said Lee Monroe, senior education adviser to Governor Martin. "They are also concerned with increasing the numbers of minority teachers in North Carolina."

The consortium was created during a recent meeting in Raleigh of the presidents and chancellors of the state's predominantly black colleges and universities. The consortium will develop and conduct cooperative educational activities among the eleven-member institutions.

Photo Prize

\$25⁰⁰

**This Week
See Page 2**

**News Reaching The Journal After 5 P.M
Tuesday Will Not Appear In Our
Thursday Edition. We Solicit Your News
And Also Your Cooperation.**

-Management.

Group Working To

(Continued from Page 1)

Hanover County; enhancing opportunities available to residents and groups to obtain adequate low-cost housing accommodations by constructing, rehabilitating, and providing decent, safe and sanitary housing in New Hanover County for persons and families of low-income, who are in need of such useful or desirable for the furtherance, accomplishment, fostering or attaining of the corporation.

To date, the corporation has received about \$25,000 to begin its work. Marcus Williams, a lawyer and executive director of Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear, stressed that the corporation may be able to get more monies through the North Carolina Legislature.

Williams stressed that the legislature is positioned to increase the allotment provided to the Wilmington/New Hanover County Community Development Corporation through the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, Inc.

LSLCF will be providing technical assistance to the corporation. Most recently, the law firm, which provides comprehensive legal assistance to indigents and low-income clients, assisted St. Mary's Catholic Church in obtaining \$2.1 million from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to construct 39 units of housing for the elderly and handicapped.

By developing a small business incubator, the corporation hopes to provide job training to the elderly

and youths.

The non-profit corporation is proposing to locate the incubator in Wilmington, making the city the home of the first small business facility to be located in Southeastern North Carolina.

In addition the board intends to sponsor "art fairs, raffles, food fairs, events at Thalian Hall (plays and seasonal affairs) and other ventures which could draw from the local annual festivities including the Azalea Festival and Riverfest," according to a proposal developed in behalf of the corporation.

Fund Raising

(Continued from Page 1)

Mary Middleton. The committee is sponsoring such activities as a fish fry, car washes, a mass mailing campaign, concerts and dances with all proceeds going towards helping Rooks.

The board of directors of the Talented Teens organization, Wilmington Police Department and housing center directors will be sponsoring a "Give A Heart" benefit dance Friday, February 16, at the Martin Luther King Center, located at 401 South 8th Street, door prizes will be awarded. Alcoholic beverages will be permitted, but will not be provided.

Entertainment for the dance will be provided by STRICTLY BUSINESS. The cost of the event, scheduled from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., is only \$5.

Tickets are available for the event at the following locations:



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"The work of Legal Services cannot be measured in terms of dollars or numbers of people helped. I have heard the stories of clients of Legal Services and seen their eyes shine in gratitude. Legal Services keeps people in their homes and helps them keep their jobs, enables them to put food

on their table, and ends domestic violence situations that afflict their lives. Members of the North Carolina General Assembly are proud to support the work of Legal Services."

— **Representative Milton F. "Toby" Fitch, Jr.**
North Carolina General Assembly



housing issues affecting the poor. This has created a much broader awareness of the needs for better low-income housing among public officials in the area and has already affected local housing policy. The officials do not want to repeat the "report card" grade again — a D plus.

In the southeastern part of the state in Wilmington, Legal Services housing advocacy took a different approach. When an elderly woman sought

legal recourse for substandard rental property, she contacted Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear. Her case broadened the awareness of the housing needs of other elderly and handicapped persons and prompted a joint church-community project, facilitated by Legal Services. Last September, Hadden Hall, a subsidized housing facility with 39, one-bedroom units was dedicated as a result of her case. Subsequently, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

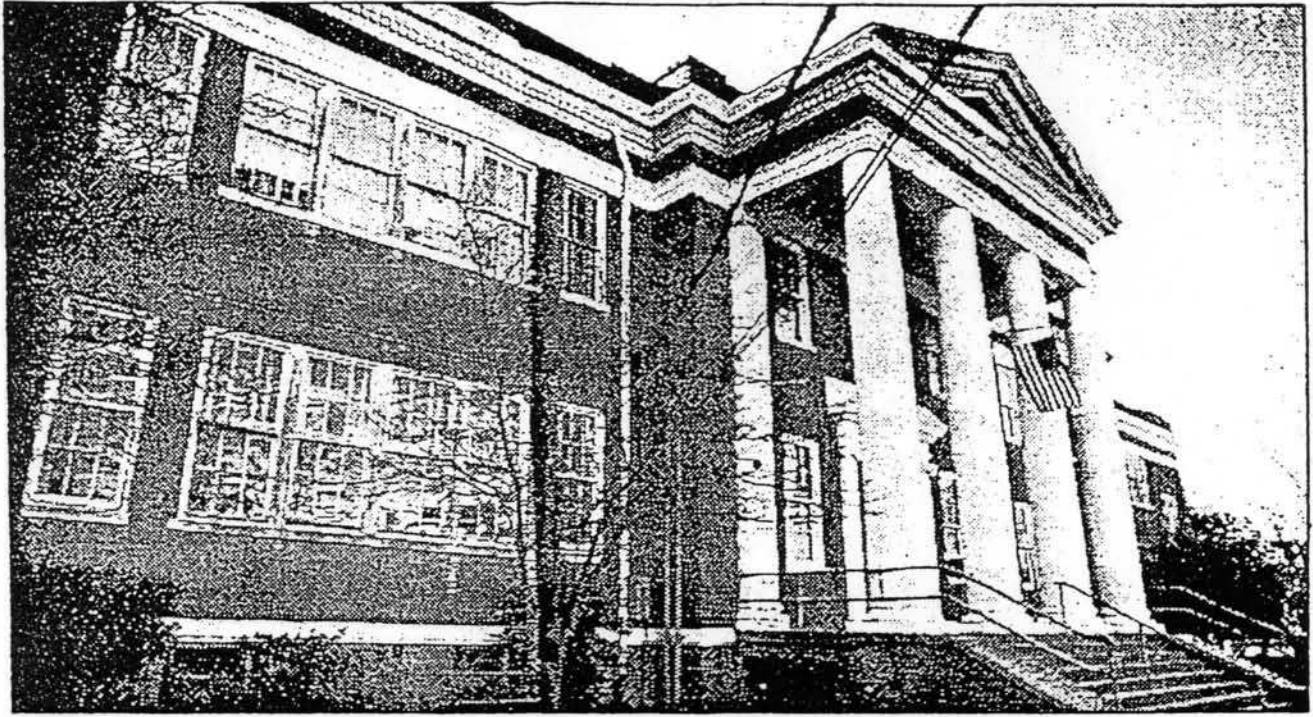


Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear helped to create Hadden Hall, a 39 unit housing facility for the elderly and handicapped.

Development approved another \$2 million grant for land acquisition and construction of 40 subsidized units on an adjacent tract through the second such nonprofit corporation created and represented by Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear.

The Region

Wilmington/New Hanover



Tileston school was first built in 1871.

Old school's renovation hinges on church's fund-raising effort

By Alison Feldman
Staff Writer

The church that bought the old Tileston school in Wilmington's Historic District has started a fund-raising campaign to help continue renovation work on the 19th century building.

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church bought the school at 400 Ann St. last summer for just under \$17,000 and is renovating it for a number of community uses. Tileston was built in 1871, with additions in 1910, 1937 and 1950. The school is actually three buildings connected by walkways.

In the future, the church plans to use the 16 school classrooms for literacy training, tutoring and adult education courses and the gymnasium as "a recreational magnet," said Marcus Williams, chairman of the project fund-raising committee. In addition, the church hopes to use the school for day care and food dis-

tribution.

He said other plans include converting the southern annex into 20 to 24 apartments for low-income elderly people.

"We want to make sure we can meet the needs of all ages," said Williams, who is also executive director of Legal Service of the Lower Cape Fear. "We want to provide an alternative to the criminal activities that may allure youth, and prevent the elderly from idly wasting their time or . . . giving up on life."

The church has already spent about \$150,000 removing asbestos, putting new lights in the gym, replacing broken window panes, re-roofing parts of the school and fixing the electrical and plumbing systems, said the Rev. Thomas P. Hadden, pastor of St. Mary's.

St. Mary's, which also houses a school, now sends its first- through eighth-graders to the Tileston gym for physical education classes. St. Mary's is across Ann Street from

Tileston.

The Raleigh diocese of the Roman Catholic Church has advanced \$350,000 for the first stage of renovations. But the funds will not cover the entire restoration, which will cost about \$1 million.

Hadden said the church has signed a contract for the second stage of work, which is restoring the exterior and completing roof work. Renovation work is expected to be completed in about three years.

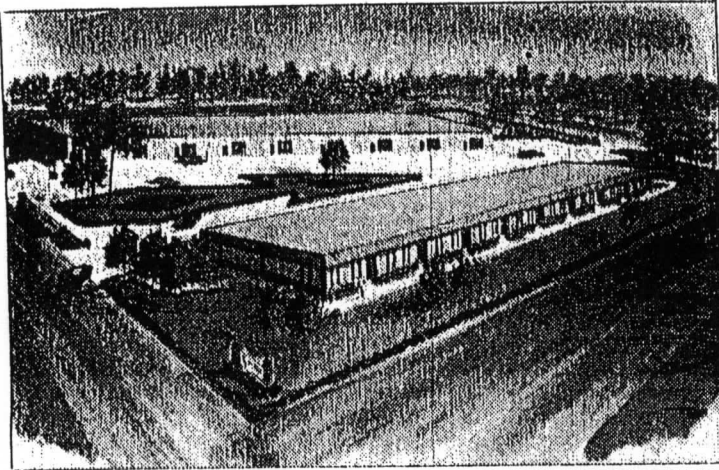
Many of the materials used so far have been donated, and the church has raised about \$10,000 through raffles and individual donations, Williams said.

But St. Mary's needs more help from the community.

As part of the fund-raising effort, he said, the church may name classrooms after people who contribute between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

To make a donation, call the church at 762-5491 or Williams at 763-6207.

MONEY

STOCKS 6C

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF WILMINGTON/NEW HANOVER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORP.

Officials hope to lure upstart businesses to these proposed condominiums at the Hilton Industrial Park at 511 Cornelius Harnett Drive, north of downtown Wilmington.

\$397,750 FEDERAL GRANT

Business incubator gets ready to build

By TIM BASS
Staff Writer

After 19 months as a mere nest egg, Wilmington's incubator for fledgling small businesses appears ready to hatch.

The non-profit agency overseeing the incubator just received a \$397,750 federal grant, has bought an acre of business property north of downtown and expects to have at least three entrepreneurs on board by the end of the year.

"We're just extremely optimistic about this little venture," said Harold L. Gore, executive director of the Wilmington/New Hanover Community Development Corp., whose main function is to get the incubator cooking.

Business incubators are designed as safe havens for newborn and infant enterprises, offering them office space, technical and financial advice, marketing help and even secretaries, computers and copiers.

In some cases, incubators offer low-interest loans. The city of Wilmington has given the CDC \$100,000 to use as a loan pool for incubator businesses, which can apply for low-interest loans up to \$20,000. No loans, however, have been issued.

meetings, he has asked for an explanation of why no loans have been awarded.

"To date, they have not made any loans," Mr. Youngblood said Tuesday. "It's enough people who want them."

CDC officials have said they wanted to line up prospective entrepreneurs, a site and more grants before making loans.


Gore

The CDC's biggest shot in the arm came in September with word that it had received a three-year, \$397,750 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The country has as many as 500 incubators — including 100 new ones in 1991. With the help of incubators, new businesses have an 80 percent chance of succeeding, Mr. Gore said. Without them, that chance drops to 20 percent.

"We expect that some world-class businesses will emanate from this facility," said Marcus W. Williams, executive director of Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear. His group set up the CDC and pro-

ness condominiums and an acre of construction-ready property at the Hilton Industrial Park at 511 Cornelius Harnett Drive. The money came from state grants, loans and locally raised cash.

The CDC is talking with the heads of four prospective businesses and plans to have the three condos occupied by the end of the year, Mr. Gore said. Using the grant money, the corporation also plans to build nine more business condos on the extra acre by spring 1993.

Mr. Williams and Mr. Gore envision Wilmington's incubator as an avenue for creating jobs for the needy. Each incubator business must hire low-income people for at least 75 percent of its work force.

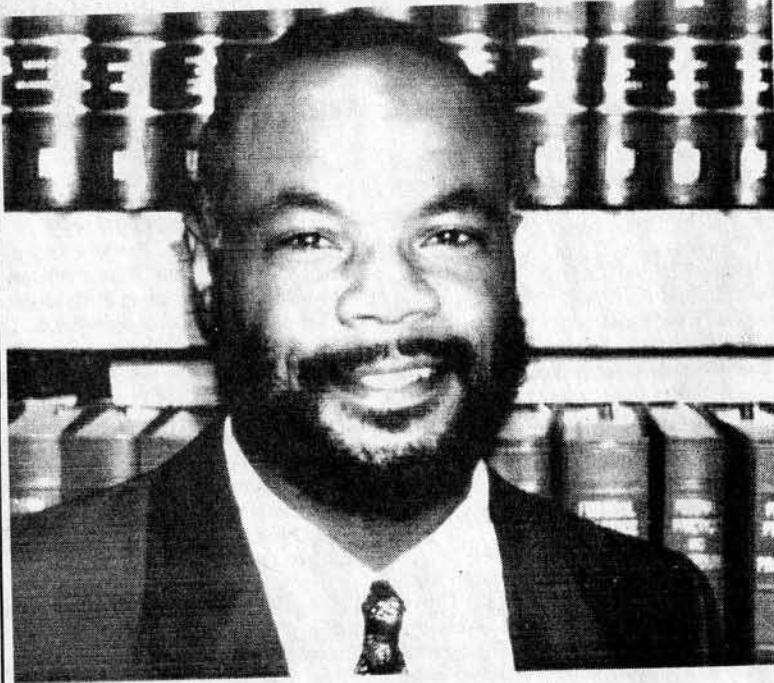
"We're hoping to provide job opportunities so that people can make it on their own," Mr. Gore said.

Mr. Williams predicts that a successful business incubator will mean more jobs, a lower crime rate and a growing community.

"It instills hope, too," he said. "And sometimes you can't quantify that."

Staff Writer Mark Ippolito contributed to this report.

The Journal, Wilmington, North Carolina, Thursday, October 12, 1995-5



Profile: Marcus W. Williams

By SYLVIA B. HOOPER

This week's profile is Marcus W. Williams, Attorney at Law, who is the Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer of the Legal Services of the Lower Cape Fear, Inc. This non-profit corporation is charged with the mission of providing high quality legal assistance to low income individuals. His office receives at least 50 or more applications per week, seeking help for the multiple needs common to low income individuals. These needs vary, but are primarily concerned with domestic violence custody disputes, visitation issues, consumer complaints, and a myriad of housing problems. The agency covers a seven county area of 5,200 miles. Williams and his staff, understandably are kept quite busy.

Some of his specific duties as Executive Director are to be the manager of resources and to distribute cases according to their level of complexity based on various factors indicating whom among the staff should handle them. He personally undertakes the matters that require his level of experience.

He is self described as a man who likes dealing in complex issues, having a basic appreciation for and concern about people. He stated, "I feel it's important to create equal justice/opportunities for every individual, no matter what color, sex, what have you...and if you're going to have a justice system, that has any validity, you need to make sure that the least endowed financially are given an opportunity to only access the courtroom, but to have an opportunity to win in court."

Williams, a self confidant professional, began his career, not only equipped with the Juris of Law degree from the University of Minnesota, but he had a foundation which he still embraces with much appreciation and honor. "I've been fortunate in my life and I think everybody, whatever they do, should believe in themselves, but also have an unshakable belief in God. I feel I've been extremely blessed by having a stable family upbringing. My parents, who both attended Shaw University, were there for me and my brothers and sisters acting as sounding boards...not making decisions, but helping to highlight our choices. Last week, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, and my joy in life is knowing that they are secure and well. That's very important to me and that's the bedrock of determination that I have!" Williams and wife Althea have been married for five years, she having formerly served as Assistant District Attorney for seven years.

Professional rewards may come in a variety of ways to an attorney at law whose overall practice is in advocacy of the elderly, handicapped

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and wife Althea have been married for five years, she having formerly served as Assistant District Attorney for seven years.

Professional rewards may come in a variety of ways to an attorney at law whose overall practice is in advocacy of the elderly, handicapped, and the low income. He stated, "As a lawyer, I can zero in on the specific problems of a client and not have to concern myself with the economic features being brought into the office. There is a job satisfaction for meeting someone's intense need at the time they need assistance most, and the fact that you work with individuals that have integrity is inherently satisfying! I also enjoy winning!"

On the subject of winning, Attorney Williams cited his 3-0 track record with respect to voting rights cases in Columbus County, where for the first time in 162 years, they have minority representation on a county-wide basis. The lawsuit they've brought has also affected positive results in Duplin and Bladen County. There is still pending action in Brunswick County.

Williams, obviously well acquainted with courtroom conflict and legal confrontations, has handled many cases as lead attorney. At times, he has argued for high profile cases and at other times, he has worked behind the scenes. Experienced in landmark cases on the local scene, he did the legal and technical work for what is known here in our community as Hadden Hall I and Hadden Hall II, which was handled in conjunction with St. Mary's Catholic Church. In this example, they received over \$4 million dollars from the federal government to buy land and construct housing for the elderly and the handicapped. The 79 units, according to Williams is, "the maturation of a dream."

Our profile was also the technical advisor for The Wilmington-New Hanover Community Development Corporation. In 1989, he did all the legal work for his organization which now owns 12 business incubators. These 1500 sq. ft. condo units, will enable businesses to move in, and hire low income individuals. Legal services accomplished this working in conjunction with community agencies. Williams also serves as President of the North Carolina Association of Project Directors, presently anticipating the upcoming budget cuts of the new 104th Congress, which could also impose restrictions on the type of work they can engage in. This community is favored to have in its employ, someone of such high qualifications with respect, concern, and commitment to the lowly and disadvantaged-advantaged. His record and reputation speaks for itself.

Bar and Court Admissions

*Licensed to practice in the States of Minnesota and North Carolina

*Admitted to practice in the Federal District Courts, the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, The United States Supreme Court and all of the North Carolina and Minnesota State Courts

Community Activities

*1983-1987: Board of Directors of Northeastern North Carolina of Tomorrow, Inc.; Advisory Board of the Regional Small Business Incubator in Ahoskie; Advisory Committee of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation; President of the Parish Council of St. Charles Catholic Church.

*1987-Present: Member of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation Sabbatical Committee; Member of St. Mary's Catholic Church; Steering Committee of the Tileston School Restoration Project; Founding Technical Advisor for the Wilmington/New Hanover Community Development Corporation; Two-Term Chair of Precinct 16 in Wilmington; Vice President of the new Hanover County Democratic Party (Spearheading the Platform and Priorities Issues); Chairman of the Coastal Carolina HIV Care Consortium; Chair-elect of the Association of Legal Services' Project Directors of North Carolina.

Professional Activities

*North Carolina State Bar; Minnesota State Bar; North Carolina Bar Association; North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers; New Hanover County Bar Association's Board of Directors; Appointed in 1991 to a four-year term on the U.S. District Court Advisory Group for the Eastern District of North Carolina Under the Civil Justice Reform Act of 1990.

Attorney opens new practice *Specializes in criminal law*



Lumberton- Marcus W. Williams has opened a private law practice in Lumberton. Williams is well-known to many in the area, as he has been with the Public Defenders Office for the last five years. He is the son of Sadie Knuckles Williams and Russell R. Williams and the grandson of W.H. Knuckles. Knuckles along with former slaves and farmers helped start and finance the Thompson Institute, now W.H. Knuckles Elementary School.

Williams was the first elected

student body president at Chapel Hill and at the University of Minnesota. He was Director of Legal Services for a 13 county area around Ahoskie, NC from 1983 to '87. He then directed a six county area with Legal Services of Lower Cape Fear, in Wilmington for nine years. From 1996 - 2000 he was State Director of Pennsylvania Legal Services. He then returned to Lumberton to work with the Public Defenders Office, where he dealt not only in criminal proceeding, but in the civil needs of the indigent.

In July, Williams left Public Defenders to begin a private law office. When asked why he chose to become private, he stated, "After 27 years, [of public service] I wanted more creative opportunities. I can also exercise more discretion in which cases I handle."

Williams will primarily handle criminal cases, but will also pursue some general law with cases such as workers compensation, accident and personal injury, and employment issues.

The new office is located at 222 West 5th Street and is handicap accessible. Appointments can be made by calling 738-8800 or 738-5555.