Improving College Access: GRASP

For students who are the first in their family to apply for college, there is a real “awareness gap” when it comes to financial aid. Thanks to a grant from WCF, Richmond-based nonprofit GRASP will provide free financial aid advising this year for up to 275 students at Jamestown, Lafayette and Warhill high schools.

GRASP advisors work in partnership with school counselors, students and their families. They help students fill out federal aid forms like the FAFSA, compare financial aid award letters, and look for scholarships. GRASP works with all students, with a focus on financially disadvantaged families.

In addition, students receive support from their GRASP advisor over the summer after high school graduation, to address any roadblocks the student might face when enrolling and starting college. GRASP helps students headed to two- or four-year colleges, and those who pursue workforce credentials.

"If my school did not have a GRASP Advisor, students would not be able to get the one-on-one help they need with the FAFSA," explains a counselor from Warhill.

Continued on page 3

Wible Fund Helps Salvation Army Bring Hope, Change Lives

Since 2017, WCF has provided grants to three local charities from the Jenny E. Wible Fund, made possible by a generous bequest from a local resident. Thanks to the prudent management of the endowment, each year the grants have grown. This year, the Salvation Army of Williamsburg received $26,085 to support its vision of building lives by breaking the poverty cycle.

For hundreds of Williamsburg residents, the Salvation Army is the place to turn when you need help to pay your electric bill, or could use some assistance from their food pantry. For others, often referred by social services, the Salvation Army offers a transitional housing program, providing up to two years of support. Seven families participate in transitional housing right now.

This experience can be transformational for some. Betty had been struggling with drug abuse, and had lost custody of her children. With support from Salvation Army, Betty found a job, got her GED, regained custody of her kids, and is now qualified to rent an apartment on her own.

Continued on back cover
An influential member of Williamsburg’s drama community, Claudine Carew shaped the next generation of thespians during her career as a teacher, actor, and drama director. She founded the York County School of the Arts in 1988, where she inspired and expected excellence. Indeed, two of her students won national awards for young playwrights.

When Carew passed away in 1998, colleagues came together to create the Claudine Carew Spirit of the Arts Award to recognize a School of the Arts student with a scholarship. Co-Founders Charles and Carolee Bush initially funded the award from Wedgewood Renaissance productions, done in conjunction with the William & Mary Shakespeare Festival. The fund is now managed by the Williamsburg Community Foundation.

2021 scholarship recipient Elijah Smith is a multi-talented student who wrote an original sea shanty. In his application, he wrote about how his work in music, writing, and photography have made him more open to exploring new ideas, thinking outside the box.

“I plan to attend Dartmouth College this fall,” says Smith. “I don’t know exactly what I want to do after that, but I know that the creativity and flexibility that the arts have taught me will continue to allow me to solve problems in whatever environment I find myself in.”

GRASP, continued from page 1

“GRASP has been delighted with having the opportunity to provide hope for achieving educational goals to Williamsburg-James City County students,” says Todd Martin, GRASP President/CEO. “Navigating the financial aid process can often be a challenge, and GRASP advisors are able to help light the way while also providing options for minimizing educational debt.”

This fall marks the third year that GRASP advisors have been working in Williamsburg. Despite the pandemic, advisors continued to meet virtually with students and families. WCF is proud to support their work with students and families in our community.

Need help for your student?

At Jamestown, Warhill or Lafayette High Schools, you can contact the school counselor, or contact the GRASP advisor directly to make an appointment:

Jamestown High School
Ms. Valena Dixon, jamestown@grasp4va.org

Lafayette High School
Ms. Rosslyn Brown, lafayette@grasp4va.org

Warhill High School
Ms. Rosslyn Brown, warhill@grasp4va.org

Did you know?

• The US Department of Education has reported that 85% of four-year students qualify for federal financial aid, but 20% don’t apply.

• Students who apply for federal aid are 64% more likely to enroll in postsecondary education directly after high school than those who don’t apply.

• Once on a campus, FAFSA completers are 72% more likely than their non-completing peers to persist in college.
New Fund to Help Women & Seniors

A Williamsburg resident for over 20 years, Peggy Swain lived a vibrant life as a military wife, raising four children. She was also an entrepreneur, owning and managing a retail nursery. Always connecting with her family, friends and community, Peggy personally gave aid to many causes and individuals who needed support, but she was especially sensitive to issues and challenges facing disadvantaged children and women.

After her passing this year, Peggy’s children created an endowment fund in her memory at WCF. This fund will make grants in her name specifically for programs that help low- and moderate-income women, children and senior citizens in greater Williamsburg.

WJCC Scholarship Fund - Class of 2021

Every year our community raises funds for students from Jamestown, Lafayette and Warhill High Schools. 2021 was another record-breaking year for scholarships, thanks to your help!

- 73 students received awards of $1,000 or more
- $114,125 total awarded
- 9 students received $2,000 scholarships for academic excellence and financial need.

Thanks to everyone who made this possible!

Learn more about supporting scholarships by visiting our website, calling 757-259-1660 or emailing office@williamsburgcommunityfoundation.org.

Mid-Year Report: Your Help is Making a Difference

Thanks to donors like you, WCF has awarded $829,970 in grants and scholarships to date this year, including competitive grants to local nonprofits and donor-advised and designated grants, directed by our generous donors. A few highlights:

- $45,000 in COVID relief grants
- 40 businesses received a grant through the Greater Williamsburg Small Business Relief Fund*
- The Perisie Fund is providing a renewable scholarship for medical school, covering all costs!

*Funding allocated in 2020
SAVE THE DATE!

Lunch & Learn: Oct. 19 or Nov. 12
Join us for lunch at the WCF office to get a more in-depth understanding of how the foundation works. You will hear a brief presentation and have time for questions in a small group, informal setting. There is no cost to attend.

RSVP to 757-259-1660, or email us at office@williamsburgcommunityfoundation.org

Grant Deadline: Dec. 16, 2021
Are you involved in a local nonprofit? If so, you may be eligible to apply for a grant of up to $5,000. Check our website and click on “Receive” then “Apply for a Grant” for more details on how to apply, and to see if your organization is eligible. We encourage first-time applicants to contact us first before starting your application.

Learn more at WilliamsburgCommunityFoundation.org.

Salvation Army, continued from page 1

Salvation Army is one of many nonprofits in our area that make up the safety net for members of our community. Vicki Davis, Social Services Program Manager, reports that the volume of clients has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. Here is a snapshot of emergency assistance in 2020:

- Rent Assistance — 108 families
- Motel nights provided — 532
- Food Boxes Distributed — 2,948
- People assisted with gas/bus transportation — 193
- Parents assisted with baby supplies — 330
- Households Assisted with Meals — 2,948

“We are honored to be a recipient of the Wible Funds, which help us provide transitional housing and social services to our beloved Williamsburg community.”

- Julio DaSilva, Salvation Army