The connections between Virginia and Liberia are complex and fascinating. Jefferson was an early proponent of African colonization: he saw it as a solution to the problem of slavery and the most desirable outcome of emancipation. The founders and leading supporters of the American Colonization Society—

The American Colonization Society (ACS) was established in 1816 to promote the voluntary return of African Americans—emancipated slaves as well as free blacks—to Africa. With the help of the U.S. government, the colony of Liberia was created to receive them. Virginians were instrumental, both in the formation of the Society and in the early history of the colony; nearly one-third of the 11,909 African Americans who left the U.S. for Liberia between 1820 and 1866 were from Virginia.

a group of clergymen, political leaders, and antislavery advocates—including Virginians James Monroe, John Marshall, and Bushrod Washington. The idea originated with another Virginian named Charles Fenton Mercer, a member of the state legislature inspired by accounts he read of earlier legislative debates about black colonization that took place in the aftermath of Gabriel’s Rebellion. In the early years especially, Virginians were also among the Society’s leading donors.

The ACS purchased the freedom of slaves and actively encouraged free African Americans to emigrate, and then paid for their passage to Liberia. It also sought to encourage slave holders to emancipate, and for a time the Society maintained an uneasy alliance between some members of the clergy and abolitionist groups who wanted to end slavery and slave owners and others who feared the presence and influence

Continued on page 2

Ashmun Street, Monrovia
(Library of Congress)
Virginia & Liberia

Continued from cover

of free blacks in a slave-holding environment. Both groups thought it would be impossible for free—or freed—African Americans to assimilate into white society.

At the same time many free blacks, especially in the North, opposed the ACS, believing it to be an organization whose real purpose was to remove all free blacks from the U.S. and thereby strengthen the slavery system even further. Nevertheless, many black Virginians chose to emigrate. Interest was especially strong among free African Americans in the Tidewater region; and Virginia had, relatively speaking, a large number of slaveholders who were willing to emancipate slaves in their wills, once their return to Africa appeared to be a practical option.

Liberia became independent in 1847, but the new nation was not formally recognized by the United States until 1862. After an initial appropriation of $100,000, Congress refused further support for the Society and the colony. Virginia members of the ACS organized a state Society in 1828 and repeatedly sought support from the Virginia legislature which twice appropriated funds for Liberian emigration. But these funds were authorized only for free blacks not emancipated slaves, and much of the money was left unused. After 1832, few free blacks volunteered.

Lott Cary, a Virginia slave born in Charles City County, purchased his own freedom and eventually raised enough money to pay for his own transport to Liberia. Supported by the First Baptist Church in Richmond and the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society (which he had helped to establish), he became the first American Baptist missionary to Africa. He established the Providence Baptist Church in the Liberian capital, Monrovia (named for President James Monroe), and was elected vice-agent of the ACS in 1826. He became Acting Governor of the colony in 1828, but served just three months until his death in an accidental explosion.

Joseph Jenkins Roberts, another Virginian, served as the colony’s first Lieutenant Governor, its first black Governor, and the first President of Liberia for four years immediately following its independence. He served again as President from 1871 until his death in 1875. From 1856 until his death, he was also the President of Liberia College.

Native people resisted the expansion of the colony; and soon after its founding Liberia entered into an agreement with the U.S. government to accept Africans recaptured from slave ships. The new nation was thus divided early-on into three distinct groups: indigenous people, slaves freed from slave ships during transport, and black settlers from the U.S.

Virginians had been instrumental in framing and articulating the idea of individual rights as well as the U.S. Constitution on which Liberia’s founding constitution was based.

Ironically, the Liberian constitution did not extend immediate citizenship rights to indigenous people of the country. At the same time, it conferred privileged status on American immigrants and their descendants, thereby setting up internal tensions and patterns of resentment that have had disastrous consequences in the country’s more recent history.

In June 2006, the VFH awarded a Discretionary Grant to the Afro-American Historical Association of Fauquier County to support the expansion of an existing database on the more than 3,700 Virginians—emancipated slaves and free blacks—who are known to have emigrated from Virginia to Liberia prior to 1867.

This information, located mainly in the records of the American Colonization Society currently housed at the Library of Congress, is drawn primarily from ships’ lists that included age, place of birth, literacy level, occupation or skills, and family groups, as well as from letters written by Liberian immigrants and others.

This information is extremely important, not just for the insights it provides into the lives of those who emigrated, but because information on the lives and circumstances of Virginia slaves in general is difficult-to-impossible to obtain from other sources. Thus, even without further elaboration or enhancement, the database is a rich and valuable resource for new scholarship and classroom education.

In December, the VFH awarded a second grant, this time to the University of Virginia’s Center for Digital History (VCDH), to develop additional humanities content and to plan and produce a website devoted to the Liberia-Virginia connection, with the database as its central component.

The website will offer additional primary sources, links to other online resources, and a series of essays that allow for deeper exploration of the data and what it means or suggests. It will also include in-depth narratives focusing on the lives of nine emigrant families.
from Virginia and the experiences of three emancipated groups—from Rappahannock, Fauquier, and Prince Edward Counties.

Work on this project actually began almost ten years ago, when former VFH fellow Marie Tyler-McGraw began research on Virginia emigrants to Liberia concentrating on the years 1820-1843. She had assembled a number of family-based files and added to it the information from Liberia’s only extensive 19th century census, conducted in 1843.


In February 2006 she began a collaboration with another former VFH fellow and historian Deborah Lee, to encode the initial data and expand the reach of the database to include the years 1843-66. This work, which involved further research into the ACS materials at the Library of Congress, particularly the passenger lists published by the Society in its journal The African Repository, was completed under the VFH Discretionary Grant.

In the website phase of the project, they will be assisted by fellow historians Scot French of the VCDH and Reginald Butler, former Director of the Carter G. Woodson Center at U.Va., also a former VFH fellow.

Users of the database can already research many questions. What was the average age of first childbearing among emigrant mothers? What were the death rates for those who emigrated prior to 1843? How many had literacy skills? What Virginia counties produced the most emigrants and how did this change over time?

Explorations through the website can go much deeper. Users will have access to plantation records, letters, images, maps, and newspaper accounts from the period. There will be links to resources on slave trade law, free black law, American political history, and additional images of Liberia and its settlers. Researchers will be able to construct the story of a particular family, find all the Virginians on a particular ship, or compare promotional materials advertising the colony to the reality its settlers experienced.

The VFH is very pleased to have been in a position to support this extraordinary project, one which opens up an important but little-known chapter of Virginia’s history, while providing important new access to information on individual slaves—and by extension, slave life in general—that cannot be found in any other source.
Charlottesville hosts the 13th annual Virginia Festival of the Book (March 21-25)—an annual celebration of reading and literacy—with more than 200 panels, readings, and school events on a wide-range of topics.

There will be so much to see at this year’s festival—new fiction, poetry and prose from established and emerging voices; retellings of the Jamestown story from scholarly, archaeological, and indigenous points of view; tales of travel in far-away lands; and panels posing the questions of our times.

We have arranged below a small selection of the programs featuring authors, editors, and contributors to books who represent just some of the ongoing conversations we undertake throughout the world of VFH programming; among them you may see staff, fellows, and grantees whose work the VFH continues to support.

A full listing is online at the VABook! website (vabook.org), which has been made even more user-friendly this year. Programs can be viewed and sorted by day, by geographical area, and by topic. Each venue has a map, commentary on parking and accessibility. Personal itineraries can be created by selecting the “My Book Bag...Your Personal Schedule.” See you at the festival!
Thursday, March 22 (continued)

**Civil Rights and Human Rights**

Thomas Jackson (From Civil Rights to Human Rights) and Hoda Zaki (Civil Rights and Politics at Hampton Institute)

CENTRAL JMRL LIBRARY, MCINTIRE ROOM, 201 E. MARKET ST.

8:00 PM

Reconstructions: Fiction with Mark Childress and Donald McCaig

Donald McCaig (Canaan) and Mark Childress (One Mississippi) read from and discuss their novels of the Post-Civil War and Post-Civil Rights South.

UVA BOOKSTORE, 400 S. EMMET ST.

8:00 PM

This I Believe: A Collection

A reading from contributors to NPR’s “This I Believe” including essayists Gregory Orr and Frank X Walker.

BARNES & NOBLE, 1035A EMMET ST.

Friday, March 23

10:00 AM

Shaping a Nation: History and Policy

Peter Wallenstein (Cradle of America: Four Centuries of Virginia History) and Richard Laburiski (James Madison and the Struggle for the Bill of Rights) on vision of Virginians from this country’s founding to the present.

UVA ROTUNDA, CENTRAL GROUNDS

** noon**

Fact and Artifact: Unearthing Jamestown

Join two preeminent scholars, William Kelso (Jamestown, The Buried Truth) and James Horn (A Land As God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth Of America) for a journey below the surface.

VINEGAR HILL, 220 W. MARKET ST.

**noon**

Changing the Constitution: 14th Amendment and Judicial Activism

Kermit Roosevelt III (The Myth of Judicial Activism), Garrett Epps (Democracy Reborn), and Dahlia Lithwick (NPR and Slate.com judicial analyst) discuss Supreme Court activism, the Constitution and American society.

UVA BOOKSTORE, 400 S. EMMET ST.

Saturday, March 24

10:00 AM

Poetry in the Papers

Poetry as a historical public force with Jonathan Green (Thomas Jefferson’s Scrapbooks) and James Basker (Amazing Grace: An Anthology of Poems About Slavery).

BARNES & NOBLE, 1035A EMMET ST.

2:00 PM

Treasures of Black History: Three Perspectives

Thomas C. Battle (Legacy: Treasure of Black History), Donna M. Wells, editor Christina Draper (Don’t Grieve for Me), Jeanne Siler (Fayette Street), and Frances Latimer (Landmarks) engage African American history on the local, state and national levels.

CENTRAL JMRL LIBRARY, MCINTIRE ROOM, 201 E. MARKET ST.

4:00 PM

Graphic Nonfiction: Brave New Genre

Editors of Slate.com discuss their recent forays into nonfiction.

VINEGAR HILL, 220 W. MARKET ST.

6:00 PM

How! and Other Approaches to American Indians

With American Indian historians and authors, Gabrielle Tayac (Meet Natchez) and Karenne Wood (Markings on Earth) discuss experiences with violence, both personal and war-related.

UVA BOOKSTORE, 400 S. EMMET ST.

8:00 PM

Interrogations: A Poetry Reading

Poems of cultural inquiry and spiritual searching with Kevin Young (For the Confederate Dead) and David Wojahn (Interrogation Palace).

UVA BOOKSTORE, 400 S. EMMET ST.

NOON

Subjects of History: Virginia Indians Speak Out

Virginia Indian tribal leaders Anne Richardson (Rappahannock Tribe), Stephen Adams (Chickahominy Tribe), George Whitefield (Monacan Nation) and Wayne Adams (Chickahominy Tribe) respond to books written about them, past and present.

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 401 E. MAIN ST.

2:00 PM

Women’s Voices Re-envisioned: A Poetry Reading

Poets Hilary Holladay (The Dreams of Mary Rowlandson) and Judith Hall (Three Trios) reimagine a 1682 Indian captivity narrative and the apocryphal Book of Judith.

UVA BOOKSTORE, 400 S. EMMET ST.

4:00 PM

Immigration: Where Are We Going?

A discussion with Michele Wucker (Lockout), Luis Alberto Urrea (The Devil’s Highway), Hiroshi Motomura (Americans in Waiting) and Charles Bowden (Down By the River).

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 401 E. MAIN ST.

8:00 PM

Transformations: An Evening of Fiction

Novelists Howard Norman (Devotion), Lee Smith (Old Agate Hill), and Luis Alberto Urrea (The Hummingbird’s Daughter) share their recent works.

ALBEMARLE COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING, 401 MCINTIRE RD.

Sunday, March 25

1:00 PM

Figured in Fiction: Literary Figures as Characters

The life and times of great authors refigured in new fiction by Caroline Preston (Gettysburg’s Girl), Maneve Medved (How Elizabeth Barrett Browning Saved My Life) and Louis Bayard (The Pale Blue Eye).

CENTRAL JMRL LIBRARY, MCINTIRE ROOM, 201 E. MARKET ST.

3:00 PM

Press Pass: From the White House to the World

With journalists Helen Thomas (Front Row at the White House: Watchdogs of Democracy), Margaret Klipore (Remember to Laugh: Writing My Way Around the World), Betty DeFamos (Forbidden Fruit), and Alicia Shepard (Woodward and Bernstein).

ALBEMARLE COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING, 401 MCINTIRE RD.
African American Museums Solidify Network

By Christina Draper

Anticipation is great for the arrival of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. In 1929, legislation was first proposed for this national center; however, it was not until 2003 that this piece of legislation was signed. As a result, the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in consultation with the Council and Director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture has created a grant opportunity designed to strengthen African American museums.

This long and faithful journey is familiar to many African American museums. In localities across the Commonwealth, faith and perseverance are the driving forces for institutions focusing on local African American history. Consequently, the Legacy Museum of Lynchburg, Virginia has created the Network of African American Museums in Virginia (NAAMV) in partnership with the VFH African American Heritage of Virginia Program (AAHV). The Legacy Museum of African American History received one of only eight IMLS grants awarded to African American museums in 2006.

The grant promises to strengthen six Central Virginia museums of African American history and culture. “We are so pleased by the quality and creativity of this group of awardees,” said Lonnie G. Bunch, III, founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. “This is a significant opportunity not only for these institutions but also for the museum field writ large.”

The Legacy museum has established the NAAMV permanently. The AAHV program will provide support in the organization and facilitation of this two-year project. A technical assistance team will work with the selected historical institutions in the following:

- Curation and Historical Documentation
- Exhibition Preparation and Installation
- Collection Management and Care
- Fundraising and Staff Development/Sustainability

Hands-on training in the above areas will enhance institutional capacity and sustainability for of the six museums included in the network. In addition, these workshops are designed to develop an active “community” of African American history museums within the Commonwealth as the first step toward creating a larger statewide network of museums of African American history.

Network of African American Museums in Virginia

The Carver-Price Legacy Museum, Appomattox
The Robert Russa Moton Museum, Farmville
The L.E. Coleman African-American Museum, Halifax County
The Legacy Museum, Lynchburg
The Anne Spencer House and Garden Museum, Lynchburg
The Harrison Museum of African-American Culture, Roanoke

Legacy Museum, Lynchburg
Virginia Folklife
a Presence in National and Regional Festivals

With the increased attention focused on Virginia and its cultural traditions in 2007, the Virginia Folklife Program (VFP) has been sought out by many national and regional festivals to assist in presenting and celebrating the Commonwealth’s rich cultural folkways. 2007 will no doubt be a busy, and highly visible year for the program. Some of the highlights are below.

41st Annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival
June 27 – July 1 and July 4 – 8, on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

The Smithsonian will be presenting a festival program entitled “The Roots of Virginia,” showcasing the Native American, English, and African roots of Virginia culture. The Virginia Folklife Program, along with key contributors from Ferrum College’s Blue Ridge Institute, is integrally involved in the planning of this festival, in which over approximately 120 performers, artists, musicians, dancers, storytellers, cooks, farmers, and craftspeople from Virginia, Kent County England, and West Africa will help explain, demonstrate, and celebrate the cultural traditions which have formed much of the roots of Virginia’s expressive culture.

69th Annual National Folk Festival
October 12 – 14, Richmond

The Virginia Folklife Program will continue its close involvement with the National Folk Festival this year by presenting a program which highlights and celebrates the first five years of the Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program. As it had with the highly successful “Instrument Makers of Virginia” program in 2005, the VFP will design, and host this program featuring some of Virginia’s finest “master artists” and their apprentices.

11th Annual Virginia Arts Festival
June 3, Colonial Williamsburg

The Virginia Folklife Program is joining the National Council for the Traditional Arts in presenting craftspersons and musicians of Southwest Virginia for their day-long celebration of music from along the Crooked Road Heritage Trail.

In addition to these festivals, the Virginia Folklife Program Director Jon Lohman will continue to participate in some of the finest folklife festivals held in Virginia and beyond, including Merlefest (North Wilkesboro, NC, April 26-29), the “Virginia Folklife Workshop Porch” at FloydFest (Floyd, VA, July 26-29), the American Folk Festival (Bangor, Maine, August 24-26), the Blue Ridge Folklife Festival (Ferrum, VA, October 27), and at the many wonderful folk and traditional music festivals and gatherings throughout the state.

Other Affiliated Festivals On The Horizon

The VFP will be closely involved with the cultural and traditional arts programming for two additional conferences in Williamsburg this year: the 2007 National Humanities Conference “Making Sense of Place” in Colonial Williamsburg (November 2 – 4) and as the Mid-Atlantic Folklore Association joins with the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Society of Ethnomusicology for its annual meeting to be held at the College of William and Mary (March 30 – April 1).

And most recently, the Virginia Folklife Program has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to produce a Virginia Heritage Showcase, to be held in Charlottesville. The Heritage Showcase will feature many of Virginia’s finest folk masters, including its recipients of the prestigious National Heritage Fellowship. This event is still in its planning stage, so stay tuned for dates and details!
April 26 marks the 400th anniversary of the English landing in North America. Should we think of the 1607 arrival more as the invasion of an existing civilization than as a founding settlement? How accurate is John Smith’s famous account of his rescue by Pocahontas? Did the feebleness of the English effort at Jamestown actually save it from the Spanish? Was Plymouth planned in part on the basis of what had been learned at Jamestown? Did the Poles and other non-English play crucial roles as the colony emerged in the first true era of “globalization?”

These and many other surprising questions—with their most likely answers—provide the substance of five timely and thought-provoking With Good Reason (WGR) radio programs completed and broadcast within Virginia during 2006 and early 2007. Made possible with generous support from the Rosenstiel Foundation, these entertaining programs were developed with a group of outstanding scholar consultants, who were among those interviewed for the series. Now, leading up to this 400th anniversary, With Good Reason is reformatting the original programs for distribution to stations nationwide.

The story begins before the arrival of Europeans. Historians Helen Rountree (Old Dominion University) and Camilla Townsend (Colgate) deconstruct and demystify the legend of Pocahontas and, in doing so, paint an engrossing picture of Indian life in late 16th and early 17th centuries.

The overextended Spanish—according to Douglas Foard (George Mason University), J. H. Elliott (Oxford), James Horn (College of William & Mary), and Barcelona-based historian Henry Kamen—could easily have wiped out Jamestown, but they didn’t bother because they thought that the English simply wouldn’t survive. Yet Jamestown settlers always feared the possibility of some sort of Spanish attack and, in 1609, a Spanish ship came alarmingly close to threatening and possibly destroying the fledgling colony.

History professor Joseph Miller (University of Virginia) is joined by professors Jennifer Morgan (NYU/Rutgers) and Stephanie Smallwood (UC-San Diego) to explore the Middle Passage and slavery at a time before Virginia became a rigid, racially governed society. The colonists, we learn, responded to fears of the consequences of interracial sex in a land where up to 80% of the slave population was female and white males comprised a majority of the settlers. They passed a 1662 law decreeing that a black child’s lineage should be traced through the female line of descent.

New York University’s Karen Kupperman describes early Jamestown as figuring out, through trial and error, how to create a working society and effective government, in part becoming a model for Plymouth. Joining this discussion are Crandall Shifflett (Virginia Tech), who reveals that significant numbers of Puritans were operating freely in the Chesapeake by 1630, and James Whittemburg (College of William & Mary), who describes the wild and dissolute reputation that, for political reasons, was attached to the colony by 19th century writers.

Perhaps the most unusual story is that of Jamestown’s Poles. Patrick Griffin (University of Virginia) says that the colony was in the vanguard of England’s participation in a growing global economy. The new venture, explains James Horn (College of William and Mary), took advantage of England’s increased economic links to other nations. The Virginia Company sought out skilled Polish craftsmen, among other nationalities, to help build the colony.

John Radziłowski (University of St. Thomas) says the Poles not only made essential contributions to daily life in Jamestown, they were also involved in rescuing Captain John Smith from an Indian attack and became the first non-English to vote for members of the representative assembly.

With Good Reason’s “New Perspectives on Jamestown” will be available for broadcast and educational use, starting in late March of this year. The original programs can be accessed online at withgoodreasonradio.org. With Good Reason is produced by the VFH for the Virginia Higher Education Broadcasting Consortium.
An Idea Whose Time Has Come: Virginia Indian Heritage Program

BY KARENNE WOOD (Monacan)
Project Director, Virginia Indian Heritage Trail

In Virginia, where history and tradition are accorded the highest respect, there is one area in which public education is terribly lacking. In many cases, Virginians know almost nothing about Virginia Indians.

Although our ancestors have been here for thousands of years, few people would report having ever met a Virginia Indian person; they know little or nothing about Virginia Indian history, and most assume that Virginia Indians are people of the past. Our Native elders have been concerned about this situation for decades: although they impress upon us the value of education, they also stress that what Virginians learn in history books and textbooks is inaccurate, steeped in misperception and stereotypical thinking. The stories we learn about our ancestors are ones with which we are unable to identify. They are stories in which we cannot see ourselves.

Several years ago, the Virginia Council on Indians, an advisory council to the Governor, approached the VFH with the idea of working together, and with the leaders of the eight state-recognized tribes, to establish a permanent Virginia Indian Heritage Program as a way to correct this historical imbalance. The VFH’s experience with the African American Heritage Program would serve as a model in some ways for the project, we thought.

Although the VFH has a 20-year history of working with tribes on community-driven projects, the Heritage Program would be an unprecedented partnership. It would provide a means of educating tourists and Virginians about Native history and cultures within the Commonwealth prior to and during the past 400 years. It would benefit the tribes by bringing visitors to their areas. It would offer a series of institutes and related programs for Virginia teachers, so that they are better prepared to teach students about Virginia Indians, and it would support new publications to supplement culturally accurate, culturally sensitive teaching materials. It would also provide a source of grant funding to which tribes and other Virginia organizations could apply. Finally, it would establish and maintain a permanent database of Virginia Indian historic sites and other resources for use by teachers and students, visitors to the state, and the general public.

For many Virginia Indian people, the 2007 anniversary is not an occasion to be celebrated. But through heightened public awareness, it does create an opportunity. The Virginia Indian Heritage Program has received the unanimous approval of the eight state-recognized tribes. Given this unprecedented coalition, widespread support for the Program, its many benefits to the Commonwealth, and in particular the need to redress centuries of historical omission, exclusion, and misrepresentation, I believe the Virginia Indian Heritage Program is an idea whose time has come.

Virginia Indian Tribal Leaders’ Meeting

BY KARENNE WOOD

For the past four years, the chiefs and assistant chiefs of Virginia’s state-recognized tribes have met in January and July, at the initiative of the Virginia Council on Indians, to consider future events together. The January meeting generally occurs in Charlottesville, beginning with a Friday night reception hosted by the University of Virginia Provost. This year, leaders from seven tribes met for an all-day working meeting on January 13 at the VFH.

The meeting began with introductory remarks from Rob Vaughan, and a discussion of radio program planning with Andrew Wyndham and Lydia Wilson. A series of seven short features is planned. Tribal leaders then discussed progress on the Virginia Indian Heritage Trail booklet and the larger vision for the Heritage Program to follow.

Two related panel discussions for the Virginia Festival of the Book were planned. (“Howl and Other Approaches to American Indians” and “Subjects of History: Virginia Indians Speak Out.”)

Tribal leaders also talked about a summer seminar for teachers, planned for June in Charlottesville. Finally, they helped to plan a “short course” on Virginia Indian history and cultures, to be offered at the Federation of State Humanities annual conference, “Making Sense of Place” in Williamsburg (November 2-4).
“If you are looking for a book that combines a love story, opulent parties, gangsters, a murder mystery, and the most perfect kiss in literature, then *The Great Gatsby* is for you,” said Susan Coleman, Director of the Virginia Foundation Center for the Book.

Communities across Virginia are encouraged to read—or re-read—and discuss *The Great Gatsby*, which many consider to be the most popular classic in modern American fiction.

The Virginia Foundation Center for the Book is one of 72 organizations nationally to receive a grant to support “The Big Read in Virginia,” featuring F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. The Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and Arts Midwest, with First Lady Laura Bush as its Honorary Chair.

In addition to the Virginia Foundation Center for the Book, two library systems in Virginia received Big Read grants. In the Pamunkey Regional Library area, community members will read *Fahrenheit 451*; the Newport News Public Library area will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

After executing a successful pilot Big Read program with ten communities in 2006, the Arts Endowment announced in May that it would take the Big Read nationwide, with the Virginia Foundation being one of the next organizations chosen to participate. Modeled on successful “city reads” programs, the Big Read is meant to address the national decline in literary reading as documented in the NEA’s 2004 landmark survey *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*. The survey showed that less than half the American adult population now reads literature.

To learn how to obtain a reading guide, a teacher’s guide or a CD with radio programs on the book, go to virginiafoundation.org/bookcenter or contact Susan Coleman at spcoleman@virginia.edu.

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**CHAPTER 1**

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I’ve been turning over in my mind ever since.

“Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone,” he told me, “just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had.”

He didn’t say any more but we’ve always been unusually communicative in a reserved way and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence I’m inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores. The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought—frequently I have fainted sleep, preoccupations or a hostile levity when I realized by some unmistakable sign that an intimate revelation was quivering on the horizon -- for the intimate revelations of young men or at least the terms in which they express them are usually plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions. Reserving judgements is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth. ...
Evette Lamka and Bob Reynolds: A Couple of Classic Volunteers

BY JEANNE SILER

Evette Lamka remembers a childhood filled with Little Golden Books and library visits. In college, she majored in English and led a student book club. As an adult she once attended four different book clubs. Bob Reynolds, Evette’s husband, read avidly in high school, including his aunt’s Book-of-the-Month Club selections. “I also read a lot in the Navy,” he says. Stationed on a destroyer, he recalls “reading a lot of Hemingway.”

Last March these two Fluvanna County bibliophiles, married almost 30 years, celebrated ten years of dedication to the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.

Bob and Evette heard about the Foundation’s Virginia Festival of the Book shortly after moving to Virginia. After attending an evening panel discussion of Southern writers in 1996, Evette recognized the name tag of someone setting up refreshments as the volunteer contact, and expressed interest.

“Can you work right now?” K.K. Pearson had asked. Evette could and did, and recalls with amusement how she and Bob stayed until late that evening, emptying coffee urns. They returned to clean up the next few nights, too. By 1998, Evette, a retired educator, was chairing a brand new committee for recruiting volunteers and organizing their responsibilities.

She and Bob don’t try to calculate the hours contributed since then, but Evette still heads up the committee, and maintains the same lively enthusiasm for the author-rich event that she first experienced a decade earlier.

“We enjoy doing the work,” says Bob, now retired from his work as an engineer with Bell Telephone. “We are strong supporters of the Book Festival and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. We like to support the programs with more than just a check.” His wife adds, “We’ve always known what the Festival gives back to the community.”

Both feel strongly that if you believe in social causes or the humanities, it’s especially important to include them in your philanthropy. “When budgets are tight, they are likely to fall by the wayside so much more quickly.”

The VFH is proud to acknowledge the gifts of time and financial support from Evette and Bob—and the more than 100 other Book Festival volunteers—as it prepares to celebrate the 13th annual Festival of the Book.

2007 VFH Fellows

A new or existing life insurance policy is a low-cost way to provide a significant gift to the VFH. The donor may list the VFH as a beneficiary. You may also receive a tax deduction for your premium payments. (Please note that VFH must be owner and beneficiary of the policy for a gift to be eligible for tax benefits.) For more information on planned giving or membership in The Cornerstone Society, please call the VFH Development Office at 434-924-3296.
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