

# CHESAPEAKE *currents*



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## The Market Locals Call “Super”: Kilmarnock’s Tri-Star Supermarket, Inc.



“The Little Grocery That Could” has been defying nay-sayers since 1975 when it opened in space recently vacated by A&P. When the largest grocery chain in America closed its Kilmarnock store, Stuart Dunaway, Lee Davis and Mitchell Carlson decided the time was right for them to open their own store.

The trio knew how to provide good service and run an efficient operation. What they needed most, Dunaway reminisces, was buying power. “We decided to affiliate with Richfood, a co-op that gave independents like us the chance to stock our shelves with a wide variety of products at prices comparable to those in larger chain stores.” Today Tri-Star is affiliated with Super Valu, the Minnesota conglomerate that bought Richfood in 1999.

The landscape changed in 1987. Safeway closed shortly after a second national chain entered the Kilmarnock market. Instead of exiting the market, the Tri-Star owners opted to move into the former Safeway location. They continue to operate at 81 Irvington Road.

Customer loyalty is the main reason Tri-Star weathered the opening of national chain stores in 1995 and 2007. Business dipped a bit, Dunaway admits, but Tri-Star’s parking lot continues to fill up again with customers who believe there’s something special about the home-town grocery that offers them great service at fair prices, and a selection of merchandise, especially meats, that is second to none in the area. Customers say they shop at Tri-Star because the staff “always makes you feel welcome” and the store “always has a little bit of everything.”

Of course, the store has changed with the times. Dunaway remembers doing inventory with a small cassette attached to his shoulder so he could dictate a list of what was needed, and spending an hour on the phone calling in orders to the Richfood warehouse in Mechanicsville.

Now inventory is handled with scanners that instantly provide the information required for resupply, and orders can be transmitted in a manner of minutes.

In 1897 an enterprising reporter went to Hartford, Connecticut after hearing that the great writer Mark Twain had passed away. Imagine his surprise when Twain, still very alive, met him at the door and quipped, “Reports of my death have been exaggerated.”

The same might be said of Tri-Star Supermarket in Kilmarnock.

“The Little Grocery That Could” has been defying nay-sayers since 1975 when it opened in space recently vacated by A&P. When the largest grocery chain in America closed its Kilmarnock store, Stuart Dunaway, Lee Davis and Mitchell Carlson decided the time was right for them to open their own store. All three were experienced grocers. Dunaway and Carlson, both from Lancaster County, had worked at independent stores. Davis, a North Carolina native, had worked for the A&P chain. He decided to throw in his lot with Dunaway and Carlson when his wife said she liked the idea of living in the area.

“We were certainly not the only store in town,” Dunaway says. “The competition was keen even then.” The area had one national chain, Safeway, and many independent stores.

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Jean Light,  
vice president  
and trust officer  
at Chesapeake  
Investment  
Group



Funds from the Trust also provided much-needed support for construction of affordable housing for teachers and other professionals working in Lancaster County. Pictured in center photo from left: Lancaster County Schools Foundation President William Warren, residents Renate Neal, David Williams, and Benjamin White.

*With Jean Light's help,  
the couple established the  
S. Mason and Lula Cole  
Charitable Trust.*

# A "Gift" That Keeps on Giving: The S. Mason and Lula P. Cole Charitable Trust

In the late 1970's, the lure of the Chesapeake Bay brought Mason and Lula Cole from their home in Colonial Heights, Virginia to the Northern Neck. The avid boaters built a home in Wheatland Acres outside Lewisetta, Virginia. Over the years they developed a special fondness for the region and its people.

Since the Coles had no children, they decided that they wanted to leave their money to the community when they died. In 2007 they met with Jean Light, vice president and trust officer at Chesapeake Investment Group (CIG) to discuss their philanthropic goals in more detail. Light says, "Our role is to help people plan for the use of their funds while they are able to make decisions and then see that their wishes are honored in the future."

The Cole's had revocable living trusts, and with Light's help, the couple established the S. Mason and Lula Cole Charitable Trust to break out from the existing trusts when the last one died. Light says creating a charitable trust allows people to have their wishes granted and avoid paying unnecessary taxes. Funds are invested by the trustee, and the earnings help to benefit certain groups or the general public.

Mason Cole died in December 2007, Lula the following year. The Cole Charitable Trust began making awards in 2009. A portion of the funds are

awarded to three groups designated by the Coles: the Atkinson Museum at Hampden-Sydney College, The Westmoreland Players and the Mobjack Bay Power Squadron. The remainder is available to other community organizations.

In accordance with the Coles' wishes, Light says, "We try to give where there will be the greatest impact in the community. Sometimes that means supporting a one-time project, and at other times it means assisting organizations that depend solely on outside funding for their operations."

It would be hard to argue with the selection of community organizations that have received grants. Last year's recipients included the Central Virginia Food Bank, Hospice of the Northern Neck, Interfaith Council of Churches, Kilmarnock Volunteer Fire Department, Kilmarnock-Lancaster Volunteer Rescue Squad, Northern Neck (NN) Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, Northern Neck Free Health Clinic, Partners for Lancaster County Schools Foundation, Rappahannock Art League, Rappahannock General Hospital (RGH) Foundation, Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury (RWC) Foundation, and the Animal Welfare League, as the Coles were particularly concerned about the welfare of animals in the area.

These awards have made a difference, says Jimmie Carter of the RGH Foundation, which has received two grants. "At RGH, 60% of our revenue comes from Medicare and Medicaid. It's hard to maintain the level of service people in our community need without support from outside. Grants from the Cole Charitable Trust have allowed the Foundation to address immediate needs and support key programs at the hospital."

RGH used their first grant to help obtain a digital mammography machine. Last year's award was used to assist in creating a Pain Management Center. Since counties on the Northern Neck have the highest median age population in the State, creating the Center was an important step in serving community needs. "The elderly population in our region is already benefiting from services provided there," Carter says.

Partners for Lancaster County Schools Foundation president William Warren says funds from the Trust also provided much-needed support for construction of affordable housing for teachers and other professionals working in Lancaster County. The Foundation wanted to keep down the amount of money borrowed to finance their \$2+ million complex on Church Street because loans would have to be paid back from rents paid by occupants. "We did not want anyone to have to pay more than 25% of after-tax wages," he says.

Hence, the more money received from private contributions, the lower the rents could be for young professionals. The Foundation launched a campaign to raise \$800,000,

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# Kilmarnock's Tri-Star Supermarket, Inc.

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One of the most important changes occurred in 2005 when the owners decided to promote long-time employee Francine Jones to Store manager, Michael Painter to Meat Department manager and Anna Akers to Front End manager. Jones and all the Tri-Star employees keep the store running smoothly. Jones handles ordering and pricing, a challenging job in times when so many stores large and small offer similar merchandise.

Dunaway and Davis continue to be active in store operations. Sadly, Mitchell Carlson died in June 2011. "We certainly miss Mitchell," Dunaway says, "and Lee and I are starting to think about what we need to do to keep Tri-Star operating in this community in the future." Davis feels confident, however, that customers will continue to support Tri-Star as long as they receive the kind of service that has been the store's hallmark for the past three decades and can find goods at prices comparable to those of other stores in the area.

"Everybody knows we compete



Partners Lee Davis and Stuart Dunaway are active in daily Tri-Star operations.

with national chains," Dunaway says, "but there are other competitors as well. Places like convenience stores, dollar stores, and pharmacies sell food and other products you used to see only in grocery stores."

But these stores don't carry some of the items that local residents look for – and find – at Tri-Star. So it's likely the tradition started by Dunaway, Carlson and Davis nearly four decades ago will continue for some time to come.

## Francine Jones Keeps Tri-Star Running Like a Well-Oiled Machine



Tri-Star's owners describe Francine Jones as the engine that keeps Tri-Star running. Jones went to work in the Dairy section of Tri-Star in 1983. A decade later she was asked to learn the new automatic scanning system being introduced to control inventory and checkout. In 2005, when the owners decided it was time to get someone else involved in running daily operations at the store, they promoted Jones to Store Manager.

"All of us try to keep our customers happy," Jones says. "Sometimes that means getting them what they need, or ordering what they want. I enjoy helping customers plan for events like weddings and parties, getting orders ready for pickup in time for those special occasions."

## New Website Designed to Keep Investors Up-to-Date

Chesapeake Financial Shares, holding company for Chesapeake Bank and Chesapeake Investment Group, has launched a new website designed to give current and potential investors information about the company's financial performance and its other activities.

"We believe our investors will find the new site a great help in tracking our performance," says CFS Chairman Jeff Szyperki. The site provides a corporate overview, stock information, independent analyst reports, financial reports and news about CFS and its subsidiaries. Tools are available to help investors compare the performance of CFS with that of other banks. Visitors to the site can also watch video presentations on the company's quarter-by-quarter performance.



The new website can be accessed at [www.chesapeakefinancialshares.com](http://www.chesapeakefinancialshares.com).

# A "Gift" That Keeps on Giving

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and the Cole Charitable Trust made three separate grants toward this ambitious goal.

Today ten percent of the County's teachers, eight from Lancaster County schools and three from Chesapeake Academy, reside in the recently opened facility. "That gives you some idea of the impact that contributions such as ones from the Cole Charitable Trust can have," Warren notes.

RWC Foundation's Whiz Harris says the recent grant from the Cole Charitable Trust has been added to the Foundation's Fellowship Fund, which provides financial assistance to current and new residents who cannot afford the entrance fee or monthly fees, and qualified individuals from the community to

attend RWC's Adult Day Program.

Because CIG is a corporate entity, there is always someone appointed to make sure that the Cole Charitable Trust is managed and administered properly. CIG also manages a number of other charitable trusts. Some have strict criteria for awards and specified recipients, while others are broader in their reach. "What most of them share," Light says, "is a commitment to do good for the community."

Many people are not aware that they can leave a legacy for the community. However, those who do can be assured that gifts awarded through a trust will be greatly appreciated, says Jimmie Carter of the RGH Foundation. "Everyone living in our area should



The Cole Charitable Trust provided assistance to RGH to create the Pain Management Center. Pictured from left: B.H. Hubbard and Jimmie Carter.

be exceptionally grateful for the Coles' generosity and for the example they provide to others who may have the means of helping the community long after they are gone."

## The Westmoreland Players Benefit from Long-Time Support from Mason and Lula Cole

Shortly after settling in their new home outside Lewisetta, Mason and Lula Cole attended a performance by the new community theater company, The Westmoreland Players, which was founded in 1979. It didn't take long for the Coles to become patrons, providing an annual contribution that helped the fledgling organization continue its operations and build a reputation as a promising community theater group.

In 1993, the Coles made their first major gift to the Players. "We were doing *The Music Man*," longtime WP member Nancy Royall recalls. "We needed an electric piano. The Coles graciously agreed to buy one for us. Their gift meant so much to us then."

Additionally, Royall says, "The Coles were instrumental in helping us move from being a traveling company to having our own permanent space." For nearly twenty years

The Westmoreland Players were an itinerant troupe, setting up wherever they could secure appropriate space. Then in 2000, with the Coles' help, they were able to acquire their own building. Mason and Lula were part owners of a building outside Callao that had originally been designed as a banquet hall and theater. The Coles bought out their partner and arranged for the Players to purchase the space. Since then an ambitious group of volunteers has been converting the space into one of the finest community theaters in the mid-Atlantic region.

Because of their foresight in planning for the management of their assets after they died, Mason and Lula Cole continue to support The Westmoreland Players. For two years grants awarded by the Cole Charitable Trust have allowed the organization to continue its renovation project.

"We're depending on volunteer labor to get



Mason and Lula were part owners of a building outside Callao that had originally been designed as a banquet hall and theater. The Coles bought out their partner and arranged for the Players to purchase the space.

the job done," says current WP president Brian Tilbury. "But even so, we anticipate spending \$300,000 to purchase the materials we need to complete our renovation. That's quite a sum for a small community theater group to raise—and it's why the recent gifts from the Cole Charitable Trust have meant so much to us."

*Chesapeake Currents, a biannual publication from Chesapeake Bank and Chesapeake Investment Group, is a special advertising section. To submit feedback or a story idea, email editor@chesbank.com or write to: Chesapeake Financial Shares Inc., Attn: Chesapeake Currents Editor, P.O. Box 1419, Kilmarnock, VA 22482.*

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