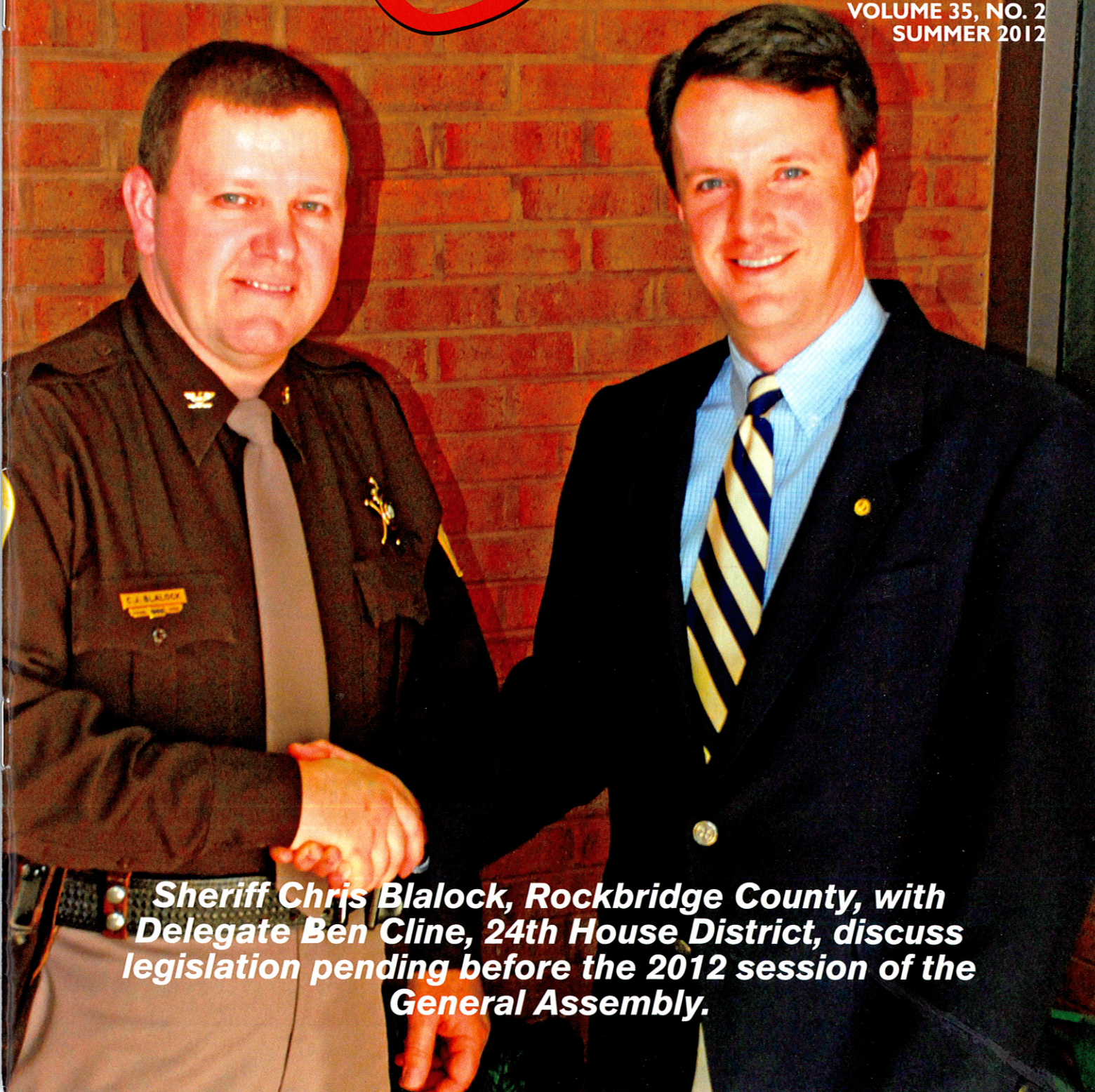


VIRGINIA Sheriff



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Sheriff Chris Blalock, Rockbridge County, with Delegate Ben Cline, 24th House District, discuss legislation pending before the 2012 session of the General Assembly.

Project Lifesaver: a family's perspective

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Jesse Bowcock quietly nodded that he remembers his years as a child. He grew up in Corbin, Kentucky, just down the road from Colonel Sanders. Yes, that colonel, the founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken, now re-branded as KFC. Sanders would run the kids off from his kitchen when they came following the deliciously familiar aroma. These things Bowcock remembers. That's the thing about Alzheimer's—you have long-term memory, but you are robbed of a short-term memory. Perhaps that's

why Bowcock wanders. His wife of 62 years thinks he might be trying to get home to the mountains of Kentucky. Laura Bowcock said, "He was born and raised out in the country."

No one is really certain why he wanders. They can only guess. The one thing that is clear about "Bow," as he is called by his wife, is he cannot take walks alone. He gets lost and confused in his current surroundings.

The couple lived in Gloucester nearly two decades before moving to Newport News three years ago. They relocated to be closer to doctors and medical facilities, but they moved further away from their daughter, who still lives an hour's drive away in Gloucester. The daughter, also named Laura, but Laura Nelson, explained why she was afraid for her father's safety. "I know a friend of mine whose father-in-law is suffering from the same thing. They lived in Matthews but found him in Norfolk. He wandered off in the middle of the night. To this day, they don't know how he got to Norfolk, but he did." It meant he crossed two bodies of water—the York River and the southern end of the James River before it empties into the Chesapeake Bay. She said if that man could do that, so could her dad. "I figured Project Lifesaver was perfect for Dad," she continued.

Project Lifesaver is an international search and rescue program offered in most jurisdictions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Newport News Sheriff's Office facilitates the program for its locality, and it does so free of charge to its clients. Sheriff Gabe Morgan believes a family has enough to worry about without concerning themselves with program expenditures. "Our Sheriff's Office meets all costs for Project Lifesaver through generous corporate and individual donations," said Lieutenant Kandyce Gross, Civil Enforcement commander. Enrollment is not contingent on a client's willingness or ability to contribute. However, some caregivers have been known to make donations, not unlike the Bowcock family.

Daughter Laura Nelson made a donation the very



Jesse and Laura Bowcock were both 20 years old when they married. That was 62 years ago.

day her dad was hooked up to the program. "If you can afford to make a contribution, why would you not?" she exclaimed. "You want to keep the service going."

Within weeks of becoming a Project Lifesaver client, Bow left the house without his wife's knowledge. "I just got out of the shower and was coming out of the bathroom, and he was gone," Laura said. Other than the dementia, Bow is in perfect health. He is nimble and can outpace his wife. She called Lieutenant Gross immediately, and a highly trained team of Deputies deployed to begin the search. Antennas were quickly assembled and receivers set to the frequency number specific to Mr. Bowcock. The search and rescue team fanned out in different directions listening for a chirping noise on their receivers. They headed in the direction of the loudest ping. In less than 30 minutes, Bow was found at a strip mall about a half mile from home.

Mother and daughter agreed that Bow is calmer after a visit from Lieutenant Gross, whether due to the search or for a simple battery change. Without speaking, Bow motioned his approval of the lieutenant. He raised a fist. Not to hit her. "We fist bump," said Lieutenant Gross with a grin. "That's our thing." Bow responded with a smile and a nod.

Daughter Laura repeated her appreciation, "It's a great program. Of course, not everyone (client) can afford to make a donation. That's why I say it was the least I could do. It's worth it to me knowing dad is going to be safe, and I don't have to have an anxiety attack." Her mother agreed, "Well, it takes a little worry off of me. I can just make a call, and they (Deputies) are right here."

Hearing the heartfelt testimonials from the Bowcock family, Lieutenant Gross felt validation for what she already knew to be true—Project Lifesaver offers peace of mind to the caregiver.

Jesse Bowcock and daughter, Laura Nelson, look at a print of images from Corbin, Kentucky, the town where Jesse was born and raised.



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and the
Newport News Sheriff's
Office**

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Lifesaver"

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