

**Niche
Itch**

Valley Business

FRONT

**FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED**

\$3 • Vol I: ISSUE 5 • FEBRUARY 09



**Richard Wells:
The Godfather
of niche
publications**

**The Employee
Free Choice Act**

Meet Ms. Aluminum

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hypnosis



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WELCOME to the FRONT

Sticking to the basics >

It's the talk of the water cooler, the loading dock, the mail room and the board room these days, but talk and worry and making dramatic change without good reason won't solve the problems in the economy. We're seeing a wide variety of responses to the challenges facing business these days, but the reactions that impress us most are the steady, careful, measured reactions based on solid understanding of the business model and how it relates to the economy, especially the local economy.

The three investment advisors the FRONT uses on a regular basis to share their insights with you (Andy Hudick, Pete Krull and Joel Williams) are consistently telling you to be patient, believe in the basics, don't do anything stupid, irrational or out of your comfort zone.

That's good, basic advice for business in general these days. There simply is no need to change a model unless the model isn't working because of a deficiency within it. Be certain if you're making a dramatic change that it would be made in a good economy for a good reason. People have a lot of questions when anything familiar becomes something different and they have suspicions about those changes.

The strong, the steady, those who believe in themselves will emerge from today's troubles stronger and steadier if they stick to their basic values, the ones that made their businesses successful in the first place.



Tom Field



Dan Smith

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Valley Business FRONT

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Niche Itch

evidently, media matters

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Forget the tin man. Here's the aluminum woman.



The Employee Free Choice Act: Page 30 So Many Questions

Cover photograph of Richard Wells by Greg Vaughn Photography

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Anne Giles Clelland



Bobbi A. Hoffman



Tim W. Jackson



Leigh Ann Roman



Dan Smith

Editorial Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of 16 diverse business professionals, who will meet as a group periodically during the 18 months of the first board's service. It will turn over every year and a half.

The board will be given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. "We're journalists," says Editor Dan Smith, "and not business experts. This group of distinguished business professionals—whose range in age, experience, level and specialty is impressive—will give us a solid handle on how business runs and what the primary issues and key players are in this region. My guess is that our coverage of business will be especially useful because of this group of people."

RY CONTRIBUTORS



Jane Dalier



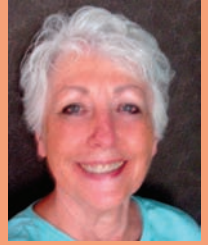
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Jill Elswick



Tom Field



Rachael Garrity



Gene Marrano



John A. Montgomery



Linda Nardin



Deborah Nason



David Perry



Kathy Surace



Greg Vaughn



Alison Weaver

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 50.

2008 / 09 Members

- Nancy Agee** Carilion
- Laura Bradford** Claire V
- Warner Dalhouse** retired banker, community activist
- Cory Donovan** NewVa Corridor Technology Council
- Nanci Hardwick** Schultz-Creehan
- Ed Hall** Hall Associates
- George Kegley** retired journalist, community activist
- Terri Jones** Access PR
- Cynthia Lawrence** Design Marketing
- Stuart Mease** Roanoke City
- Mary Miller** Interactive Design & Development
- Bill Rakes** Gentry, Locke, Rakes and Moore
- Court Rosen** Walnut Creek Development, Roanoke City Council
- Jay Turner** J.M. Turner Construction
- Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners
- John Williamson** RGC Resources

You will note that the Board is comprised of experts in many different business / industry "fronts." This is intentional, as we are reporting on all the areas that affect our regional economy and are important to you. In keeping with our policy of being "the voice of business in the valleys" we ask each reader to join us as an editorial partner by calling or e-mailing us your ideas. You know more than we know about your business—or you certainly should—and that inside knowledge shared with our readers will make us all better at what we do.

“I’ll do anything but work bingo. Most of those little old ladies cheat...” — Page 27



courtesy Leisure Publishing

Niche Itch

Look what you started! Richard Wells wasn't the first niche publisher in the region, but few would argue his status and rise to success in introducing the first, quality special interest magazines with true staying power. The feat drew national attention as Roanoke was considered 'too small a market' in comparison to others at the time.

And yes, that's Wells as the "Godfather" of niche—our February FRONT cover model.

If the economy is taking a toll on Roanoke's smaller newspapers and magazines, the publishers aren't letting on about it.

At least 26 weeklies and monthlies have carved out—or hope to carve out—their niche in the Roanoke and New River Valley markets. That figure doesn't include shopper, real estate or trade publications.

"It's very unusual to have so many publications in a city this size. It remains to be seen how many will make it," says Karl Phillips, publisher of City magazine and a self-taught veteran of the publishing industry.

By Alison Weaver

The Roanoke Times, the region's largest publication (about 100,000 weekly circulation, though there have been reports it has dipped below that number for the first time in years) and a daily newspaper, has occasionally and forcefully reacted to the changing landscape.

Executive Summary:
If you think there are a lot of print publications blossoming in this region—at a time of dire warnings of the death of print—you're right. And there's a good reason for it.

About 11 years ago, it bought the Blue Ridge Business Journal. A couple of years ago, it purchased Laker Magazine, a glossy publication at Smith Mountain Lake. It has reacted to weekly publications by creating special editions for Botetourt County, South Roanoke County and Salem, three hot-spots for weeklies. It has a daily publication in the New River Valley (Current, created after an aborted attempt at a weekly some years ago). It created its weekend entertainment section, Inside Out, at least partly in response to the



a look at the special interest publications market

success of City Magazine and it has sent reporters to intensive training for the young mother demographic it has identified as a target audience, one that Bella favors.

Phillips began preparing for possible leaner times at City months ago. "I changed presses and slightly reduced the overall size" of the monthly entertainment publication. The changes save him 25 percent to 30 percent in printing costs, money that he reinvests in the magazine in terms of glossy covers and other upgrades. "I cut my costs in printing without cutting the quality."

Phillips says that so far he hasn't seen a decrease in advertising revenue. "Some advertisers have been with us for over 10 years. They're loyal because they believe in the publication and because it meets their advertising needs."

John Montgomery, who had been an advertising executive for The Roanoke Times and general manager of the Blue Ridge Business Journal, followed a longtime dream when he founded Play By Play, the region's sports monthly. Montgomery had run the Sports Journal when it was a companion of the Business Journal, but when The Times folded it, he left the Journal to start his monthly with the small, but loyal following.

Says Montgomery, "The value of doing something that you enjoy doing for a living cannot be overestimated. I love putting each issue of Play by Play together: assembling the components from the writers, the photographers, and the advertisers;

Niche Pubs >

(Here is a list of most popular niche publications in Roanoke area and New River Valley, including the owner, niche served, date founded, and website. Don't stop at this page—it keeps going!)

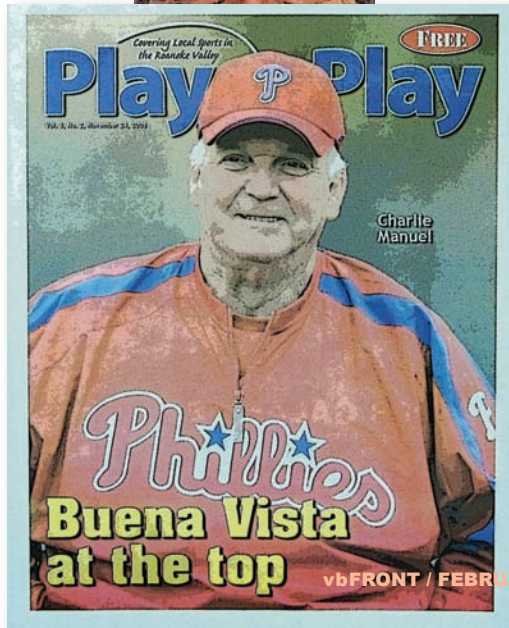
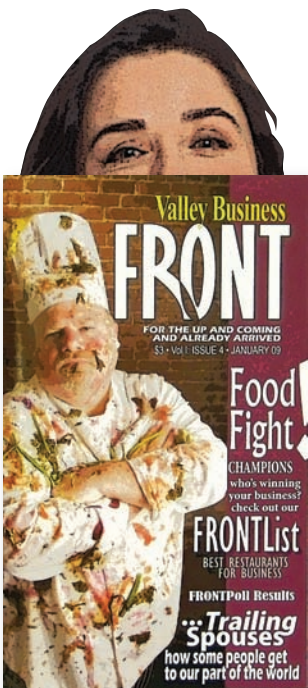
16 Blocks
Hart Fowler
entertainment
2007
16blocksmagazine.com

Bella
Joey Beck
women
2006
beckmediagroup.com

City
Karl Phillips
entertainment
1996
citymagazineonline.com

Leisure Publishing*
Richard Wells
lifestyles
1972
leisurepublishing.com

* Roanoker Magazine, Blue Ridge Country Magazine, Mountain Homes.





Bella's Joey Beck

Dan Smith



meeting with the designer to develop the layout; choosing the cover art; arranging the printing; handling the distribution. Then I get to begin all over again.

"Sixty-two issues down and I still find the process exciting. I have a feeling that I always will."

With 36 years in the publishing business, Richard Wells, founder of Leisure Publishing, has weathered other economic downturns. The company, which publishes glossy magazines such as The Roanoker and Blue Ridge Country, has become one of the largest niche publishers in the Southeast.

"Despite the widespread alarm bells tolling the death of today's newspaper industry and print media in general, the city/regional magazine segment has remained strong," Wells says. "Independent, community publications are an important and otherwise nonexistent outlet for local and regional content; they create and sustain the community."

Wells emphasizes that Leisure's publications have something in common with many of the new, local publications: Their revenue stays in the area. "These alternative media are all homegrown," he says. "Take a look at the larger, established media outlets and see where the revenues from Roanoke businesses end up. Look at The Roanoke Times, all three network television stations, our cable media providers, even our major radio stations and you'll see dollars flowing out of our market. While many of these established media are excellent corporate citizens, at the close of business each day, their



Knock on wood, we're doing better than this time last year.

—Joey Beck

Niche Itch



EPA warns county homeowners about

State 8 counties have a potential average radon indoor concentration greater than a 4 pCi/L, open homes post that level every 1000 homes





16 Block
Publisher
Hart Fowler
(left) with
website
creator
Dave Williams



Sixty-two issues
down and I still find
the process exciting.

—John Montgomery



Dan Smith

Play by Play's
John Montgomery

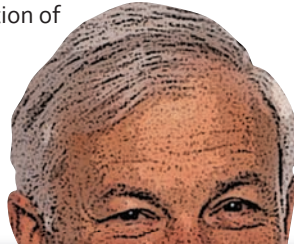
revenues flow from the area into corporate coffers elsewhere."

Revenues are based on circulation figures and those are notoriously suspect, since few of these niche publications' claims of circulation are audited. Professed circulation numbers can often be taken with a grain of salt, particularly for publications that are set out on racks and don't have a specific subscriber list. There simply is no accurate way to count readers. Mailed publications' circulations are readily verifiable.

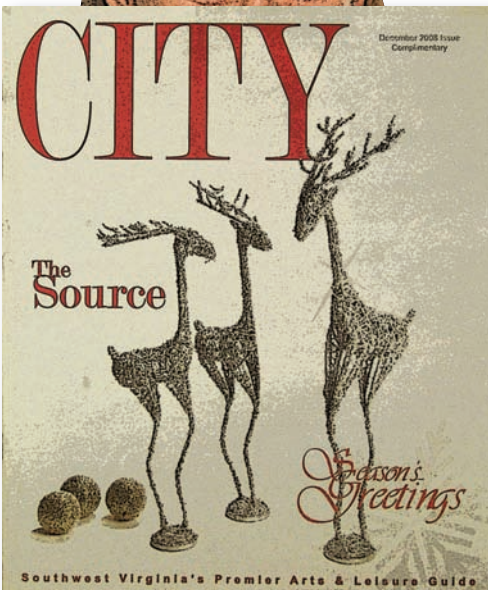
Washington & Lee Journalism Professor Doug Cumming, who has graded many of the region's publications as an accompanying part of this story, says the niche publications here generally are not strong on news content and rarely seem to tackle controversy. Of City, he writes, "Vague puff-pieces snuggle next to ads about the same event" and of Bella (which he gave a B+), "It makes little effort to go beyond its formula of writing-workshop women breezily talking to the 'bella girl' reader about their lives, feelings, relationships—almost anything except Southwest Virginia."

Of Main Street Newspapers, which publishes several weekly papers in the region, Cumming says, "Ads litter the front pages. Their idea of community news is a church bulletin, and even these might require a correction. This third-rate

journalism is particularly
dismaying in a time when
hyper-local is supposed
to be the salvation of



** Cave Spring Connection, Christiansburg News-Messenger, Fincastle Herald, New Castle Record, Radford News-Journal, Salem Times Register, Valley Sports, Vinton Messenger.





Take a look at the larger, established media outlets and see where the revenues from Roanoke end up. Look at The Roanoke Times, all three network television stations, our cable media providers, even our major radio stations and you'll see dollars flowing out of our market.

—Richard Wells

Like Wells publisher Stuart says that niche can survive

the news business. I read in... Quill magazine that feisty, independent startups are finding success in the boondocks. Watch out, Main Street Newspapers."

Like Wells and Phillips, publisher Stuart Revercomb says that niche publications such as his weekly Roanoke Star-Sentinel, which has a decidedly conservative bent, can survive if they truly fill a void. "We opened in the teeth of tough economic times" in November 2007, mailing to specific households, Revercomb says. "In spite of the tough market conditions, it's gone really well."

According to Revercomb, the number of subscribers has "gown nicely" and the paper is now available at 120 locations, but he is no longer blanket mailing the publication. "We felt the market was ready for a really positive, community-focused newspaper. We knew we wouldn't be covering all the car wrecks and the cocaine deals gone bad."

Joey Beck, publisher of Bella magazine, is keeping a wary eye on the economy but says, "Knock on wood, we're doing better than this time last year. Each month gets better."

Beck launched Bella, an oversized monthly magazine for women, in 2006. "It was the perfect timing for me to start Bella. [Roanoke] didn't have anything like it for women." Beck, who is several months pregnant, says, "It's my third boy. And I own a women's magazine."

Niche Itch



and Phillips, Revercomb publications if they truly fill a void.



I cut my costs
in printing without
cutting the quality.

—Karl Phillips



courtesy of Karl Phillips


**CITY'S
Karl Phillips**

Beck notes that local, niche publications generally offer lower ad rates that are appealing when budgets tighten. Bella markets itself by sponsoring events targeted at women.

The newest arrival on the local media scene, Roanoke Valley TV Spectator (about a month newer than Valley Business FRONT, which first published in October), owes its existence to one man's frustration. Chuck Denison, a wallpaper hanger and remodeler by trade, was trying to find out when a History Channel show was going to air so he could record it.

"I used to buy Saturday's paper to get the Spectator," a long-running TV listing supplement in The Roanoke Times, Denison says. "When they stopped printing it, I thought, 'How are people supposed to know what's on TV anymore?'"

Flying in the face of conventional technology, which gives TV listings readily on cable TV stations and the Internet, Denison launched Roanoke Valley TV Spectator with a 30,000 print run.

Denison is confident enough about the new tabloid that he's quitting his day job as a remodeler. In early December he started a major bathroom remodeling project. "That'll probably be the last job for me." 

(Editor Dan Smith contributed to this story.)

Niche Pubs >

Roanoke Times***

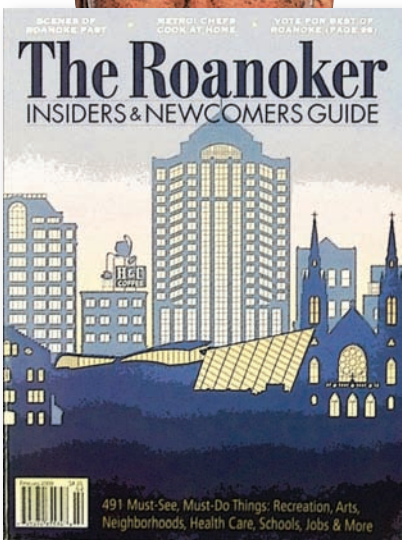
Landmark
various
1886
roanoke.com

Roanoke Tribune
Claudia Whitworth
black
1939
theroanoketribune.com

RV TV Spectator
Chuck Denison
television
2008

Roanoke Valley Home
Julie Pierce and
Colleen Dougherty
lifestyle
2007
westwillowpublishing.com

*** Blue Ridge Business Journal, Botetourt County, Laker Magazine, Laker Weekly, Southwest County, So Salem, Roanoke Times





Doug Cumming

Dan Smith

By Doug Cumming

Executive Summary: Valley Business FRONT commissions a professor of journalism to "grade" niche publications in our region.

} one critic reviews them

Grading the region's publications >

Blue Ridge Country

Grade: A

Thick and slick, this 20-year-old magazine is conservative in the best sense. The layout, photographs, editing, sense-of-itself: everything seems restrained, tradition-loving and, well, almost dull until you spend some easy time with it. The editors, writers, and photographers obviously love this ancient geological saddle ridge of the American South, and love this magazine like blood kin.

CITY

Grade: C+

This full-color, un-slick arts and leisure monthly lacks anything like actual coverage of arts and leisure. Vague puff-pieces snuggle next to ads about the same event. Local personalities smile in text and pictures, but we get no good storytelling or background. It's not clear what any of the articles is about. A focused headline or a pull-quote might help. An extra copy-editor would help, too. If you like the ads and the listings, it's worth the price: Complimentary.

Washington & Lee University journalism professor Doug Cumming, a former journalist and magazine publisher, was asked to grade the most prominent of the region's periodicals. He did not judge them against each other, but on their own niches. He was not asked to judge the region's largest publication, *The Roanoke Times*, concentrating instead on the alternatives. His report is presented here, in no particular order.

Bella

Grade: B+

"B" is for beautiful, or the Italian bella, and the plus is for having so many fine writers fill this highly formatted, colorful tabloid. But it falls off my "A" list because it makes little effort to go beyond its formula of writing-workshop women breezily talking to the "bella girl" readers about their lives, feelings, relationships—almost anything except the region.

16 Blocks

Grade: A –

As a monthly alternative paper on the thin side, 16 Blocks rocks. It mixes short articles on local oddities with columns such as an "Ethos" feature and an ironic political "rant." And it keeps its editorial content separate from its ads, each on their own pages.

(Note: Cumming did not grade Senior News or Prime Living because "They just didn't seem worth mentioning." The Roanoke Times' specialty tabs "or supplements or whatever they are—I didn't see the point in judging them as magazines or periodicals.")

New River Valley Magazine

Grade: A-

An upscale bimonthly lifestyle magazine for the region can't be criticized for being pretty, practical, local, easy on the eyes, and clean in the hands. The problem is that a good magazine needs a personality, and this means something distinctive in the front and back of the book. No distinctive columns or calendars give this publication character. The design is minimalist. Decent articles and ads, for the most part, are all you get.

Blue Ridge Business Journal

Grade: B

Business Digest, People and On the Record courthouse squibs give it the look of the business fortnightly of the region. But this is awfully pale tea. It you want to see what a good metro business journal should look like, see the thick weeklies that bigger cities enjoy, and in competition, not bed, with their local daily paper.

Niche Pubs >

Senior News

Jeffrey K. Williams
Ellen Deaton
elderly
1994
roanokevague.com

Smith Mt. Eagle

Womack Publishing
weekly paper
1985
smithmountaineagle.com

Star Sentinel

Stuart Revercomb
weekly paper
2007
theroanokestar.com

Valley Business FRONT

Tom Field & Dan Smith
business
2008
vbFRONT.com

*If you want more in-depth coverage about the publications in our region, check out the **moreFRONT** blog at vbfront.com where you'll get:*

- *An Interview with Roanoke Times Publisher Debbie Meade, the first she has given*
- *A timeline for The Times over the past two years of staff cuts, going on the block, changes*
- *Grading the Web sites of various publications, by Keith Ferrell, former editor of Omni Magazine*
- *A listing of the region's 26 publications*

Valley Business FRONT

Grade: A-

It is, you'll notice, curiously small. Seems to have a lot of contacts with local entrepreneurs and writers, a lot of energy, and a pro-business zeal that animates it. The witty, color-coded organization makes for a good read or good riffing (if you just want to read the "Executive Summary" atop each story). The gung-ho slant for business and an editorial advisory board comprised of business people worry me a bit. But if the editor's modest demurrer—"We're journalists"—is taken to authorize an independent watchdog role, then the advice and consent from business can only help.

The Roanoker

Grade: B+

The Roanoker is a good city magazine journalistically, but fails to show any signs of having been inspired by the 1960s city magazine revolution: impious, snobby, graphically wild, creatively written, and lifestyle-useful—much less updating or localizing it. It does borrow Esquire's "Dubious Achievement" award, but the magazine feels like something out of the 1950s.

The Roanoke Star-Sentinel

Grade: D

Trying to counter a relatively liberal opinion page of Roanoke's pretty darn good newspaper with this weekly ragamuffin of wasted pulpwood makes no sense. It actually puts conservatism in a bad light, but not because of any extremism in this flimsy sheet. This is simply bad community journalism—random news judgment, dull guest columns, blurry and poorly framed photos and graphics.

Play by Play

Grade: A-

A regional monthly on sports—now there's a niche I wouldn't have thought of. Play by Play can't compete with daily scores, or match national sports mags in appearance—it is pretty shabby except on a few four-color pages. But the long articles connect, telling interesting sports stories loaded with history and people.

The Roanoke Tribune

Grade: B

It may not look like much, but the Tribune deserves respect as an authentic survivor of an embattled form of community journalism, the African-American press. Its journalism comes out of a history of segregation. Good black weeklies like this (founded 1939) were advocates of equality and recognition, not "objectivity," while giving Black social life and religious faith the respect they never got in the mainstream (white) press. The Tribune still serves its community.

Salem Times-Register, Cave Spring Connection, Vinton Messenger, New Castle Record, Radford News Journal, News Messenger (Christianburg) and Fincastle Herald & Botetourt County News

Grade: D +

One or two of these weeklies seem a bit better than a D+ (Salem and Fincastle), but they all seem under the same dreary spell of owner Main Street Newspapers, determined to see how little money it takes to put out a community paper and bring in piddling ad revenue. This third-rate journalism is particularly dismaying in a time when hyper-local is supposed to be the salvation of the news business.


Smith Mountain Laker

Grade: B

A ritzy community, conversely, can underwrite a nice-looking magazine like Smith Mountain Laker thanks to real estate ads. Real estate-sponsored journalism has never been about real community, nor was it ever in danger of foreseeing the collapse of the real estate market.

Roanoke Valley Home

Grade: A

This glossy upscale shelter magazine debuts at a thin 52 pages, with a cover story on the art of table napkin presentation for the civilized Southern home. Like a tasteful table setting, it comes close to a flawless little home and garden quarterly. 



COVER STORY

one newcomer examined

16 Blocks: An evolution >

Executive Summary:

Blacksburg's hip new entertainment magazine sets a high standard.

By Dan Smith

16 Blocks is a year-old arts and culture magazine published in Blacksburg by a young, eager group of newsies. We posed a few questions to founder and publisher Hart Fowler and here are his replies:

What's the magazine's background (when, how, who)?

I'd worked as a freelancer in the area since graduating from Virginia Tech and really thought there was a niche in the New River Valley. I was writing a lot, and was becoming tired of writing articles nobody read. I decided I was going to try publishing my own magazine, and called Christina O'Connor, a freelance photographer I worked with for the Roanoke Times.

It turned out her fiancé, Dave Franisuch, was a graphic designer. They loved the idea and I had a dedicated and talented core from the beginning. Advertisers signed on without us even having a magazine because of the great team I put together and the interest in the idea itself.

What's the intent and the projected audience (both in size and demographic)?

We're here to celebrate local arts and culture, and to emphasize the wealth of talented young people here. There's over 40,000 people from 18 to 44 who live in the New River Valley, and that's our

demographic. We believe we cater to the readership between the [Tech's] Collegiate Times and [Radford University's] Tartan, which are read and written by college underclassmen, and the Roanoke Times, which is read by Baby Boomers.

Talk about the founders and those who are running the mag.

I founded the magazine and am a Tech alum. Dave Franusich is a fifth year architecture student at Tech and Christina O'Connor is an alum. Amy Splitt works for the art department and came aboard as editor after writing some great pieces for us. Dave Williams is also a Tech alum and he's been running 16blocksmagazine.com since we went live last January. Recent recruit Will Boyar has nearly completed his computer engineering degree [at Tech] and his handling of the marketing and advertising for the magazine, freeing me up to work on events, as well as on new and innovative content ideas.

Give an overview of the magazine (and its Web presence) and talk about where you hope to be in five years.

In one year, we have evolved more than we could ever have imagined. I am, and always have been, a writer, but now I found myself involved in so many more things through 16 Blocks Presents. [We recently sponsored] a fashion show showcasing student designers and rock-show that featured four local bands and we're working on a downtown space where we can have art events. We have 100 people who have contributed to the magazine.

Maybe in five years I'll have found a nice town on the beach that needs what this area needed with 16 Blocks and pass on the magazine to someone else. I don't know. But right now it seems to be all about the moment and the next issue and the next event. 📺



Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

Executive Summary:
As in all practices, use common sense when communicating electronically.

Proper etiquette for the electronic highway >

Business owners, companies, and consumers understand the value of marketing as an important component to increase sales for a company, product, or service. Within recent years, the easy access to broadcast e-mail, and other new technologies in global telecommunications has become an easy advertising medium.

Low-cost use becomes abusive. Today, consumers in-boxes are filled with unsolicited SPAM and junk email.

Most companies want to properly use the Internet, telephone and fax as legitimate methods for their sales and marketing strategy. The three leading advertising trade groups—the Direct Marketing Association, The American Association of Advertising Agencies, and The National Advertisers—have agreed to the following guidelines for use of e-mail.

E-Mail Advertising Guidelines

- The subject line of an e-mail must be honest and not misleading.
- Senders should include a valid return e-mail address and physical address. Firms should also use their company or brand names in their domain address and throughout the message.
- The e-mail should identify the sender and the subject at the beginning.
- All commercial e-mail should provide customers with a clear electronic option to opt out that is user friendly.
- A company with multiple affiliates should offer notice and opt-out for each separate brand, or those that the consumer is likely to perceive.
- Firms should not acquire e-mail addresses surreptitiously. Marketers are prohibited from using the dictionary attacks or other mechanisms for fabrication e-mail addresses without providing notice and choice.
- Opt-out requests must be honored in a reliable and prompt way.
- E-mail lists should not be shared with third parties unless consumers have been given notice and choice.

- A commercial e-mail should contain the sender's privacy policy in the body of the message or via a link.

These e-mail guidelines are part of federal law, effective in 2004. With this information, you should take the time to adjust your marketing messages and clean-up your database by doing the following:

For businesses

- Review the items in the law to verify you are in full compliance with the information you send consumers. Make necessary adjustments to properly identify your business and to allow the receiver the choice to be removed from your contact list.
- Consider telling customers you are updating your database and want permission to continue sending your information.
- Identify yourself at the onset of a cold call and tell where you got the name and contact information.
- Keep track of those on a "Do Not Call" list and don't call them.
- Be professional in the manner in which you address people. A proper greeting is "Mr. or Ms" until you are invited to use the first name. Mrs. can be used for married women.
- Have additional marketing literature for potential buyers. Without it, the company gives the impression of being sneaky in its approach. A reluctance to send written information is unprofessional behavior. 📄



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The underperforming saint >

Dear Anne: My new hire has a strong résumé and a sort of goodness that makes me feel I'm in the presence of a saint. He's really that nice. You can guess the problem: His work product is below standard. He doesn't fully follow specs, doesn't fully meet the specs he does follow, and completes them after deadline. Asking him to redo the project is problematic, because he will improve it, but it takes a while. Whether coached or confronted, he's very, very nice. What do I do with this guy?


Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:
Got a personal problem at work? Get to "The Heart of It" by e-mailing your question to: theheartofit@handshake20.com

Dear Saintly Witness: The problem of underperforming, deadline-missing employees is common and frustrating. When they're surly, how to proceed seems clearer than when they're very, very nice.

When we see someone under-perform at work, the natural tendency is for us to assume he has a work problem. Probably not. People tend to be consistent and the odds are good your saint is sub-par at work, at home and as a citizen. Regardless of the historical or psychological reasons for your employee's inability to fulfill your expectations, he's ultimately supposed to make money for your company. Time you spend tending him is time you could spend making money yourself or mentoring someone who could.

The Heart of It: If your employee is capable of growth, and he may or may not be, people often achieve insights through experiencing the consequences of their actions or inactions. Withholding natural consequences from the people in our lives compromises us and robs them of chances to grow. Set a standard and a deadline. If he doesn't meet it, and he's consistent, he'll be very, very nice about being let go to grow. 

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Custom-tailored fashion >

The advantage of ordering a custom-tailored suit is that the fabrics are more luxurious than those in off-the-rack clothing and the garment is unique, with a perfect fit.

Before the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the tailor shop was the place to get a new set of clothing. All clothing was made to fit the measurements of the customer, from a three-piece suit and overcoat down to underwear and socks.

Today the number of tailor shops has dwindled and the average person relies exclusively on ready-to-wear garments from storefronts. However, we should consider how the remaining tailors could help us build and maintain a flattering, useful and efficient wardrobe.

The advantage of ordering a custom-tailored suit is that the fabrics are more luxurious than those in off-the-rack clothing and the garment is unique, with a perfect fit. Custom clothing is usually classic in style without extreme design features. If these clothes are cleaned as needed and stored properly, a suit can last 10 or even 20 years. Resting the suit between wearings will retain the shape and extend the life of the garment.

This year Roy Prusak of J.P. Tailoring in Roanoke celebrates the 50th year of the tailoring business his father started. His tailoring services range from simple alterations to custom suits that are interlined with canvas, hand-shaped and hand-stitched for a perfect fit. He also reweaves fine fabrics and redesigns quality garments when styles change.

Roy orders his fine wool, wool-blend, cotton and linen fabrics from England and each fabric is priced individually by the yard. It takes three months to produce a custom tailored suit at J.P. Tailoring because of the extensive amount of hand stitching involved.

In Roanoke County at Berkovic Tailoring, Buba Berkovic, offers similar services. A native of Bosnia, she studied tailoring in high school. After a stint in Paris dressmaking shops, she has stitched for 40 years alongside her husband and daughter. Buba uses wool, silk, linen and cotton from Italy and Asia. Her fabrics arrive in less than a week and her custom suits are ready in 4 to 6 weeks.

The average cost of a custom-tailored suit from Roy is \$1,400 to \$1,800. Pants cost an average of \$425 and shirts about \$135, with a price break for larger orders.

The prices of Berkovic's custom garments are determined by the price range of fabric the customer chooses: classic, premium, exclusive, and deluxe. As a result, one of Buba's custom-tailored suits can range from \$490 to \$870. Her custom shirts range in price from \$90 to \$130. Altering a suit is much less expensive at each shop. The cost depends on the part of the suit needing adjustment and how many sizes it



Business Dress


By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

Custom clothing is pricy, but you're getting a whole lot more than a simple suit of clothes with the tailor-made look.

must change. The shoulders and armhole on the jacket and the hips in the pants are the areas that are time-consuming and difficult to adjust. To reduce costs, make sure these areas fit when selecting an off-the-rack suit.

At both tailor shops most clients are high-level professionals or CEOs, as expected. Some clients are hard-to-fit sizes, falling outside the average range of sizes. Occasionally the custom suit order is a gift.

At J. P. Tailoring, however, many custom suit customers are ordinary people who come to Roy for the special occasions in their lives. They order a custom-fitted suit in anticipation of getting married—and getting buried. So if you think a custom-made suit is too expensive to splurge on yourself, according to Roy, you can take it with you. 



Roy Prusak of J.P. Tailoring in Roanoke:
50 years of building wardrobes

Dan Smith

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Dan Smith

Despite downturn, CRA still a loan force >

Executive Summary:

The legislation that made minorities part of our financial system could be vulnerable in the current crisis.

By Gene Marrano

The Community Investment Act was made law more than 30 years ago because bankers were being unfair to the poor—especially the African American poor. Over the years, it has made a significant difference in credit availability to underserved populations and helped those minorities create businesses, buy homes and take part in the American promise.

The question now, in these tough economic times, with credit harder to come by: are banks being given a pass, or being told by the Feds that they can back off on making loans to certain low or moderate income applicants?

The quick answer in this region appears to be “no, it is business as usual,” with perhaps lenders doing a bit more to make sure applicants across the board at various income levels meet all requirements.

The CRA initially included low and moderate income neighborhoods where the discriminatory lending practice known as “redlining” were used, passing over those in the literally redlined on a local map areas.

Tweaked several times over the years, most recently in August 2005, depository institutions are monitored for adherence



We are making fewer exceptions to policy.

—Ellis Gutshall

to the CRA's mission through periodic audits by federal agencies—although there are no concrete, specific criteria as to what constitutes compliance. The act does not require banks to make high-risk loans and compliance takes into account each particular environment in which that institution exists.

Roanoke-based Woods Rogers attorney Neal Keesee keeps an eye on banks; he says individual financial institutions handle most CRA compliance in-house although it can become an issue when there is an acquisition. “That’s one thing [the buyer] will look at.”

Keesee doesn't buy the argument put forth by some commentators and editorial writers, that defaulted loans pushed under the CRA program were a main cause of the mortgage meltdown. “That’s [nonsense],” says Keesee, noting problems with bad sub-prime loans across several market segments.

“I’m not aware that the rules are being relaxed at all,” Keesee says.

Virginia Bankers Association president and CEO Bruce Whitehurst says members of that trade group are proceeding as usual when it comes to doling out money, even if it means following the letter of the law more closely on loan applications. He says the CRA is a broad law: “It doesn't

continued Page 25

Media General >

Compiled by Deborah Nason

Overview:

Media General, Inc. provides news, information, and entertainment through three segments:

- *The Publishing segment offers daily and Sunday newspapers in Virginia, Florida, North Carolina, Alabama, and South Carolina. It publishes 24 daily newspapers, including The Tampa Tribune, Richmond Times-Dispatch, and Winston-Salem Journal; and approximately 275 weekly newspapers and other targeted publications.*
- *The Broadcast segment owns and operates 19 network-affiliated television stations, including WSLs in Roanoke.*
- *The Interactive Media segment primarily provides online news, information, and entertainment. This segment comprises approximately 75 interactive enterprises, as well as a minority investment. The company has a strategic alliance with Yahoo, Inc. to deliver classified advertising to consumers. Media General, Inc. was founded in 1879 and is headquartered in Richmond. o.*

[Source: businessweek.com]

Market Commentary and Headlines

- "Moody's Investors Service has downgraded MediaNews Group Inc.'s debt ratings further into junk status, out of concerns that advertising sales declines at its daily newspapers will be more prolonged than previously expected."
[Associated Press, 12.12.08]
- Media General Inc. has reported losses of \$85.5 million in the fourth quarter on an impairment charge and a steep drop in publishing profits due to declining advertising sales. The company's shares dropped 24 percent and it announced it is suspending dividends. Publishing profit fell 68 percent to \$8.5 million from the prior year.
[Yahoo.com]
- "Media General Inc. (MEG) Chief Operating Officer Reid Ashe said Wednesday he expects the company to book \$7 million in revenue this year from its partnership with Internet search giant Yahoo Inc."
[Dow Jones]

- "Richmond-based Media General Inc. said yesterday that it has reached new debt-agreement terms with its bank lenders to give the company more flexibility as the economic downturn cuts into advertising revenue."
[TimesDispatch.com, 12.11.08]

Executive Compensation

As of 30 Dec 2006 (basic compensation plus "other" compensation):

Name	Title	Total
O. Ashe Jr.	COO, EVP	\$3,338,960
J. Stewart Bryan	Chairman of the Board	\$3,407,570
George Mahoney	VP, General Counsel	\$1,261,040
Marshall Morton	CEO, President	\$4,168,520
John Schauss	CFO	\$1,026,440
Grahan Woodlief	VP, Pres. Pub. Div.	\$2,247,900
James Zimmerman	VP, Pres. Brdcast. Div.	\$1,303,040

Board of Directors

Name	Primary Company	Age
Marshall Morton	Media General, Inc.	62
O. Ashe Jr.	Media General, Inc.	59
J. Bryan III	MG Operations, Inc.	69
Walter Williams	Media General, Inc.	72
Rodney Smolia	Media General, Inc.	55
Thompson Rankin	Media General, Inc.	67
C. Wortham III	Davenport Asset Mgmt.	63
Diana Cantor	NY Private Bank & Trust	50
Charles A. Davis	Stone Point Capital	59

Institutional Stock Ownership

Over 91% of outstanding shares are held by institutional investors—a greater percentage than at almost any other company in the newspaper industry.

[Source: businessweek.com]

Top 10 Non-Institutional Holders

The founding Bryan family, led by chairman J. Stewart Bryan III, has more than 80% voting control of the company.

[Source: hoovers.com]

Name	Shares held
J. Stewart Bryan III	1,376,348
Marshal N. Morton	352,823
O. Reid Ashe, Jr.	188,539
Charles A. Davis	44,410
H. Graham Woodlief, Jr.	137,865
John A. Schauss	49,890
Thompson L. Rankin	18,171
Coleman Wortham III	19,268
Diana Cantor	4,162
Walter E. Williams	14,721

Sources

[mediageneral.com] / [investing.businessweek.com]
[reuters.com] / [finance.aol.com] / [hoovers.com]
[timesdispatch.com] / [smartmoney.com]
[forbes.com]

Note

This article is meant for information purposes only and is not intended as an investment guide.

get into products and services. It doesn't really reach to what the credit standards are."

Instead the CRA monitors what institutions might be doing to serve particular communities, like having branches in low to moderate-income neighborhoods.


"The bank needs to demonstrate... [that effort]," says Whitehurst. Most are in no position nowadays to turn away from reliable sources of revenue, either.

"There's plenty of good business across the economic spectrum," Whitehurst says.

Smaller financial institutions like ValleyBank (based in Roanoke with eight branches, \$600 million in assets) have to be especially careful with their money these days, according to president/CEO Ellis L. Gutshall. He explains the CRA this way: "Wherever [deposits originate], you should be lending

to those census tracts. The credit granting process should be across the board."

The Federal Reserve Bank has typically conducted examinations at ValleyBank for CRA compliance every few years says Gutshall, using tools like the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act. That law requires banks to track every mortgage application and follow it to the end. Those are the only types of loan applications that can legally ask for information on race and gender, data that makes it easier to gauge compliance to the CRA.

Rest assured says Ellis Gutshall, loans are being carefully examined: "We are making fewer exceptions to policy." But, he says, "We're still going to be charged with making sure we identify... opportunities. If the numbers don't make sense they will not criticize you for declining a loan." 



Virginia Western Workforce Development— Partnering with Government for Solution-Focused Results

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*Michele Vineyard,
Assistant Director of
Human Resources*

SITUATION: The City of Salem needed employee development opportunities to enhance workforce skills.

SOLUTION: Through an ongoing series of classes offered in partnership with Virginia Western, the city has been able to provide continuing education in leadership development; business skills development; management skills; computer classes; math refresher courses; and language classes.



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Dan Smith

The steady hand of Melinda Chitwood >

Executive Summary:

Everything about this CPA screams rural except for the fact that she's one of the best and most respected accountants in Virginia.

By Alison Weaver

Melinda Chitwood isn't afraid of change, but she also isn't afraid to stay the course.

She grew up in Fulks Run, a tiny community in Rockingham County about 35 miles from Harrisonburg. Her ancestors, the Turners, moved in before the Revolutionary War and literally chased the Native Americans out.

"I'm the first direct descendant in eight generations to live more than five miles from the homestead," she says.

Her father ran a grocery and served as postmaster at a post office built into a

corner of the store. The family lived in an apartment below, and "when it got busy, my father would stomp on the floor to summon my mother to come up and help," Chitwood recalls.

Rural life revolved around church, swimming in the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and going to grandma's farm. "It was a fun childhood. Simple times," she says. "Sunday lunch was a big weekly event, and you fought with your brother and sisters for entertainment."

From an early age, Chitwood and her siblings helped out in the store, running the cash register, sweeping and stocking shelves. But when she took a bookkeeping class in her senior year, she was smitten. She loved working with numbers and liked the way things balanced. "I knew I wanted to be a CPA at 17."

Chitwood left home for Virginia Tech, where she earned an accounting degree during the school year and worked summers at her father's store. Always focused on her dream job, she interviewed with Brown, Edwards & Company in December of her senior year and began working in the firm's Bluefield, W.Va., office three weeks after graduation.


As fate would have it, a fellow she'd met a year before happened to end up in Bluefield as well. "We met on a double date, although he wasn't my date. When he came to Bluefield, I caught him between girlfriends and had my chance."

The couple wed in 1979 and moved to Roanoke in 1981. Three decades later, Chitwood is still working for Brown, Edwards and is still married to same guy.

Although Chitwood's employer has stayed the same, the company has changed dramatically over the years. In November, the firm joined with S.B. Hoover & Company of Harrisonburg and Chambers, Paterno & Associates of Charleston, W.Va. With seven offices, 24 partners and a total of about 200 employees, Brown, Edwards is the state's largest accounting firm west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

A partner since 1988, Chitwood still thrives on accounting. "We have a great firm," she says, and the merger "provides even more resources for our clients; more people who know more about each area. It's a great opportunity for us."

But no matter how prestigious the job, when summer rolls around Chitwood knows she'll be back in Fulks Run, volunteering at the annual "lawn party" fundraiser.

"Oh, it's mandatory. I'll sell tickets to rides, make ham sandwiches," she says. "I'll do anything but work bingo. Most of those little old ladies cheat, and I can't say anything because I'm related to most of them." 

“”

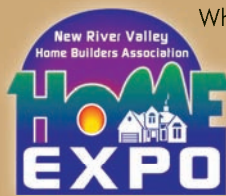
I'm the first direct descendant in eight generations to live more than five miles from the homestead.

—Melinda Chitwood

In Brief

Name:	Melinda T. Chitwood
Age:	53
Company:	Brown, Edwards & Company, CPA
Title:	Partner
Community Service:	Virginia Tech Accounting Department Advisory Board (10 years); Grandin Theatre Foundation (6 years); Kiwanis (10 years); past president of the local chapter of Virginia Society of CPAs.
Family:	Married to Dan Chitwood, a landscape architect, musician and artist; daughter Jenna, 23; son, Adam, 26; daughter-in-law Britney; and granddaughter, Cayden, 4.

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American Inn of Court: promoting professionalism >

Executive Summary:

This old, British-based organization attempts to dent some of the lawyer jokes by creating an atmosphere of high ethical standards and practices.

By Gene Marrano

The lawyer's son wanted to follow in his father's footsteps, so he went to law school. He graduated with honors, and then went home to join his father's firm. At the end

of his first day at work he rushed into his father's office, and said, "Father, in one day I broke the accident case that you've been working on for 10 years!"

His father responded: "You idiot, we could live on the funding of that case for another 10 years!" (old lawyer joke)

Everyone has heard the jokes about attorneys—a preoccupation with money over the best interests of the clients, the crassness, etc. "The first thing we do," said a character in Shakespeare's "Henry VI," is "kill all the lawyers."

An organization founded almost 25 years ago on a British model, the American Inns of Court Foundation is designed to bring attorneys, judges and law students together in a more collegial setting, to promote skills, professionalism and ethics between the bench and bar.

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family law | health law | **intellectual property** | labor & employment | litigation
local government | real estate & land use | regulated industries | tax

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Authorized by Nicholas C. Conte, Chairman, on behalf of the firm.

In the Roanoke and New River Valleys the Ted Dalton American Inn of Court chapter (named for a late prosecutor, state legislator and U.S. District judge) meets about eight times a year, with Roanoke College serving as host. District Court Judge Glen Conrad, nominated last year for a U.S. Appeals Court position, is the current president.

Roanoke Attorneys Bill Poff and William Rakes helped found the Ted Dalton chapter about six years ago, along with now-retired judge Diane Strickland, current District Court Judge James Turk and Lawrence Koontz, a member of the Virginia Supreme Court.

Poff, a lawyer with Woods Rogers and a member of the governing board for the Ted Dalton chapter, says a “variety of legal programs,” are discussed, with a theme for the year typically established. “The concept goes back to the common law of England,” notes Poff.

Membership in the American Inns of Court is divided along several categories and is limited to 80 per chapter: Masters of the Bench—judges, experienced lawyers, and law professors; Barristers—lawyers with some experience who do not meet requirements for Masters; associates and law students. There are about 25,000 members nationwide.

Aspiring attorneys from Washington and Lee Law School—Poff’s alma mater—are members of the Ted Dalton American Inn of Court, along with a faculty representative.

Sitting down to break bread with judges “doesn’t happen in any other setting, other than the [local] bar association meeting once a month,” says Poff.

While some judges prefer to avoid mingling with lawyers they may have to deal with in court, Poff sees where getting together has helped round off some of the sharp edges between the two groups. “Unquestionably, it does. It is an opportunity for social contact [and] an opportunity for lawyers to get to know judges, in an informal setting. I think it’s a good thing.”

Strickland, now a mediator who still substitutes on the Circuit Court bench in Roanoke, was a major force in getting the Ted Dalton chapter off the ground. She cites the “educational component,” and an opportunity for students and young lawyers to seek out mentors as major reasons why the American Inns of Court concept is worthwhile.

There’s more time for camaraderie at the Ted Dalton chapter meetings than at the typical bar association monthly luncheon notes Strickland, one reason she likes the American Inns of Court.

Ethical debates, mock trials or programs that focus on opening statements and closing arguments have all been part of the mix. “It gives the students and associates a hands-on opportunity to learn.”

Strickland has seen where the program has made a difference, especially between attorneys in some of the situations she mediates: “The bar [members] seem to get along very well with one another. Rarely do I see any animosity in these cases between counsel.”



An opportunity for social contact [and] an opportunity for lawyers to get to know judges, in an informal setting...

—Bill Poff

Free choice or just more confusion? >

Executive Summary:

A new labor law which could pass the Senate and be signed by new President Obama, will present challenges for businesses. Here's what it's about and what you need to do.



Dan Smith

Labor lawyer Bayard Harris serves on the faculty of the Business Department at Roanoke College in Salem where he teaches Labor Relations, Human Resource Management, and Business Law. He is also a working attorney with Woods Rogers in Roanoke.

A native of D.C., he joined Woods Rogers in 1973. In 1991, Harris founded The Center for Employment Law and was president until 1998. He earned his law degree in 1973 (cum laude) from the University of South Carolina where he served as an author and editor on its Law Review. His A.B. degree is from UNC Chapel Hill.

The Employee Free Choice Act has been a hot topic since Barack Obama was elected president in November and has raised a number of questions in the business community. We asked Harris five of them and, in not-very-typical Harris fashion, he was short and to the point.

What Is EFCA?

It is federal legislation that would require employers to recognize a labor union as the exclusive bargaining agent for their employees without a secret ballot NLRB election. It would be based solely on authorization cards the union gets by any means it can. This dramatically change 80 years of American labor law.

Would EFCA also affect the concept of negotiation with a union in good faith and possibly bring negotiations to impasse without an agreement?

EFCA requires "interest arbitration" to have a third party arbitrator write the parties' agreement if there is an impasse. After 120 days from certification there will be a forced two year union contract. Labor contends that the campaign period before the election is used by employers to threaten and coerce votes against the union at the election. Unions also blame the election process on the dramatic decline in labor's penetration of the workforce over the past 50 years. Card check recognition, according to labor, is the only viable remedy to these ills.


Will EFCA be enacted?

This law passed the House last year, the new Senate seems to be poised to pass it and our new president has promised to sign it.

What do I need to do to get my business ready?

Because the card signing could start at any time and be done by any union, it is vital to educate employees early and often in the process of labor organization and collective bargaining. An educated employee may decide not to sign the authorization card when approached.

Where do I get help to plan my response and the needed education?

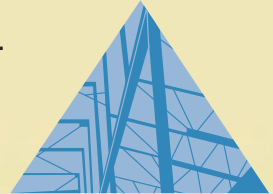
Employ an experienced labor attorney. Ask what the attorney has done, since there are many pretenders in the field without experience, but a good appearance. Lay consultants do not have the protection of the attorney client privilege. 

Restoring the 100-year-old Center in the Square facility is a privilege.



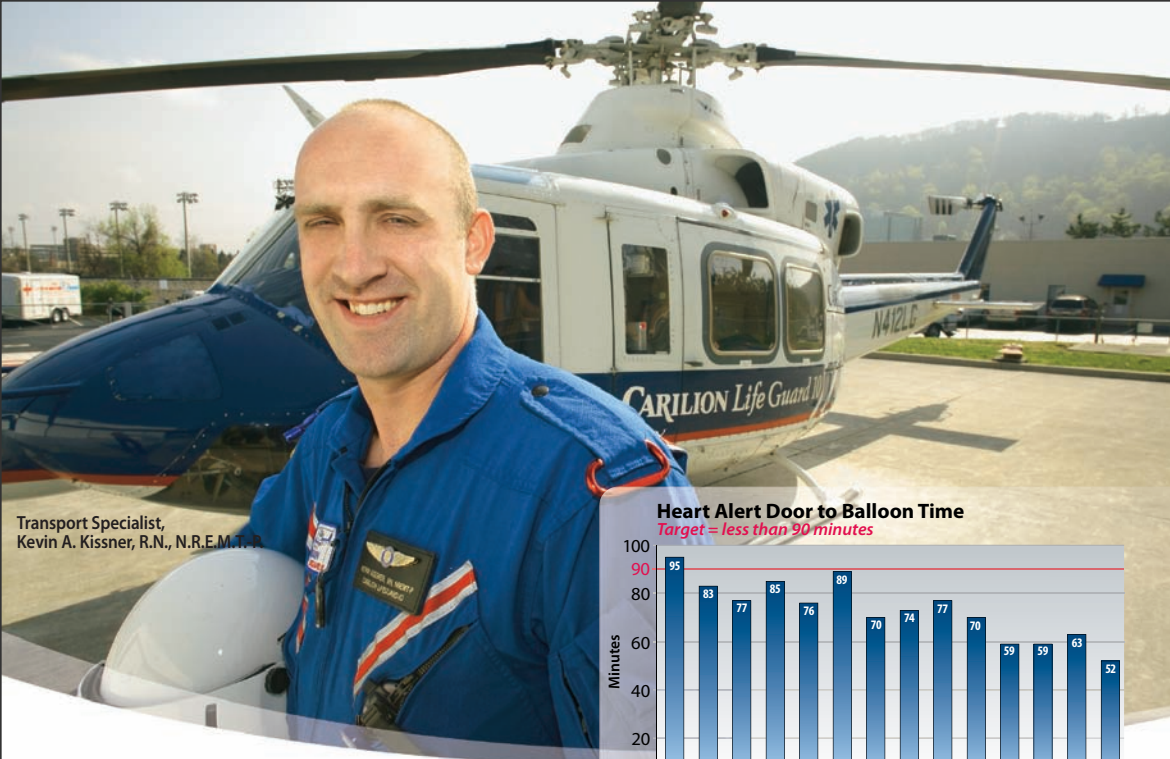
Like all of Spectrum Design's projects, this one is poised to make an impact.

Embracing both science and creativity, the roof at Center in the Square will be a regional destination. Cutting-edge walk-through exhibits will allow visitors to experience the sustainable power of nature, observe hundreds of butterfly species in a two-story glass habitat, and enjoy a first-class sculpture garden. On track to be a LEED-certified facility, when all is said and done Center in the Square will have one of the "coolest" rooftops along the East Coast. Stay tuned...



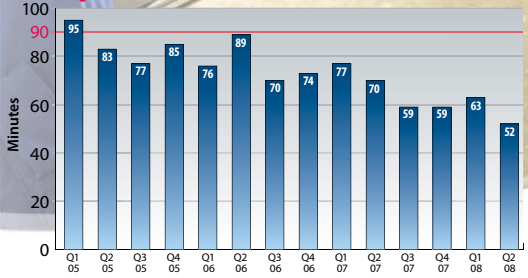
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Transport Specialist,
Kevin A. Kissner, R.N., N.R.E.M.T.

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en route to the hospital. Through the alert, the medical team springs into action and initiates a fast-track process that gets you treated an average of 30 minutes faster than the national hospital standard. And, with Carilion's Lifeguard medical helicopters, you can rest assured that no matter where you live, you're getting the fastest care available.

You always hear that seconds count. But when you have a health partner working with your community to give you a half-hour advantage, that's a life-saving difference. If you experience symptoms of a heart attack, do not attempt to drive yourself to the hospital. Call 911 immediately.

For more information on Carilion Clinic's Heart Alert™ program, please call 540-266-6000 or 800-422-8482.



CARILION CLINIC



Tim W. Jackson

WELLNESS FRONT



It helps them to substitute one behavior for another.

—Linda Coulter

'You're getting very sleepy...' >

Executive Summary:

Linda Coulter of Successful Thinking Hypnosis Center wants employers to better understand the practical uses of hypnosis.

By Tim W. Jackson

If you mention hypnosis, the imagination often runs wild. People think they'll be made to cluck like a chicken or become the next Manchurian Candidate. Perhaps an old bearded guy will wave a pocket watch and say, "You're getting very sleepy."

"People get all that stuff from the media—from movies and TV," says Linda Coulter, a certified clinical hypnotist at Successful Thinking Hypnosis Center, which is one half of the Rejuvenation Center found in Fairlawn. Her business partner is Sean Terry, a massage therapist.

Coulter stresses that hypnosis is a medically approved health and wellness program accepted by the American Medical Association since 1958 and its practitioners are professionals.

Coulter says she hopes the public will understand there is no black magic surrounding hypnotism. Instead, hypnosis allows the client to enter a state of deep relaxation. Once in this state, the subconscious begins to move to the front. A hypnotist is then able to communicate with the client's subconscious.

Coulter uses hypnotism mostly to assist people in practical applications: weight loss, stress management, pain control, smoking cessation. The relief can make for healthier and happier employees who will have fewer sick days, fewer health insurance claims and will be more productive.

One area hypnosis can help is in the pain that comes with some jobs and in workman's compensation cases. "There are so many Americans who suffer from chronic pain," Coulter says. "Even if they're medicated, sometimes they can't take enough to alleviate your pain and still function in society."

Coulter works with clients to essentially "turn down their pain." She says she treats clients with problems such as arthritis, fibromyalgia, cancer pain or an injury like a torn rotator cuff.

Stress can lead to errors, accidents, forgetfulness and irritability at work. Coulter uses hypnosis to bring down the baseline level of stress.

Most of the time Coulter sets up a plan with the client, and sometimes works with the client's physician to establish that plan. A big part of the strategy for success is to have the client simply avoid that initial urge to eat or smoke or engage in undesirable behavior.

"For instance," Coulter says, "we might have a person to think that instead of accepting that urge to smoke, he should wash the dishes or go get some exercise. It helps to substitute one behavior for another to get his mind off the behavior he wants to avoid. 📌"

Hospitalist: Built-in efficiency >

Executive Summary:
Hospitalists are stationed at the hospital and become a vital extra set of hands and eyes for the primary care physician.

By Alison Weaver

You're in the emergency room with your elderly mother. The ER doctor says your mother needs to be admitted, and the next thing you know you're shaking hands with a hospitalist.

A what?

The term "hospitalist" didn't even exist until 1996. Now, a dozen years later, every hospital in this region has physicians trained in the specialty.

"Hospitalists are physicians whose duty, first and foremost, is the primary care of patients who are in the hospital," says Dr. Harsukh Patolia, a hospitalist at Lewis-Gale Medical Center in Salem.

Hospitalists serve as the attending physician for patients admitted through the ER and for patients who are hospitalized with an ailment such as pneumonia but who have complicating issues like high blood pressure, congestive heart failure or diabetes.

After serving a residency at East Carolina University, he arrived at Lewis-Gale in 1997 to set up a hospitalist program, one of the first in Virginia.

Lewis-Gale now has 10 of the specialists on staff, and is looking for more. "There are many, many factors as to why the specialty developed," Patolia says. "One reason is it



Dan Smith

allows the primary care physician to concentrate on his outpatient practice, without running back and forth to the hospital."


Hospitalists are with the patients from the beginning of their stay through discharge. They take a detailed medical history, keep the primary care physician in the loop, communicate with the family around the clock and prepare the discharge summary.

"It helps reduce the length of stay and is more efficient. Because we're based in the hospital, we can come see the patient four or five times a day," Patolia

explains. "The nursing staff can be hesitant to interrupt a doctor at his office where he has a roomful of patients waiting, but they can contact us at anytime. That's what we're here for."

Patolia acknowledges that some people have reservations about seeing a new face when they're at their sickest, "but they quickly understand that we'll be their attending physician in the hospital and then they'll be released to the care of their primary health care provider."

In larger cities, some doctors or HMOs contract with hospitalists to provide after-hours care on nights, weekends or holidays. In the Roanoke area, most hospitalists are employees of the hospital. Patolia says that as an employee of HCA, Lewis-Gale's parent company, it allows him to practice medicine without being concerned about the financial side.

"We don't care if they're insured or uninsured. They'll get the same care. I get a tremendous amount of satisfaction with what I do." 

Making the best of 'a restless nature' >

Executive Summary:

Ellyn Roberts sees opportunities in all the diversity of task she's seeing at work these days and she's loving every minute of it.

By Leigh Ann Roman

If you want to make Ellyn Roberts happy, just give her a challenge.

Maybe you could ask her to keep a hospital running smoothly while you build five floors on top of it. Or maybe you could get her to help you move a hospital full of patients into another hospital. This Carilion Clinic nurse has done both since joining the hospital staff in 1995.

"Nursing, No. 1, and Carilion, No. 2., has been able to give me all of the opportunities for growth and professional excitement," says Roberts, 45. "Not just development, but the thrill of pulling off a big project where everyone has contributed and played an active role."

After doing clinical nursing for three years, Roberts became a nursing supervisor who oversaw day-to-day operations and patient flow at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital and Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital. When Roberts asked for more opportunities, Carilion COO Nancy Agee assigned her to be a consultant in building the Mountain Pavilion while still working as a nursing supervisor.

When Roberts completed that project—and her master's degree in business administration—she became clinical consultant for project management for Carilion in Roanoke. "My responsibility was to keep patient care and in-house operations going while we were building on top (of Memorial)," she says. "We moved units around or would close ORs (operating




Dan Smith

rooms). We had to keep people out of the way of the wrecking ball." The expansion was 300,000 square feet. In addition to that, Roberts served as facilitator of the move of patients from Community Hospital to Memorial last year. "It's the best time in my life," she says.

In November, Roberts made another change and took the job as regional practice director for surgery for Carilion Clinic. "The new job will help us move one step closer to the new clinic mode, a physician model of care where patients come first," she says.

Agee, the COO, also worked as a nurse early in her career. "One thing about Carilion is that we have a real passion around nurses and the important role they have. Being a large organization, there are many opportunities," she says. "Ellyn is an example of someone whose restless nature and organizational skills and broad background have enabled her to take advantage of opportunities across the organization."

Roberts became a nurse because of an early experience she had at Carilion. When her son was two weeks old, he caught bacterial meningitis and was in Carilion for three weeks. He is now in college.

"I remember the doctors and nurses and the care he got here," Roberts says. "I chose nursing because I knew that I could do anything." 

For TMEIC, it's time of plenty >

Executive Summary:
The former GE Drive Systems in Salem works with industries across the globe who need its products and need them now.

By Rod Belcher

At a time when the majority of those in the business community, locally, nationally and globally, are pulling out their umbrellas and bracing for the coming storm, Dale Guidry's sky isn't falling. At least not yet.

"I am ... cautiously optimistic about our immediate future," says Guidry, the president and CEO of TMEIC, an international integrator of industrial drive systems.

Guidry has good reason for his positive outlook. When many companies in the region are downsizing and closing, TMEIC is looking at a surplus of work that will carry it over well into the next year.

"Over 50 percent of what we are doing in 2009 is backlog," Guidry says. "The economy hasn't had as great an impact on the



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industries we supply and our global basis helps as well. We export 60 percent of what we do here around the world."

It's been a year since the company, which began life in 1955 as General Electric's drive system operation in Salem, moved to its new headquarters in the former Atlantic Mutual building in Roanoke County. In that year, GE's involvement in the company, with controlling partners, Mitsubishi Electric and Toshiba, has decreased, changing the company's brand to TMEIC, from the former TMEIC GE. Guidry recently returned from a business summit in Japan where the company's new logo was unveiled.

"We still work closely with GE," Guidry explains. "But it now has a minority voting interest in the company."

Globalization continues to be integral to TMEIC's business strategy. New industrialization in places like China, India and South America has been less affected by the global economic downturn. The industrial drives that TMEIC designs and produces are essential to industrial processes like steel production, cement manufacturing and papermaking and are still in demand in those regions of the globe.

Guidry, who has been on the forefront of developing business relationships with China for almost 20 years, says that it's not luck that they TMEIC is positioned in these markets, but rather the fruition of a long-term corporate vision.

"We planned globally. We wanted to be in China," he says. "All of the major economies are anticipated to have a negative GDP next year. However The BRIC countries—Brazil, Russia, China and India are expected to have positive GDP growth next year."

In the last 12 months, TMEIC has won numerous contracts in India, China and Mexico and Guidry says that in 2009 they are targeting South American markets.



Rod Belcher



We're going after Brazil.


—Dale Guidry

"We're going after Brazil," he says. "There were some factors down there that were looking closely at and we think now is the time to move into that market."

The TMEIC office in Roanoke handles much of the company's engineering development and Guidry, a former engineer himself, says that his employees have been less impacted by the current economic trends in the area, but that there is still an element of uncertainty, even in his workforce.

"We're seeing some employees delaying retirement right now," he says. "We're not seeing cancellations of projects, but we are seeing more projects being delayed. We're working to accommodate clients with their changes in scheduling."

As an international company with an emphasis on the Japanese business model, TMEIC has a long view of employment, Guidry says. "While we don't guarantee lifetime employment to anyone, when you are hiring, you are looking at that process as a potential life-long relationship. Likewise, the success or failure of this company is viewed as the direct responsibility of my team and myself."

That kind of direct cause-effect responsibility may be a different model than how many companies are structured, but in economic times like these it seems a sound business model; and it's hard to argue with success. 

A new dynamic in moving >

Executive Summary:

The decision to move involves a lot more than simply calling a movers these days because of an economy that forces you to make some hard decisions.

By Rachael Garrity

A bleak financial forecast can hardly be described as news these days, but how a prescient business owner adapts to ride out the storm certainly is. For John S. Phillips, president of Premier Transfer and Storage, “ride” is the operative word.

In today’s residential real estate market, sales that a year or so ago were completed in a matter of weeks or even days may now take months or years. That means planning a move, even when there is a job transfer involved, can be a nightmare.

“Look,” says Phillips emphatically, “moving is pure stress to just about everybody. Our job is to make it as smooth as it can be—and that goes beyond being sure nothing is broken. If you know you’re moving but you can’t go until the house sells, then we can work with you on the schedule.”

Specifically, a cost estimate that last year was good for 30 days now may be guaranteed for 90 days. “And if that’s not enough, we’ll talk about how to make it fit what you need,” he adds.

That kind of customer focus is obviously good business, but it also is possible because Phillips has built an enterprise that can tolerate flexible timing.

“In 2002 when I bought the company (then operating as Blacksburg Transfer and Storage) I knew part of the reason the then-owner was in a selling mood was that the 2001 recession had been a tough go,” he recalls. “My idea was to find a way to prepare for such times.”

Americans in general are moving at a lower rate than they have since the Census Bureau began keeping track in 1940, according to the New York Times.

A poll by Current Population

Survey discovered that just 12 percent of Americans have moved since 2007. That’s down a percentage point from 2006 and it compares to 20 percent in the 1950s and 1960s.

With an MBA from the R. B. Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech and experience in the local banking industry, followed by a stint as director of economic development for Virginia Tech, Phillips is no stranger to the business climate in the region. He set about diversifying his services by adding both corporate and military accounts, a move that has made a significant difference this year.

“Sure, our residential work has slowed, but the corporate has increased at the same time, so our total sales are really only marginally off,” he reports. “And we’re also now serving a much larger geographic area—Bristol, Bluefield, Lynchburg, Martinsville—so the base of operations is greater, too.”

This does not mean, Phillips hastens to add, that the company is in any way turning away from local moves. Indeed, he bought the Salem-based Akers Transfer and Storage earlier this year. The current operation is roughly 50 percent local residential, 40 percent corporate and 10 percent military. Included are a full range of projects, from transferring equipment when the VT football is on the road to moving a large—and delicate—piece of sculpture from the university to the new Taubman Art Museum or managing laboratory moves that involve transferring multimillion dollar pieces of



John Phillips and Page Warner



Rachael Garrity



Rachael Garrity

equipment with what he calls “zero tolerance.”

“This industry is changing. Technology means more efficiency, better service—as in, for instance, a GPS system that lets customers essentially ‘watch’ the truck with their stuff in it. This year, for the first time, we’ve hired a marketing manager. We know that keeping a strictly operational focus is not enough. Yes, the economy is in decline. What that means to us is every opportunity is golden.”



If you know you’re moving but you can’t go until the house sells, we can work with you on the schedule.

—John Phillips



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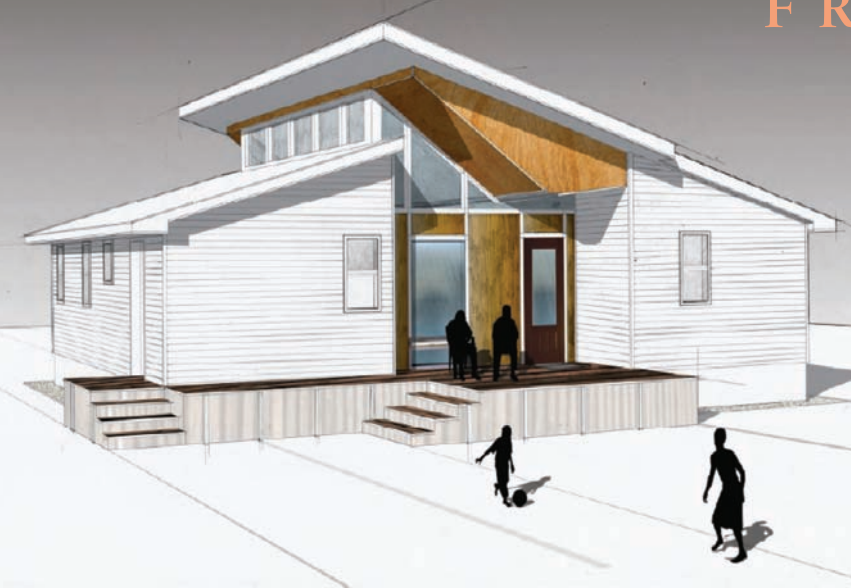
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Virginia Tech students' innovative Habitat for Humanity home

A new kind of Habitat home >

Executive Summary:

Tech students and faculty worked to create a model that is not only custom-made for the customer, but also for Habitat for Humanity.

Special to the FRONT

It's a prefab. It's a custom-designed home. It's a floorwax.


Forget the floorwax with apologies to Saturday Night Live, but take a close look at the prefabricated custom designed home put together by a couple of recent Virginia Tech students working with faculty members.

They've taken competing styles and merged them into a workable and attractive home for those who normally wouldn't even dream of being able to live custom.

The house was moved from its construction site at the Tech College of Architecture to Montgomery Street in Christiansburg in December and is part of the undergraduate thesis project of Dan Gussman of

Williamsburg, and Brandon Lingenfelter of Blacksburg—two recent graduates of the School of Architecture + Design at Virginia Tech. Adam Elsea, a fifth-year architecture student from Roanoke, is among others who helped with the structure. Faculty advisors were Joseph Wheeler and Robert Dunay.

The design includes two modules fabricated at the school's research facilities. Each module was completed with as much of the mechanical, electrical and plumbing work as possible in place prior to transport to the home site. The home was designed so that little professional skilled work needed be done on-site, which helps to best use the volunteers who are involved in the construction of Habitat for Humanity houses.

The design-build research into prefabrication employs techniques to maintain superior quality control, stays within severe funding limits, and reduces time of construction on the open site. It is intended to provide a house of unique stature and image while remaining true to the Habitat for Humanity spirit of building. 

Work Spaces

Fabric quest in the NRV >

Executive Summary:
Old buildings, new fabrics and a lot of interested customers.

By Rachael Garrity

It could be argued that nobody in retail knows customers better than those in the fabric business. It is a hands-on operation—literally and figuratively—and one that works best if there is lots of space, but still a sense of coziness.

Two New River Valley owners have found a solution that provides just the right mix, and at the same time preserves a sense of history and place that those same customers treasure. The stores are Sew Biz in Radford and Schoolhouse Fabrics in Floyd.

Marianne Beeson originally opened her fabric store in downtown Radford in 1981, with 800 square feet. Within a couple of years, she expanded into an adjacent area that had been used as an office, and the business continued to grow.

In the early 1990s she learned that the Central Depot building, an historic structure built in 1891 as a hotel for railroad passengers, was available. Carefully renovated by owners Luther



all photos: Rachael Garrity



Radford's Sew Biz, in the old Central Depot, is filled floor to ceiling with fabric; Marianne Beeson relaxes (bottom center)



DEVELOPMENT FRONT

and Helen Dickens to preserve not only the front porch and the Palladian windows, but also the wood details on the inside, the building offered plenty of space, great light in the front for demonstrating state of the art sewing machines, rooms for classes and sewing groups—the gamut.


Today, the store inventory includes 3,000 bolts of fabric. What was a separate building housing the hotel kitchen has been joined to the main building and become a teaching studio. Because the renovation was originally for a client planning to operate a tearoom, Marianne points out happily on her Web site that: “Sew Biz is perhaps the only fabric store in the world with both a wine cellar and an herb garden (we use the wine cellar for box storage).”

Like Marianne Beeson, Jerry Duncan has seen his business move from the one his mother founded that focused on home sewn garments, to a Mecca for quilters, as well as others involved in related crafts or home décor.

His mother, Clester Duncan, opened her business in 1971, renting what had been the first grade classroom in the Floyd Elementary School, built in 1911 and closed in 1962. By 1985, Jerry’s parents had purchased the entire building, and they, like Jerry, saw the value in preserving as much of the original structure as possible.

“The slate blackboards are still here, the floors are original,” Jerry proudly points out. “I would even have kept the pot-bellied stoves, but safety rules wouldn’t allow it.”

All six of Jerry’s employees are family members. There is ample testimony to the fact that the charm of the school—and of the family—creates no small amount of the appeal.

Like Sew Biz, it is on the list for traveling quilters. As one happy stitcher put it, having posted a picture of the building on her blog: “Isn’t this a lovely old school building. Best part is it is filled with fabric.” 





David Perry

Bill Elliot was thrust into the president's chair of his father's business in 1982 and has thrived since

Always playing against type >

Executive Summary:

Bill Elliot has rarely lived life by somebody else's prescription, but he's living it quite well, thank you very much.

By David Perry

Bill Elliot is a liberal in a conservative business.

After all, how many top executives do you know with degrees in philosophy and conflict resolution, who volunteer for charities promoting religious tolerance and international artistic health resources?

Elliot's family shares his progressive leanings. His wife Diane is a licensed minister who teaches spiritual inquiry classes and performs weddings and blessings. She also teaches Sufi, the inner and mystical dimension of Islam, and performs cranio-sacral therapy, which involves connecting with the rhythm of her client's cerebral spinal fluid for healing purposes. Son Rives runs the Local Roots Cafe in the

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It makes you wonder how a self-described social liberal like Bill Elliot came to head up the Davis H. Elliot Company, Inc., a major Roanoke-based electrical company.

"I try to be fiscally conservative," says Elliot with a laugh.

Davis H. Elliot is not some run-of-the-mill home wiring company. It specializes in power line and utility construction and maintenance throughout the southeast, and has about 1,450 employees. Founded by Elliot's father, Davis, in 1946, the company began with one crew and one customer—Appalachian Power. Today, clients include the likes of AEP and the city of Nashville.

Throughout his youth and college years, while attending some hoity-toity schools, Elliot worked summers at his dad's company. After completing his law degree, Elliot returned to Roanoke, where he practiced law for eight years. Shortly after his father died in 1979, his uncle took over the company, and Elliot became vice president for sales and development. To his surprise, his uncle retired 15 months later.

Elliot suddenly found himself as the new president and chairman of the board in 1982. Today, he counts the company's repair work after the recent spate of hurricanes as some of its most important.

Elliot completed a master's degree in conflict resolution through the conflict transformation program at Eastern Mennonite University in 2001. He volunteers with the Center for Religious Tolerance, based in Sarasota, FL, and the Storydancer Project in Santa Fe, NM, which focuses on improving women's and girl's health through dance and storytelling.


Elliot also finds time for art. He recently spent four months in New York at the National Academy School of Fine Arts studying drawing and painting, and is going back for four more in 2009. "That was really a lot of fun, extremely challenging and a lot of hard work," says Elliot. "He prefers "oil for the serious approach and watercolor for

In Brief

Name:	William Davis Elliot
Age:	62
Company:	Davis H. Elliot
Location:	Roanoke
Type of business:	Power line construction and maintenance; utility maintenance
Title:	President and chairman of the board
History:	Born in Lynchburg. Attended Episcopal High School in Alexandria and Gresham's School in Norfolk, England. Earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Trinity College, a law degree from Washington & Lee, and a master's degree in conflict resolution from Eastern Mennonite University. Joined his father's company in June of 1982 as vice president of sales and development and became president and chairman of the board in October of 1983.

fun, but I'm finding watercolor to be the more difficult of the two."

But Elliot's first love seems to be trout fishing, which he's done since his dad, who helped found the local Trout Unlimited chapter, taught him to fish as a boy. Elliot has taken a fly fishing trip out west every summer since 1984. Among his favorite streams is Idaho's Henry's Fork, "a graduate school river for fly fishing. I've come away from there humbled many times. They're very highly educated fish," says Elliot.

His best fish tale? While trying to land one on Henry's Fork, he caught his foot in a rock and fell face first in the water, struggling to right himself. "I didn't lose the fish, but I lost my wedding ring. I looked forever for it." Bracing himself for his wife's wrath, he phoned home, only to find a large maple tree had just fallen on the house during a thunderstorm. says Elliot, "She was more concerned about the tree, and so was I after I heard that." 

'This year has just really collapsed' >

Executive Profile:

It's a hard world out there for automobile sellers. "Dealers are tightening their belts [and] streamlining operations, focusing on their core business to ride this out," says one official.

By Gene Marrano

If numbers don't lie then Virginia's new car and truck dealers were hit upside the head with statistics in 2008, experiencing a precipitous drop in sales from 2007. Blame gloomy economic forecasts, job loss or fear thereof, and tightened credit standards.

So says Michael Allen, director of public affairs for the Virginia Automobile Dealers Association (VADA) in Richmond. "This is our fourth [straight] year of decreases," Allen points out. "This year [2008] has really just collapsed." New car sales will drop about 18 percent for 2008, trucks (including some SUV's and minivans) more than 30 percent.

Using numbers supplied by the Department of Motor Vehicles, based on where they are garaged, domestic new car sales in Roanoke City, Roanoke County, the City of Salem and Montgomery County plunged from 325 units in November 2007 to 132 in November 2008. Consumer confidence, or the lack of it says Allen "is the inherent underlying issue."

He also says a perception that credit is still very hard to come by is dampening enthusiasm. Some banks have ratcheted up their requirements, once again requiring larger down payments, higher Beacon scores, etc. "Traffic in to the dealerships is being reduced by overall consumer confidence," notes Allen.

Foreign auto dealerships in the region (Toyota, Honda, etc.) suffered much the same fate: 144 units registered by DMV in



Vinton Motors closed its doors after 77 years

November '08 vs. 346 one year earlier. Internationally, Toyota posted its first loss in history in 2008. In both cases, domestic and foreign, the November numbers showed a much sharper drop off than did October's. Passenger truck sales were also down: 128 in November '07, compared to 76 in November '08. Some SUV's and minivans get lumped into the truck category.

Allen says no one region of the state is doing much better than another. "They're all suffering equally." In the past year 20 dealerships statewide have gone out of business. He recalls just one failure during his previous 10 years with VADA. Others in financial distress have sold out to competitors.

Family-owned Vinton Motors (77 years in the business) packed it in last summer, citing slow sales of its Ford product line. Allen, a Martinsville native, points out that car dealerships are often the "biggest small business in town," supporting Little League teams, print shops, media outlets and other concerns.

"Most dealers are tightening their belts [and] streamlining operations," says Allen, "focusing on their core business to ride this out." They're taking a wait-and-see attitude on what positive impact the Obama



Dan Smith

RETAIL FRONT




We expected more dealerships to go out of business.

—VADA's Michael Allen

GM makes 20 vehicles that average more than 30 mpg, but many don't know that.

Haley Toyota in Roanoke is indicative of many car dealerships: holding on, trying to keep people employed. General Manager Chuck Baker says the service department has been a positive note: "Thank goodness business there has been very, very steady."

Baker says many dealerships are price reductions on new cars and light trucks: "It is a buyer's market [if] you can afford to buy. I think it will be a while until we're back to where we were, but I see things getting better. I'm an optimistic guy."

"These are troubled times, not everyone is going to make it through," warns VADA's Michael Allen. "Unfortunately we expect more dealerships to go out of business." 

Administration might have. Recent VADA town hall meetings held around the state dealt with topics like bankruptcy and closing dealerships.

Domestic car sales nationwide were down 40 percent in 2008; Toyota and Honda weren't far behind in the mid 30s. "The market's finally caught up to [the imports]," says Allen, noting that domestic carmakers also suffer from the gas-guzzler image problem.

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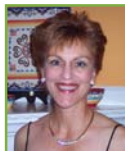
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Alejandro's Moises Nucamendi

Dan Smith

Good food, good attitude, good response >

Executive Summary:

Moises Nucamendi has found the philosophy that is working wonders for his restaurants: "Be nice."

By Jill Elswick

Moises Nucamendi had long dreamed of opening his own restaurant. A 16-year veteran of Wendy's International, he began his career as a crew member and worked his way up to district manager in Sacramento, Calif.

He moved to Roanoke with his family a few years ago to accept the same position with the fast-food chain. "We moved here mainly because we wanted change," says Nucamendi.

But when that job didn't work out as planned, Nucamendi decided to go into business for himself. In November of 2007, he opened Alejandro's on Campbell Ave. in downtown Roanoke. The restaurant is named for his brother. It sounded catchy, he says.

"I always thought of doing something on my own," says Nucamendi. "So I said, 'Let's do it and see what happens.'" What happened was that Alejandro's was so successful that it begged for more. And now there is more. Nucamendi recently opened the second Alejandro's at the corner of Williamson Road and Peters Creek Road and he is look into the future at other potential locations—Salem mentioned prominently.

The Mexican restaurant's standout feature is its all-you-can-eat salsa and chip bar, with many varieties of salsa: mild, hot, green, red, and creamy, 15 in all at the new restaurant. Nucamendi worked with a cook to come up with the dishes, including chimichangas, enchiladas, and the spectacular fish tacos.

"My customers have the most diversity," says Nucamendi, noting that they range from business people to local artists and musicians.

But because of the downtown restaurant's relatively small space—it seats 50 people—customers have sometimes had to be turned away at the door on crowded occasions. Many of them started asking Nucamendi if he would open a larger restaurant. He decided he would and started looking at buildings in Roanoke's Grandin Village and Salem's Main St. But he settled on a space that seats 250 people. "It was a good opportunity, so we couldn't just let it go," says Nucamendi. "It was only a 15-month lease, so why not give it a shot?"

But Nucamendi has a recipe for success: "Just be nice. If that were on the menu, it would be your most-selling item. When you go into a place and they make you feel good, that's where it starts."

Even in a troubled economy, Nucamendi says, people will eat out enough to keep moderately priced restaurants like Alejandro's in business.

"I would like to keep going as far as I can go," he says. "If [Wendy's founder] Dave Thomas started with one restaurant and now has more than 7,000, why not?"



Just be nice. If that were on the menu, it would be your most-selling item.

—Moises Nucamendi



Dan Smith

Alejandro's downtown Roanoke restaurant and its newest location in Northwest Roanoke

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Dan Smith is editor and co-owner of Valley Business FRONT. A native of Asheville, N.C., he has been a journalist for more than four decades. He spent 20 years as editor of the Blue Ridge Business Journal, and was Virginia's 2005 Small Business Journalist of the Year and has been nominated for the 2009 class of the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame. He has been nominated four times as the Roanoke Regional Chamber's Business Advocate of the Year (his wife, Christina, calls him the Advocate's Susan Lucci). He has won many journalism awards (writing, photography and design), several awards for Public Radio essays. He is married, has two grown children and a grandchild. [dsmith@vbFRONT.com]

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Greg Vaughn

JANUARY 2009 >
Contributor of the Month

Valley Business FRONT congratulates **Greg Vaughn**, who receives the Publisher's Choice and Editor's Choice for our "Contributor of the Month" including a "One Who's in the FRONT" certificate and special gift.

Greg photographed our January "Food Fight!" cover, which featured a food-splattered, real-life chef. While FRONT creative director Tom Field started to gingerly place items of food on the cover model, including assorted vegetables, noodles, and even a fish—he says, "I knew we had a truly dedicated photographer when I saw him actually 'wind up' to throw the food. Fortunately, I was able to jump out of the way... and at least he did ask our model to close his eyes. Greg helps us get the best out of our concepts."

If you missed it, you can see it online (January 09 issue) at vbFRONT.com

NOTE: Look for this page of bios and contacts in each issue of the FRONT as Contributors change.



Triathlon offers executives stress relief >

Executive Summary:

Here's how to push yourself to your absolute physical limits... in order to relax and enjoy life.

By John A. Montgomery

There once was a time when company leaders, intense entrepreneurs and confirmed workaholics swore off athletics and exercise in general, subscribing to a philosophy that all work and no play was the high-percentage path to financial independence—or at the very least, a more secure future.

Today, that attitude has become as passé as the upward spikes of yesteryear's stock market.

When the President of the United States, a former member of a high school state championship basketball team, can find time to shoot hoops regularly with his cabinet—amidst the most depressed national economy in 75 years—it's a clear bellwether

that working out on a consistent basis can serve as a much-needed salve to stress-, anxiety- and fatigue-related difficulties.

For many executives, the exercise of choice is triathlons, a combination of distance running, swimming and biking. For some type-A personalities, the lure of triathlons is the competition. For others, it's a form of relaxation. And for all, the mental diversion and the physical therapy are attractive.

The YMCA of Roanoke Valley and Virginia Amateur Sports have staged successful triathlons at Smith Mountain Lake State Park in recent years, and the inaugural New River Valley Triathlon is slated in October (originally it was July 12, but it was moved) at the Christiansburg Aquatic Center, a venue profiled in the January issue of Valley Business FRONT. The aquatic center is to open this spring.

The NRV event is a "sprint" triathlon, where the distances covered are shorter than the Ironman series. Part of the Virginia Series, the July event will feature a 400-meter swim in the new 50-meter Olympic pool, a 13-mile bike ride through the surrounding countryside and a 5K run on residential streets.

Initiated by FRONT columnist Anne Clelland, owner of Handshake 2.0, the NRV triathlon is open to newcomers and veteran triathletes alike, and the early registration list released in mid-January, six months prior



“

...a fabulous spectator experience.

—Anne Clelland

For some type-A personalities, the lure of triathlons is the competition. For others, it's a form of relaxation. Competing or relaxing, Sycom's Gordie Zeigler celebrates (below).

to the event, reflects a wide array of ages and triathlon experience.

Twelve names on the list of 70 are older than 50 years of age (including Clelland, who just turned five-oh); nine are teenagers. While most of the field is from a 15-mile radius of Blacksburg, there also are entries from Maryland, North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Louisiana. Two-thirds of the registrants to date are female.

An executive with Set Up Events Inc. the organization overseeing the competition's logistics, says that for a first-time event to have 70 sign-ups—including four teams, where three individuals each compete in one leg and then pass the baton to a teammate—six months in advance is impressive. The overall field could burgeon to as many as 600.


Clelland brought the concept of a triathlon to the NRV after attending one in Lynchburg two years ago, where her future husband, Iain Clelland, was competing. "It was a fabulous spectator experience," Clelland says. "I wanted to have one at home."

Anne Clelland has since become a triathlete herself, although she dismisses her abilities as "average." But as a professional who works long hours, she recognizes the value of exercise and stress relief and is encouraged that a number of New River Valley executives concur—as evidenced by their commitments.

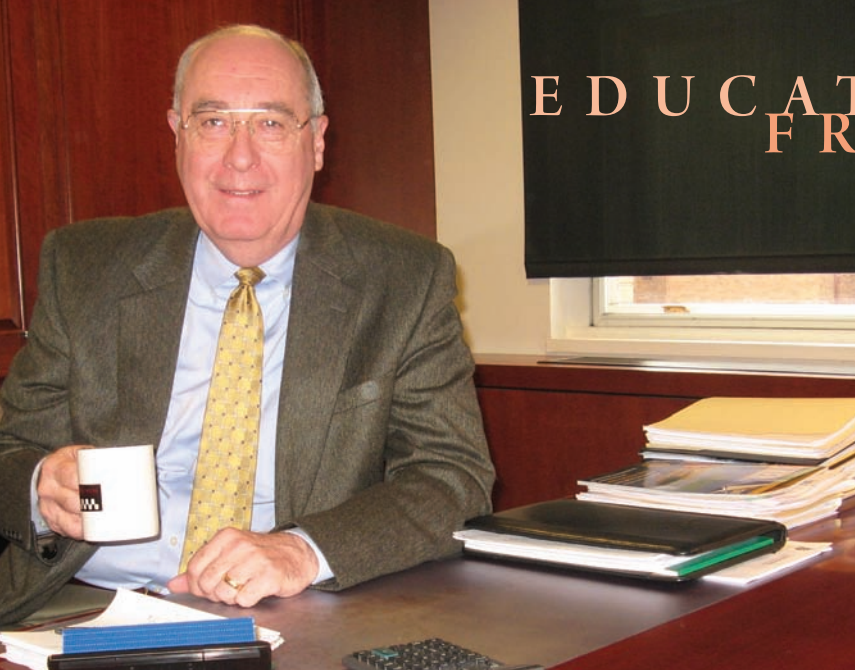
Among those already signed up are Michael St. Jean, 54, director of the New River Valley

Airport and Glenn Skutt, 46, president of VPT Energy Systems in Blacksburg. David Cutter from TORC Technologies, another Blacksburg-based operation based in the Corporate Research Center, is entering a squad in the Valley Cup (a team competition), and has issued a challenge to other companies. Forty-year-old Gordie Zeigler, former director of the NCTC and now a SyCom Technologies account executive is another of those anticipating heated competition.

The proceeds from the event go to the Mental Health Association of the New River Valley.

For more information, go to newrivervalleytriathlon.com. 





Roanoke Higher Education Center's Tom McKeon

Dan Smith

Higher Ed Center: Striking a balance >

Executive Summary:

Roanoke's Higher Education Center is a beehive of activity, educating students and reacting to the needs of the business community.

By Rod Belcher

A university campus is a living, breathing thing—a constant dance of scheduling classes, lectures, seminars and conferences. Keeping it running smoothly is a massive undertaking.

Now imagine scheduling 15 colleges, universities and workforce training organizations, all under one roof and with one set of classrooms and conference centers. That is the daily mission of Tom McKeon and his staff at the Roanoke Higher Education Center.

The Roanoke Higher Education Center is one of a statewide system of these institutions, with centers in Virginia Beach, South Boston, Sterling and Abingdon, as well as Roanoke.

McKeon, the center's director says that the facility is host to more than 200 programs

designed to allow students, fresh from high school all the way to workers looking at retirement, to jump-start a new careers or move to the next level of their current career with continuing education and advanced degree programs.

The heart of the facility is the 15 member institutions, organizations that share the center's facilities. Those facilities include more than 57 available classrooms, a 2,100 square-foot meeting room, four smaller meeting rooms and computer technology and video conferencing facilities.

McKeon says that new programs are selected by the member organizations based on perceived need.

"Each member organization does its own market research," he says. Members "look at national and local trends and determine what they want to offer in Roanoke, what the region needs."

Recently Old Dominion added a Public Health Masters program and James Madison decided to include a Master of Public Administration degree to their offerings at the center, presenting new vocational opportunities for the area.

McKeon says he and his staff listen closely to the local businesses community and offer advice about programs when there is an interest. "We stay active with community organizations and try to keep our ear to the

ground” he says. “We keep in touch with economic development groups and try to look for new programs.”


One example of this process is the development of the culinary arts program at Virginia Western Community College. “There had been inquires for a program like this for a while,” McKeon says, “and we saw a national trend developing. Virginia Western began the program with 80 students and it has grown to 160 currently.”

Besides acting as a facilitator for new educational development, the center also does a brisk business as a business conference center. Coordinating the scheduling for the various meetings and seminars can also be challenging, McKeon admits, but his staff and the member organizations work together to keep scheduling running as smoothly as possible.

“The meeting rooms are handled by the center,” he says. “But we coordinate with the member groups and offer the meeting spaces to organizations on a first come, first serve basis—everyone understands that. Most of what we do here involves local companies. Companies are cutting back on travel, but we are seeing more day conferences and meetings.”

McKeon says that while the economy has many businesses seeking to maximize expenses, they have seen no more cancellations of business events that normal. He also says that traditionally in economic downturns, enrollment in continuing

education increases. Right now is no exception to that rule.

“We are expecting to see a spike in our spring enrollment,” he says. 

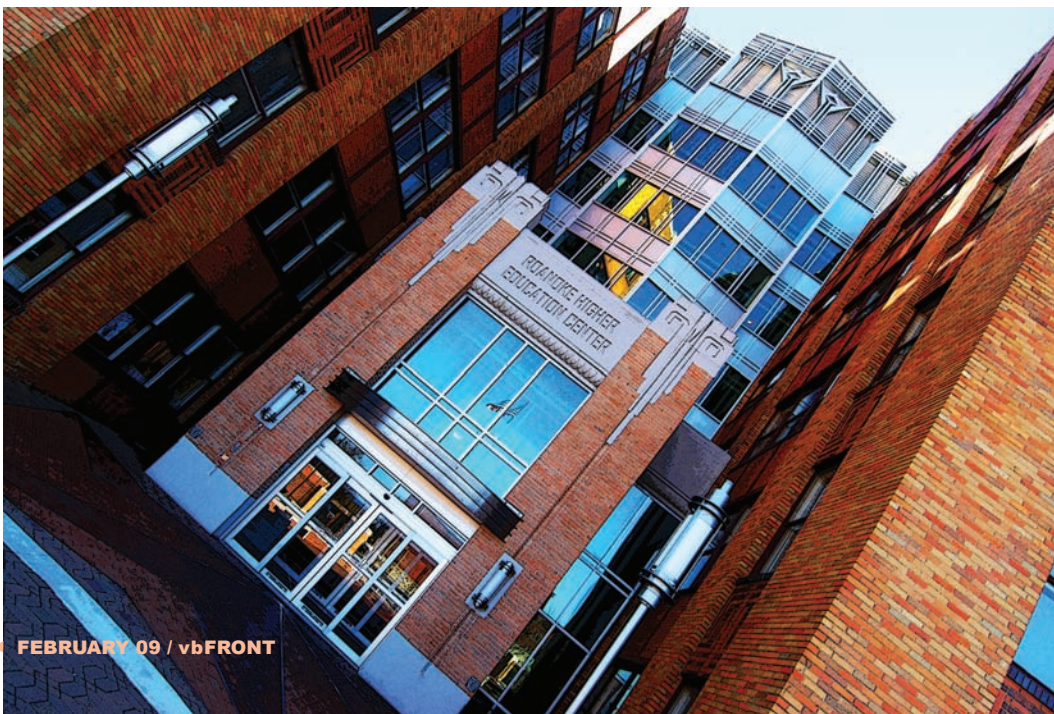
RHEC Member Institutions

Averett University
Bluefield College
James Madison University
Jefferson College of Health Sciences
Hampton University
Hollins University
Mary Baldwin College
Nova Southeastern University
Old Dominion University
Radford University
Roanoke College
TAP-This Valley Works job training programs
University of Virginia
Virginia Tech
Virginia Western Community College



Companies are cutting back on travel, but we are seeing more day conferences and meetings.

—Tom McKeon





John Hunter

Bobbi A. Hoffman



Tom Tanner

Dan Smith

Tough love for tough times >

Executive summary:

A tanking economy means less business startup and expansion, but counselors at SCORE and the Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center stay busy helping area companies in trouble.

By Bobbi A. Hoffman

John Hunter wears dungarees to his volunteer job as chairman of the SCORE chapter covering southwest Virginia. He thinks his casual attire is less intimidating to clients who come to SCORE needing help to start, expand or resuscitate a business.

"Not many people come in here wearing a shirt and tie," he says.

Hunter says the economy has curtailed the creation and expansion of area businesses and caused greater demand from established businesses that are having problems. Calls to SCORE have increased since the economy tanked.

SCORE stands for Service Corps of Retired Executives, but you won't find any mention of "retired executives" on its Web site or literature. The all-volunteer group

welcomes—and needs—active or retired middle managers, small-business owners, IT specialists and others willing to share their expertise. Hunter retired after a 30-year banking career in New York.

SCORE's new maxim is Counselors to America's Small Businesses. Free counseling—whether face-to-face, by phone or via e-mail—is SCORE's forte.

"A large percentage of our current clients are coming to us because they're in trouble. They may be getting phone calls from banks and creditors," Hunter says. "They need help with budgeting, negotiating with creditors, cost control and surviving in a down economy."

Not keeping up with technology is a common problem Hunter sees. "Many times they're coming in looking for marketing assistance. There are a lot of old timers around that are having trouble maintaining their business volume. They don't know how to use the computer; they're not familiar with Internet marketing; they don't have a grasp of the possibilities of using an Internet site."

The Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center (RRSBDC) also offers counseling services, but the organization focuses on training. Classes include marketing for small budgets, social media, easy website development and understanding financial statements. Class fees run \$20–\$45. When entrepreneurs face difficulties, RRSBDC's paid staff


performs financial diagnostics – analyzing financial statements to see how companies can work more efficiently. The organization uses a computer program that analyzes various business scenarios and compares them to industry benchmarks. For example: What happens to a company's bottom line if it raises prices by X-percent? What if it could reduce collection time by X-number of days?

"This is a good time for people to find new niches, look at cost control, maybe merge with other companies... to make their business stronger," says Tom Tanner, professional business counselor at RRSBDC.

And despite the state of the economy, Tanner points out that for some, this may be an opportune time to pursue a long-held dream. "When the economy gets bad, people who lose jobs think about other options. One is starting a new business."

Both groups stress the importance of business plans. "We may tell someone in business for 15 to 20 years to update their business plan," Hunter explains. "Many times they don't have one, so we say, 'Well, it's time you do.'"

"We get a lot of calls where the bank is going to call their note, or they're losing sales and they don't have enough cash to stay in business... We make suggestions—painful ones—but they work," says Hunter.

"We practice tough love for the benefit of our clients. We don't want to see them get in trouble." 



There are a lot of old timers around that are having trouble maintaining their business volume. They don't know how to use the computer; they're not familiar with Internet marketing; they don't have a grasp of the possibilities of using an Internet site.

—John Hunter



When the economy gets bad, people who lose jobs think about other options. One is starting a new business.

—Tom Tanner

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There is no reason to throw up your hands and panic.

—Jan Smyth



Judy Clark and Jan Smyth of Opera Roanoke

Dan Smith

Arts surviving the stock market, too >

Executive Summary:

As Mill Mountain Theatre closes after 40 years of operation, arts organizations, faced with declining contributions from the wealthy, whose wealth has fallen with the stock market, are finding they must be more creative to survive.

By Leigh Ann Roman

Warner Dalhouse has done more fund-raising than most.

Since he retired as chairman and CEO of Dominion Bancshares a dozen years ago, Dalhouse has been involved in capital campaigns that have raised about \$30 million for local endeavors including the reopening and renovation of the Hotel Roanoke, the creation of the Higher Education Center, and the opening of the Taubman Museum of Art.

But he has never seen anything like the current national economic meltdown, and he believes we have yet to see its full impact on the arts and other organizations that rely on donations from the community. The first

significant hit of what may be several to come occurred place in mid-January when Mill Mountain Theatre announced it was closing for at least year. The theater has been riding on the financial edge for some time now and it finally fell off, a victim of diminished donations, weak attendance and the economy. (See accompanying story.)

“The greatest impact is just on the psychology of philanthropy,” Dalhouse says. “When the Dow was at 14,000 it was easy to satisfy a \$10,000 contribution by giving a few shares of stock. The psychology of a 40 percent decline in the value is just overwhelming.”

With an impressive array of arts organizations, Roanoke is easily the cultural center of this end of Virginia. “This is not a rich community, but it is a generous community,” Dalhouse says. “Over the last 25 years we have managed to put in place an opera, a ballet, a symphony, and all of the organizations at Center in the Square.”

It’s time to get back to the basics of fund-raising—donor relations, says Jan Smyth, who was hired as development director of Opera Roanoke this summer. “At times like this there is no reason to throw up your hands and panic,” Smyth says.

Studies of philanthropy show that, in good times and bad, donors continue to give to organizations in which they believe. And



Georganne Bingham Dan Smith



Laura Rawlings Dan Smith



We are doing everything we can to get people in the door.

—Georganne Bingham



Imagine Roanoke now with these economic times if the [Taubman] art museum hadn't been here.

—Laura Rawlings

the overwhelming majority of donations—about 80 percent—come from individuals, she says.

One way to stay in touch with donors and make new contacts is to get the organization's board more directly involved in fund-raising, Smyth says.

Dalhousie agrees that board members will have to pound the pavement for those donor bucks. "Raising money is just plain hard work, and they are going to have to use their own social and business influence for the organizations they support... and make the phone calls and buy the lunches and make the case," he says.

The situation in Roanoke could be worse, says Laura Rawlings, executive director of The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge.

"Imagine Roanoke now with these economic times if the [Taubman] art museum hadn't been here. We wouldn't have seen these new businesses coming in and the redevelopments with the lofts," Rawlings says.


As an example of the museum's impact, she cited the opening of the Roanoke City Art Show, which happened the same week that the Taubman opened. About 125

people visited the art show in a two-hour period the first day, but a typical Saturday for the art show would have been about 20 people.

"It really showed that the rising tide raises all the boats," Rawlings says.

The Taubman provides venues for performances by other local arts organizations. The first weekend in December, for example, offered three different concerts in the museum—one of them free. "We are doing everything we can to get people in the door. In order to do that you have to offer them something special to want to come in here," says Georganne Bingham, executive director of the Taubman.

"What we are trying so hard to do is to offer things to the public so that it will be a place that is almost like a sanctuary or haven," she says.

While some express concern that the Taubman's expenses have drawn donations away from other organizations, supporters point out that the \$54 million already raised for that museum came from fewer than 200 people in the Roanoke Valley, which is home to more than 200,000 people. 

'Intermission' for Mill Mountain Theatre


Roanoke's professional theater, Mill Mountain Theatre, will cease operations in order "to focus on reorganization of the theater's productions and business operations." The board of directors announced the decision because of "sharply declining income, reduced state funding, lower than expected donations, changes in consumer entertainment choices and the effects of today's challenging economy." The board has not decided whether to seek Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection an official said.

The theater has considerable existing debt and its income has been much lower than projected for recent productions. It has been an especially difficult economy for theaters nationally and a number the size of MMT have closed in recent months. They include theaters in Ohio, Florida, Minnesota and Boston, according to an MMT release. In the Roanoke area, funds have been especially scarce with the recent opening of the Taubman Museum of Art, a facility which has already absorbed more than \$50 million, and will have an operating projected at more than \$3 million a year.

The loss of Mill Mountain Theatre, even for a year, would be yet another strain on Center in the Square, which houses the theater and a number of other arts organizations. Center has struggled in recent months.

In a joint statement, the board released this: "Our traditional business model no longer works. We want to be responsible stewards of our community's long-standing financial support, so we are taking a break from business-as-usual to reinvent Mill Mountain Theater. We are taking an intermission and plan to re-emerge stronger and better than ever."

The board and staff will work with local officials and contributors to create a new model and an "aggressive fund-raising campaign, based on a new business plan, will begin upon the announcement of the plan's details."

The release says that "Mill Mountain Theatre is doing the responsible thing and securing its future by reinventing and reinvigorating how we do business." The first production of the revamped season can be expected during the 2009 holiday season, officials say. Season ticket holders will receive vouchers for the canceled plays. They will be good for next season's plays. 



photos: Dan Smith

An "S.O.S" prop sits outside the back stage door (top), while a patron attempts a conversation under the partly closed ticket window (bottom)



This is not a rich community, but it is a generous community.

—Warner Dalhousie

Floyds Artworks: Blending paint and business >

Executive Summary:

A Smith Mountain Lake family continues to provide artistic touches for homeowners, even though the economy is not exactly friendly.

By Linda Nardin

Last summer, Dale and Lisa Floyd of Moneta planned to sell their country home on a pond in Bedford County and return with their two children to North Carolina, an area rich in familial ties.

The economy went south before the family could, and with the slump, the Floyd's plans were interrupted. The economic downturn seems to have only made a minor dent in the family business, Floyd's Artworks, a customized mural painting enterprise.

Lisa Floyd, a commercial artist and marketing professional with 30 years' experience, devises realistic and fanciful landscapes. Her partner is her 18-year-old home-schooled daughter, Julia.

The duo's detailed work adorns a wide variety of homes, offices and restaurants around Smith Mountain Lake and beyond. The most recent addition to their portfolio

is Runk & Pratt's SML Retirement Village in the Westlake area of Moneta.

The family is also known for its sign painting business, catering to hundreds of Wendy's and McDonald's restaurants in 22 states.

Husband Dale Floyd and their 16-year-old son, Jesse, prepare the site, provide base painting duties before the artwork is added. They do final clean-up, as well. Father and son manage the business.

The family was recently commissioned to add a cheery visual landscape to the Roanoke Ronald McDonald House family lounge. Subsequently, it developed the local charity's Christmas card, replete with a dreamy scene of the Star City after a fresh snowfall.

Even in a challenging economy, says Lisa, the family continues to receive requests to paint. The Floyds charge a flat rate of \$100 per hour once they begin the painting process.



Dale and Jess Floyd prepare surface for mural (above); Lisa Floyd (below); The Ronald McDonald Christmas card was a gift from the Floyds (center); Julia Floyd touches up a scene (right); Julia and Lisa with new mural (far right)



CULTURE FRONT



In adding aesthetic pleasures to an everyday wall, room, or entire home or place of business, Lisa Floyd becomes philosophical: "Sooner or later, hard times come along and times can get tough. But innovative business owners see the work we do as a way to pique people's curiosity and draw more customers in a subtle way—through art."

Lisa recalls a client who had purchased a small, non-descript coffee shop. The owner concluded he "needed something to bring people into his place and to keep them there for more than a quick cup of coffee on the run," says Lisa.

His \$500 budget allowed for a half-day of the Floyd's time. She and her daughter set to work, gathering some ideas from the café owner and within his budgeted half-day painted a 6-foot-by-18-foot mural of the Tuscan countryside on

one of the café's walls.

"He was flabbergasted when he saw what we had done in so little time," she says. Lisa remembers him saying, "I expected a mural of maybe 3-by-4-feet... nothing of this magnitude."

The artists consult in great detail, looking for "whatever is meaningful to [the client]; we're happy to [that] incorporate into their mural." Complexity of the assignment matters not—only the number of 10-hour days the Floyds require to complete an interior or exterior space. On average, most murals are completed in 1 to 3 days.

That little buy-and-run coffee shop quickly became the talk of talk of the town and now "it's one of those special places people love to meet at, sip coffee and linger," Lisa says.

Contact Floyd's Artworks at [540-296-5552](tel:540-296-5552). 



Sooner or later, hard times come along and times can get tough. But innovative business owners see the work we do as a way to pique people's curiosity and draw more customers in a subtle way—through art.

—Lisa Floyd



Delicately handling our industry's story >

My View

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

Blog: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

Executive Summary: *Writing about niche publications required a lot of thoughtful planning and discussion—because that's us.*

The package of stories we've put together for this issue of FRONT on niche publications was a good bit more delicate a project for us than the garden variety cover story. We're telling you about our own industry and this is one story that we know a lot more about than we're telling.

There's a fine line we had to toe in backgrounding, formulating, assigning, writing and presenting the story. One of the most difficult decisions was whether to include ourselves and, if so, how to direct the writers in writing about us.

The three writers who did these stories—Alison Weaver, who had the major role; Keith Ferrell, who evaluated Web sites; and Doug Cumming, the college professor who rated most, but not all, of the publications—were given different sets of instructions. Keith and Doug, a couple of veterans whose judgment is excellent, were asked to do the ratings, and to include us. We told them to be straightforward, fair and to spare nobody—especially us—with their criticisms. They didn't.

Alison had the difficult task of bringing a massive amount of information (we're talking about 26 publications here) into focus and giving you a story that has some meaning for you. We talked a good bit about the importance of The Roanoke Times in all this. Alison had recently left The Times news department. FRONT Publisher Tom Field and I had worked for a division of The Times for years (and I actually worked for the paper for 10 other years) before starting this publication. Could we be neutral?

No, we couldn't. But we could be fair. We went to the extraordinary length of publishing—on our Web site only—an unedited interview with Times Publisher Debbie Meade. She insisted that the interview run without editing and we complied because we wanted to be as fair as possible. This is against our company's policy and, frankly, I doubt seriously if The Times would ever do that, since it means giving up control of the story. I think the interview is almost useless as far as good information is concerned, reading like a careful press release built by committee, but it's there, as requested.

There is also the strong temptation, as an editor, to shape coverage by criticizing the opposition. There's a lot to criticize because some of these pubs are amateurish, most are poorly written, almost none has any real journalistic ethic and few have any depth. But there are some strong points here, some real innovation. Blue Ridge Country, for example, is as good a publication of its type as exists. Another publication has revolutionized advertising in the region; yet another

continued Page 64



The spirit of the game >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

Blog: [ontapfrompub.blogspot.com]

I believe it was Monty Python who said, "In accordance with our principles of free enterprise and healthy competition, I'm going to ask you two to fight to the death for it."

Melodramatic? Maybe. But that's not so dissimilar to the reaction I heard when some people got wind of our cover feature this month.

"You're doing *what*?"

"Is that really a good idea?"

We try not to let the cat out of the bag. But when you have reporters of one media outlet showing up at another shop with notebook in hand—or making phone calls, sending e-mails, or scheduling interviews—it doesn't take long to divulge the secret. Especially in this town.

We simply wanted to do a story on niche publications.
Yeah, we're one of 'em. So what?

"But you're putting a *competitor* on your cover?"


"Oh, I see... you have a trick up your sleeve. A sinister motive."

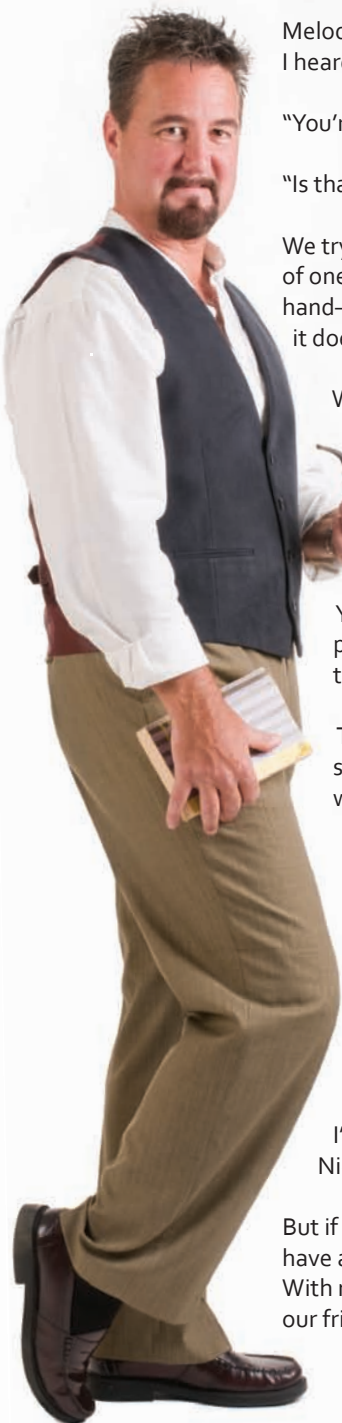
Yup. You caught us. We're gonna call out all the other niche publications—and show how bad they are. Decades of coverage, thousands of issues, and hundreds of thousands of readers.

The truth is, you don't ever really create a market. You can only serve a market. We may be the new kid on the block, but we've worked on other publications long enough to know a bit about the business. If a niche doesn't serve a market—it goes away. Simple as that.

So, I'm all for the spirit of competition. Let the best pubs win. The others... can go away. Our illustrious cover model, Richard Wells, first launched a little pub he entitled, *Ski South*. *Ski South!* What's next? *Sunbathing North?* *Midget Gangsters with Three-Legged Dogs?*

The mainstream press can continue with its uphill battle. I'll grab my little paw-challenged puppy and ski on down to Georgia. Niche pubs rule.

But if you just *have* to have a conspiracy... if you insist that we must have an ulterior motive... I'll confess. It all comes back to our cover theme. With my apologies to the Godfather of Niche: We're simply keeping our friends close. Our competitors closer. 



Smith / My View

from Page 62

has a state-of-the-art Web site and all of them give you something The Times doesn't. That's why they exist and may well outlive the elephant in the room.


As Richard Wells of Leisure Publishing points out so eloquently, The Times is owned by outsiders and most of these niche pubs are owned locally (Main Street Newspapers being a notable exception).

Here are a few observations from me and I think they have some value since I've not just been at this for a while, but that I've been doing it here since 1971.

- The Times is a good newspaper in general, especially when it is covering breaking local news and local sports, but I have heard for years from those in the business community that The Times simply doesn't get business. The explanation I've heard from those at The RT is, "We don't have the resources," which is an absurd excuse.
- There have been some dramatic changes in the way publications are

merging news and editorial copy. Bella and City magazines appear to be in partnership with advertisers, Bella working it a little less obviously. Main Street Newspapers runs ads on the front page, something unheard of in the U.S. in the past. The Blue Ridge Business Journal, whose staff is almost all female, has a new design and a new direction, both of which strongly reflect that women are in charge. Leisure Publishing has made a lot of money over the years with side jobs, but it recently lost the lucrative contract with the Virginia Division of Tourism.

- The change I believe most dramatic, though only in its infancy, is the steady emergence of the Web site as a part of what you get when you read the pubs. We are making our first incursion into putting fresh content on the Web with this story. Some publications get the value of the net, some don't. All will need to if they are to survive.

And that's the point in a very, very crowded field. 

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Letters

Editor:

The executive summary on the herbicide story in the [January 2009] issue of Valley Business FRONT says: "People living along Crystal Creek are up in arms about the spraying meant to eliminate cutting brush, but AEP insists it is perfectly safe. The dead deer says otherwise."

It appears that someone at FRONT determined that herbicides killed the deer. Even David Barudin didn't say conclusively that herbicides killed the deer. He carefully said he saw the deer acting sick a few weeks after we sprayed and it made

him think about herbicide use. From there he began his effort to ban herbicide use in the county. Every herbicide expert who's weighed in on this issue—VT, EPA and our own have stated that the dead deer is a coincidence at best. Some have said the animal would have likely died from overeating before it could have consumed enough of the herbicide to kill it.

I truly expect more factual reporting from FRONT.

Todd Burns
Appalachian Power
Corporate Communications
Roanoke

Editor:

I appreciate the nice article on my induction into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame outdoors, January FRONT), but I think you carried it to far when you implied that I am a poor speler.

Your Friend,

Bill Cochran
Catawba

Editor:

Thank you for designing such an integrated publication that really show cases the variety of our region.

I really enjoy reading this new publication. It is a quality piece—online and in hard copy.

Karin Clark,
Luna Innovations, Inc.
Blacksburg

Send letters to news@vbFRONT.com or any FRONT contact of your choosing (page 6). Submissions may be edited. You can see, read, print any current or back issue online at www.vbFRONT.com



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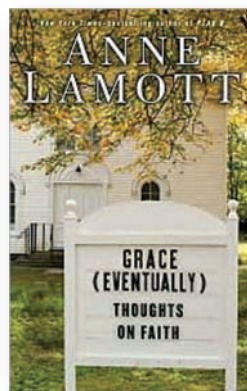
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Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our editor and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Each month, we will ask readers to submit two or three well-crafted paragraphs about a good book they've read lately (we don't read the bad books, thank you) and would like to recommend.



Iron Maggie

Claire Berlinski has crafted an intriguing—and very sympathetic—portrait of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in *There Is No Alternative: Why Margaret Thatcher Matters* (Basic Books, \$27.95). If you are of a certain age, you will remember Thatcher as the hard-nosed free enterprise advocate who rescued Great Britain from the very edge of the precipice of socialism and restored its rightful place as capitalist leader of the European Union.

For some readers this book will conjure memories of the great communist menace t'other side of the Iron Curtain and how it was neutralized by Thatcher and American President Ronald Reagan. Other readers—those who have read British history—might recognize Thatcher's temperamental similarity to Sir Winston Churchill.

There are lots of entertaining anecdotes including one that turned out to be apocryphal. Thatcher was aware that Britain's contributions to the EEU were out of balance with its benefits. As other heads of state pretended to ignore her, she slammed her purse on the table and said, "I want my money back!"

—Michael Ramsey

Lamott's wit, wisdom

Anne Lamott is danged funny—yet substantive. She struggles honestly with questions of theodicy, daily challenges (take single mom-hood and recovery from addictions, please) and ever-so-strong political views.

Try *Operating Instructions: A Journal of My Son's First Year* (Fawcett Columbine, 1993). Or *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith* (Pantheon Books, 1999), and *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith* (Riverhead Books, 2005). Her *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* (Anchor, 1995) offers sage words not just for writers: allow yourself to create a truly, uh, "poopy" first draft. Her newest is *Grace (Eventually): Thoughts on Faith* (Riverhead Trade, \$14 paperback). All the earlier books are available, but you'll have to look.

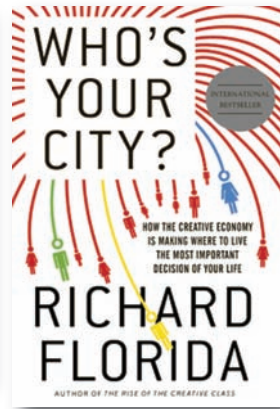
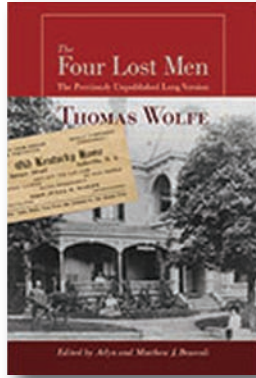
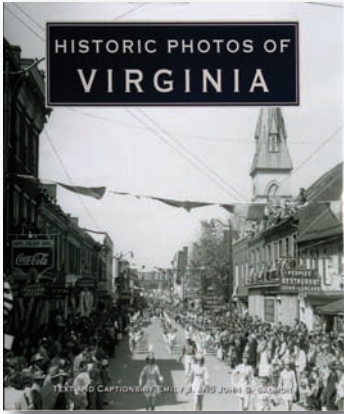
Lamott's wit-and-wisdom should have you shrieking Yes! Perfect! Nailed it!—alarming to the cats, but that's part of the fun.

—Emily Paine Carter, Salem raconteur

Just pictures

Emily J. Salmon and John S. Salmon, a couple of Library of Virginia veterans and authors of a book on the bicentennial of Franklin County, among several, have recently turned out *Historic Photos of Virginia* (Turner Publishing, \$39.95). I say "turned out," rather than "written" because this is a book of photos and captions with no context for any of them. It's as if they'd found a large box of pictures with inscriptions on the back and decided they had a book. It didn't happen that way, but it has just about that much depth.

As an exercise in aesthetics, however, it is a worthy book and the pictures can be studied for a long time. The entire state is covered in a random fashion, so that just when you think you've landed on something interesting, it's over. I would strongly suggest



that any of the Arcadia-published local photographic histories make more sense (and are a heck of a lot less expensive), but if you must have a big, splashy book of Virginia photos, this one will do.

—Dan Smith, *FRONT*

Wolfe examined

Thomas Wolfe, with whom I share a hometown and a writer I believe to be one of the five or six best in America's history, continues to be a fascinating study. There has been a spate of latter-day studies of the man, his times and his works of late and Wolfe scholars Arlyn and Matthew J. Bruccoli have added to it with their newly-edited *The Four Lost Men* (University of South Carolina Press, \$21.95). This short book of 21,000 words has evolved from the original Scribner's Magazine 1934 piece (Matthew Bruccoli is a Scribner's expert), which was later abridged for a 1935 anthology.

The book is something of a reminiscence by Wolfe, looking at his dying father and the rich stories he told, especially of four Republican presidents: Garfield, Arthur, Harrison and Hayes, Civil War generals all. They were men his father greatly admired and the young Wolfe shows his own admiration throughout.

The Bruccolis have previously put together an unabridged version of the classic *Look Homeward Angel* and this new volume is a worthy follow-up.

—Dan Smith, *FRONT*

Lurking dangers

Lawyer and law professor Stephen M. Goldman offers his broad and deep understanding of the legal issues that can make the office a dangerous place to be in *Temptations in the Office* (Praeger Publishers, \$39.95). Goldman, using solid teaching techniques and plenty of prescient examples, leads the reader through this potential minefield and offers ways of avoiding problems and facing these challenges. It's a solid lesson in company culture that few of us don't need.

—Dan Smith

Moving?

New-age economic development guru, Richard Florida, shows "how the creative economy is making where to live the most important decision of your life" in *Who's Your City: How the Creative Economy Is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life* (Basic, \$26.95).

It's all about place and then the job and Florida's data backs it up. Among all the data tables, statistics and maps, perhaps the most interesting is how he divides all people into five categories—singles, professionals, families with children, empty-nesters and retirees—and ranks all metropolitan statistical areas. Generally for the Roanoke MSA, the older you get, the better Roanoke ranks. Roanoke cracks the top five in two metrics of regions between 250,000 and 500,000 population on "best buy" for retirees and gays and lesbians. It's a must read if you are thinking about relocating.

—Stuart Mease, *Roanoke City Special Projects*



Mark Lawrence

Dan Smith

Approaching the General Assembly >

Executive Summary:

In a year when there will be "no money," says lobbyist Mark Lawrence, being heard by your representative will be increasingly important.

Mark S. Lawrence is vice president of governmental and external affairs for Carilion Clinic. He has been involved in Virginia governmental and legislative affairs for almost 20 years and is the principal representative for Carilion with the Virginia General Assembly and the U.S. Congress. He is involved in numerous regional and state community organizations. He spent 20 years with American Electric Power/ Appalachian Power. The Galax native and Virginia Tech graduate is married to Cynthia Lawrence, owner of Design Marketing in Roanoke.

At the approach of this year's General Assembly session, we asked him five questions.

Why is being in touch with the legislative process in Virginia important to the individual business person?

If you accept the premise that "All politics is local," then what happens in Richmond has a far greater potential to impact local business than issues at the federal level. Wise business people weigh in with legislators on issues of importance to their businesses.

How does the business person affect the system and how does that same person gain influence with legislators?

Legislators want to hear from business people about issues of importance to them and their businesses. We have a citizen legislature and state legislators do not have an office full of policy research staffers to determine the impact of each piece of legislation on their districts. They welcome input from constituents. Legislators want to understand the issues they are addressing, particularly the issues that come before the policy committees on which they serve. Business people gain influence by making the effort: a phone call, writing a letter, sending an e-mail, going to Richmond or Washington.

Guest Commentary



Speak loudly.
This will not be a session for the timid.

—Mark Lawrence

How important is it to belong to groups that seek to influence the legislative process and how much say would an individual have in those groups?

Very important. The key is to find the right fit for your business. This is true for both large and small businesses, but especially so for small business owners as they have to wear many hats on a daily basis and typically don't have the time (or the resources) to become experts on the General Assembly and how it works.

Business and professional organizations (like the Regional Chamber of Commerce or the various trade associations) often devote significant resources to monitoring and participating in the legislative process, and many are very good at it.

Some organizations have more influence than others because they are better organized, more engaged and knowledgeable about the legislative process. They are good at mobilizing their memberships on issues of importance to their lines of business and are good at communicating a clear, concise, consistent and accurate message to our legislators.

The General Assembly session is one in which there is little extra money to spend. Is there a best way to see that the goals of a specific individual or group are accomplished during these down times?


The reality is there will be no extra money available in the upcoming session. The Governor is suggesting a budget revenue shortfall in the \$range of \$2.9 billion. That number could grow even worse.

I believe it will be more important than ever that organizations with a vested interest in the state budget pay very close attention to what budget cuts are proposed, and how they will be impacted. Speak loudly. This will not be a session for the timid. We're hearing from everyone that everything will be on the table in crafting a balanced budget. This could impact everything from K-12 and higher education, healthcare, public safety, economic development incentives, transportation, research funding, technology and more.

What important business legislation do you anticipate being considered by the 2009 General Assembly session and what vital bills do you expect to emerge?

The 900 pound gorilla will be the biennial budget, and addressing the revenue shortfall. That has the potential to impact a lot of areas, and in fact, all other issues will pale in comparison. We could see close to 3,000 pieces of legislation that will be introduced in the 46-day session, so there will be lots of "stuff" with the potential to impact business.

I expect a number of energy-related proposals this session and some are hoping for a comprehensive transportation package, but I think that's unlikely. Look for legislation on employment and workplace-mandated insurance benefits, sales tax, worker's comp, as well as tourism, broadband and telecommunications legislation, education funding and others. The budget will drive everything else.

We should also not forget that healthcare and higher education are the economic drivers of our region, and actions at both the state and federal level have the potential to impact these areas. 



photos: Dan Smith

Carilion CEO **Ed Murphy** (left) and **Collette Edwards** of Cigna (right) await their turns to speak at the **Community Health Forum** at the Hotel Roanoke in January. That's **Steven Aldana** of Wellsteps giving his talk and stressing that lifestyle's effects on major illnesses is dramatic. He said that diet, exercise and tobacco use are instrumental in 71 percent of cancer deaths, 70 percent of strokes, 82 percent of heart-related deaths, and 91 percent of deaths resulting from diabetes. Even as Aldana spoke, the Hotel laid out a breakfast spread that would hardly have been recommended by the speakers (or, for that matter, those in the audience, very few of whom were overweight in a nation where 67 percent of the population is obese, according to Aldana).



Gene Marrano

Co-owner **Tim Rowland** goes over menu choices with Roanoke City Manager **Darlene Burcham** during the official opening for **Geonetti's Specialty Subs**, located on Campbell Avenue downtown (where Mill Mountain Coffee used to be). Rowland, who moved from Ohio to open Geonetti's here, is in partnership with Roanoke real estate broker **Rhonda Thomas**. Burcham was looking at the salads; she's been on a low-carb diet and was closing in on her target weight before the early January ribbon cutting.



photos: Dan Smith

Bev Witt, Brent McIntyre and **Glen Bratton** of Hollins University were helping unload electronic waste at the annual **e-Waste Pickup** at the Roanoke Civic Center parking lot in early January. The event, sponsored by Cox Communications, Hollins, Synergy and the City of Roanoke, collected tons of computers, printers, copiers and the like that would have been bound for the landfill. Much of it will be rehabbed or reused in some other way.



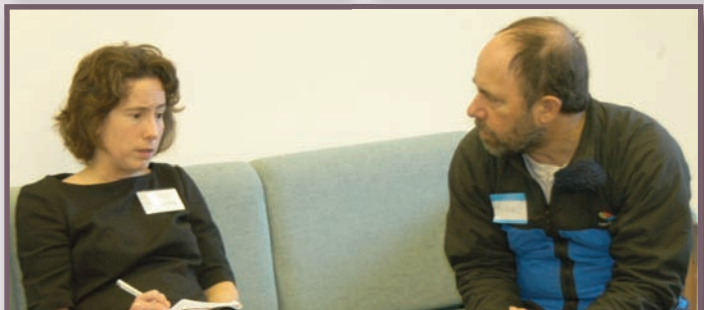
FRONT 'N ABOUT



Gene Marrano

Pierre Vimont (left), France's Ambassador to the United States, is led on a tour of the Taubman Museum of Art in January by Board of Trustees Chairman **John Williamson**. Former Advance Auto Parfs chairman **Nicholas Taubman** and his wife, **Jennie**, who donated \$15 million or so towards the Taubman project, were also on hand. Vimont, in town for a United Way dinner, noted how the construction of an avant-garde art museum in Bilboa, Spain, became a major economic development engine for that small, seaside town.

Valley Business FRONT and Hollins University teamed up to sponsor the **Roanoke Regional Writers Conference** in late January and drew nearly 150 people to the two-day event. The conference presented a \$1,500 scholarship to Horizon student **April Drummond** and offered a wide variety of writing-related classes in its second year of existence. Top: FRONT contributor **Alison Weaver** teaches a class on editing; Center left: Novelist **Sharyn McCrumb** talked to a large crowd in the Hollins auditorium; Center right: Hollins librarian **Maryke Barber** gives a lecture on internet research techniques; Bottom: Presenter **Cara Modisett** of Blue Ridge Country Magazine chats with student **Michael Abraham** of Blacksburg



photos: Dan Smith



Tamea Franco Woodward

David Perry

Going back to her earthy roots >

Executive Summary:

From jewelry and watches to anodized aluminum, Tamea Franco Woodward continues to polish her business for success.

By David Perry

"I'm an old earth mama," says Tamea Franco Woodward of Roanoke-based EastWest DyeCom, Inc.

Right. And how does an "old earth mama" become president/CEO and operations manager of a custom metal finishing company?

It makes perfect sense to Woodward. "I'm always fixing something or making something look better. That's the gift I've been given," she says. Her mechanical knack led Woodward to attend the Joseph Bulova School of Watchmaking in New York.

"When I got into watch making, it was a dying trade. I was still in the romantic age," she says.

Her first job was working at her uncle's jewelry store in West Virginia, and an opening for a watch maker at Henebrey's Jewelers at Valley View Mall brought her to Roanoke. But she was yet to discover her true calling.

Woodward was taking a class in metal-working in Gatlinburg, Tenn., when she discovered anodized aluminum. Maybe it was Woodward's previous experience with jewelry plating, but something about that material and her clicked. "I thought, 'I've found my calling,'" she says.

Later, when a position at another jeweler in town began to sour, she had an epiphany about her future in aluminum finishing. "I needed to commit to this or not do it," said Woodward. She took the plunge and started her company in her home. "All I had was \$1,300. It wasn't three months after I started EastWest DyeCom that I realized 'I'm sinking. I can't do this.'"

Undaunted, Woodward took part-time jobs, including a stint pumping gas, to stay afloat while she built her fledgling business.

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

She was working on a lathe at the John C. Nordt plant in Roanoke when a big order came in at EastWest Dyecom. She decided to focus exclusively on her dream and never looked back.

The early going was rough. A pair of Virginia Tech MBA candidates used her business for a case study. "They said, 'You're going to go broke,'" said Woodward. "But I'd never know if I don't try it."

Sometimes, she didn't know her own capabilities. "ITT came over during the first gulf war with this big casting and said, 'We hear you anodize aluminum, can you do this?'" says Woodward. "I said I can't do it, I don't have the thickness testers, I don't have the controls on my tank, I've never done it."

"And they said, 'Can you just put an insulated surface on it?' and I said, 'Oh yeah, I can do that!'"

Other rookie mistakes included purchasing 3,000 pounds of aluminum for a great price—"I couldn't get rid of it. I hadn't developed the market enough," says Woodward—and offering customers too many options. A marketing consultant reviewed Woodward's business model, and "in 30 minutes I changed the whole direction of the company," says Woodward. "I went from a \$50 minimum to a \$250 minimum. I went from 5,000 products to 31. From 30 colors to 13."

In Brief

Name: Tamea Franco Woodward

Age: 50

Company: EastWest DyeCom, Inc.

Location: Roanoke


Type of Business: Customized metal finisher specializing in aluminum

Title: President / CEO and Operations Manager

Background: An army brat born in Georgia, but home is wherever mom is. Attended trade school in New York, then worked as a watchmaker and jeweler. Started EastWest Dyecom in her home in 1987.

Fast forward to 2008. Now that the company is successful, working for a mix of metal artists and industry, what's next for the "old earth mama?" Veggies.

In January, she attended a "detox" center in Texas, where she fasted and ate organic, raw vegetables for two weeks to cleanse body, mind and soul. And next year, she plans to attend a raw food culinary school in California.

"When I got out of watch making school, my big investment was a Troy-Bilt tiller," says Woodward. "I'm going back to those roots." 

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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Investments

William Clingempeel has been named regional portfolio manager for BB&T Wealth in Roanoke.

Greystone Financial Group in Roanoke has named **Matt Mowles** and **Justin Harris** financial services representatives.

Banking

Beth Hatcher has been named vice president and loans operation manager for HomeTown Bank in Roanoke.



Thomas

J. Michael Thomas, has been named CEO for Lynchburg-based Select Bank. Thomas has been with the bank since it opened in 2007.

LEGAL FRONT

Law Firms

Frith Anderson & Peake in Roanoke has named **Timothy Mattson** an associate.



King



Ingle

Woods Rogers in Roanoke has named **B. Webb King** and **Nicole Ingle**, principals in the firm.



Brothers

Spilman Thomas & Battle in Roanoke has named **Carter R. Brothers** to its estate planning and administration, taxation, bond finance, and corporate law team.

WELLNESS FRONT

Dental

ETS Dental, a recruiting and placement firm for dentists in Roanoke, has promoted **Marcia Patterson** and **Marsha Hatfield-Elwell** to account executives.

Eldercare

Warm Hearth Village in Blacksburg has announced that several of its employees have passed the Registered Medication Aide examination. They are **Elizabeth Spicer**, **Annetta Martin**, **Lee White**, **Martha Vanover**, **Angela Perkins**, **Delores Cook**, **Lynda Hawley**, **Jamie Dadras**, **Rosie Alderman**, **Kristi Woolwine**, **Kathy Davis**, **Bridget Perfater** and **Cindy Epperly**.

Medical

Roanoke Heart Institute Director **John Shumate** has been designated Diplomat of the Certification Board of Cardiovascular Computed Tomography.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Communications

U.S. Cellular in Roanoke has named **Jim Spencer** wireless business consultant for the Southwest Virginia and Western North Carolina areas.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Architecture / Engineering

Chad Nixon of Hurd & Obenchain in Roanoke has become a LEED Accredited Professional. He is an electrical engineer and the company's seventh LEED accredited professional.

Real Estate

Zach Caldwell, **Walter Grewe III**, **Jackie Dobbins** and **Jenny Hartwell** have joined Long & Foster Real Estate North in Roanoke. L&F's **Ann Sharman** has earned the designation Accredited Buyer Representative by the National Association of Realtors. In the New River Valley, Long & Foster's **Skip Slocum** and **Rachael Hogan** have won the Good Neighbor Award from the NRVA Association of Realtors.

Jenifer Poff Cooper has been named executive assistant at the New River Valley Homebuilders Association.

The Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors has named **Mary Dykstra** of RE/MAX Valley Realtors its Realtor of the Year.

RETAIL FRONT

Have news about a career development in the retail front? Send it to news@vbFRONT.com

Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to news@vbFRONT.com
Photos should be color, 300dpi. A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

RECREATION FRONT

Have news about a career development in the recreation front? Send it to news@vbFRONT.com

is for the development of methods that will better prepare faculty and graduate students for interdisciplinary research.

EDUCATION FRONT

Colleges

Maura Borrego, an assistant professor in the Virginia Tech College of Engineering's Department of Engineering Education, has received a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers. The award, the first of its kind,

Radford University has named **Michael Moore** editor of the Virginia Journal. **Douglas Mitchell** and **Cynthia Creighton** have been named founding chairman and founding director of clinical education for the master's of occupational therapy program. **Dennis Grady** has been named director of the sustainability steering committee.

CULTURE FRONT

Have news about a career development in the culture front? Send it to news@vbFRONT.com



Drew

OTHER FRONTS

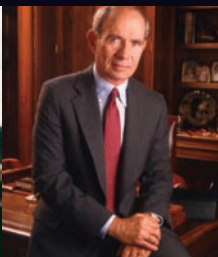
Government

H. Wyatt Walton III of Bedford (Thomas Rutherford Inc.) has been named to the Virginia Board of Contractors.

Funeral Service

Oakey's Funeral Service & Crematory in Roanoke has named **Nicole R. Drew** as manager of its AfterCare Services.

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FRONT Notes

Bingham: Her job is done

Taubman Museum
Art Director

Georganne Bingham, in announcing her plans to retire by the end of the year, drew a good bit of praise for finishing what she started: the opening of the region's high-profile, expensive new art museum.

Said Bingham, "I am ready to enjoy the pleasure and time of retirement, and I look forward to the opportunity to travel, pursue new interests, and visit family and friends." The board will hire an outside firm to find a replacement and Bingham will work with the firm.

Bingham was brought on board in August of 2003 to lead the museum's building project, the 81,000 square foot facility which opened on Nov. 8, 2008 and is expected to eventually cost more than \$60 million (\$54 million has been raised). The annual operating budget is more than \$4 million. Bingham helped increase museum membership from 500 households to more than 3,000. The museum's permanent collection has grown under Bingham, with over 310 new pieces added to the collection.

"I love the museum, and this community," Says Bingham. "I am lucky to be able to end my working career in Roanoke, where I plan to remain."

Creative economy

The **City of Roanoke** is seeking to identify 30 volunteers who will become what it's calling "Creative Connectors," people who will help transform the city. The goal is sustainability and livability. The volunteers will spend several hours a week for the next 12 months as part of the Creative Communities Leadership Program (CCLP), which was launched by the Creative Class Group (CCG), an advisory services firm associated with Richard Florida, he of the clear mind when talking about urban solutions. "Creative Connectors" will involve working with the community to build "a more authentic and prosperous region through the creation of sustainable projects," according to its literature. The CCLP will be launched at a two-day seminar for the selected leaders March 30 and 31, where the Creative Class Group will work with volunteers to build an understanding of the creative economy, the community's 4Ts (Talent, Technology, Tolerance, and Territory Assets), identify strategic economic goals, and develop a framework of projects to engage the Roanoke community. Go to www.roanokeva.gov/creative to apply.

Adjustments

CSX Corporation, which has facilities in this region, plans to increase rates and cut rates. Fourth-quarter

earnings were down 32 percent and revenue rose just four percent.

Closings

Goody's Family Clothing, which has 287 stores nationally, plans to close all of them, affecting as many as 10,000 workers nationally. Goody's has two stores in the Roanoke Valley and stores in Christiansburg, Martinsville, Danville, South Boston, Galax and Wytheville. It recently emerged from Chapter 11 bankruptcy, but its liquidation sale is expected to be completed by late March unless a buyer for some of the better-performing stores can be found.

Macy's, which has a store in Roanoke, plans to close 11 stores in nine states (not the Roanoke store or any other Virginia store).

Walgreen Company, which has drugstores throughout the region, plans to trim 1,000 jobs by the middle of the year. Those cuts will come in corporate and management levels.

Earnings

Norfolk Southern, which has seen fuel prices drop and its prices increase has reported a two percent—2.5 billion—increase in earnings for the fourth quarter. NS earned \$452 million, \$1.21 per share.

StellarOne Corp has posted a fourth-quarter

loss of \$898,000, four cents per diluted share.

Hirings

FedEx will enter the New River Valley with 60 new jobs when it builds a large operation in Pulaski County, replacing its Radford facility. The facility will be 376,000 square feet and will cost \$4 million. It will be three miles from I-81 and should open by the fall.

Labor contract

Kroger's employees in Virginia, West Virginia and Tennessee have approved a four-year contract, about 95 percent of them in this region voting in favor. The local union represents 3,000 workers in this region. The contract runs for four years.

Layoffs

As the economy in the region continues to struggle, firms are announcing layoffs and jobs reductions. Here's the latest round:

Advance Auto has laid off 19 full-time employees at the Centre for Industry and Technology facility. Those layoffs are expected to be temporary, but if the economy doesn't turn, company officials say, they could be permanent. Advance, which is based in Roanoke, has 1,500 employees in the Roanoke Valley.

Orvis, which only recently was at a jobs

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fair recruiting workers, was to have laid off about 30 people at its distribution center in Roanoke at the end of January. The center employs 480 people.

About 650 workers have been laid off by **Volvo's** plant in Dublin on top of 1,000 furloughed in May. Declining demand for the company's large trucks gets the blame.

Two years of losing money has been enough for the textile dye company **Fred Whitaker Company** in Roanoke. It plans to close at the end of March, leaving 136 people out of work. The company was founded in 1917 and has occupied 443,000 square feet at the former American Viscose plant (it is the largest tenant in the Roanoke Industrial Center) in southeast Roanoke since 1962. The company plans to sell its assets.

Wells Fargo & Co., the new owner of Wachovia, says it will trim 35 jobs in the Roanoke Valley, most in retail loans. There are 1,800 employees in the Roanoke Valley. Wells Fargo's fourth quarter loss is \$2.55 billion.

Norfolk Southern has indicated that the six percent workforce reduction of the past eight months is not the end of it. The company's profit during the fourth quarter is up 13 percent, but that came with higher shipping costs and lower fuel costs. Train

and engine service crews are down from 12,380 to 11,622.

The Roanoke Times reacting to decreased revenues has frozen wages for 2009 and told employees they must take off five unpaid days between January and June. Times offices will be closed on five Mondays during those months. Publisher Debbie Meade says the spread misery is an effort "to be as fair and equitable as possible."

Corning Inc., which has a large plant in Christiansburg that manufactures a variety of filters, plans to lay off 3,500 workers worldwide (13 percent of its workforce), about half in its U.S. facilities. About 500 of the total were laid off in the fall. Corning, a specialty glass maker and the world's largest maker of liquid crystal display glass, announced the cutbacks as its fourth-quarter profit plunged 65 percent to \$249 million.

MeadWestvaco, which has a major plant in Covington, is looking at closing or restructuring 12 of its 14 plants and laying off about 2,200 of its 22,000 workers. Officials would not speculate on the future of the Covington facility.

Freight Car America in Roanoke plans to trim 120 of an estimated 300 person workforce by March 14. The company has reported losses for 2008 (partly based on a \$51 million cost for shutting down a

Pennsylvania factory), but also reports a backlog of orders.

Clear Channel, which has radio stations in this region, plans to eliminate 1,850 jobs at some of its 800 radio stations nationally. The cut represents nine percent of the company's workforce. The layoffs will be across the board: radio, billboards, corporate offices.

Home Shopping Network has trimmed nine jobs at the call center in Bonsack. There are about 900 employees at the center. Company-wide, there were 110 jobs cut.

Coptly & Co. purchased

Richmond-based-**Thalhimer** has purchased Coptly & Company, a commercial real estate company in Roanoke, founded 17 years ago by Bob Coptly. Thalhimer is a member of the Cushman & Wakefield Alliance and has offices throughout Virginia. It is the leasing agent for Towers and Towne Square shopping centers in Roanoke, among other clients. Coptly will remain as senior vice president and manager

of the Roanoke office. He is a Roanoke native and a former football player at VMI. Coptly & Company has nine employees, who will be retained, and Coptly manages about 375,000 square feet of space.

Expansion questions

Expansion plans at the **Hotel Roanoke** are in the hands of Milwaukee-based Kahler Slater as of the first of the year and there are hopes its drawings will be completed by the spring. There is some question about the effects of the economy on the expansion, which includes 125 new guest rooms, a spa and wellness center, and 15,000 square feet of meeting space, according to published reports.

Home sales down

The Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors says home sales dropped 20 percent in 2008, compared to the previous year. A total of 3,962 homes were sold.

FRONT Notes

Institutes merge

The Virginia Bio-informatics Institute at Virginia Tech has established a new partnership with the **Mathematical Bio Sciences Institute**.

The partnership will provide VBI researchers with further educational and research opportunities. The new initiative supports the development and application of mathematical, statistical, and computational methods for solutions to problems in the bio-sciences.

RRMM anniversary

RRMM Architects, which has an office in Roanoke, is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The firm was formed in 1988 as Cederquist Rodriguez Ripley, merged in 2002 with Motley & Associates of Roanoke, a firm owned by the successor of Roanoke's 72-year old design firm, Smithy & Boynton.

Promising incubator

Blacksburg-based **VT KnowledgeWorks** has been named Most Promising New

Incubator 2008 by the Science Alliance Conference on Best Practices in Science-Based Incubation, a world-wide organization.

Technology

The National Center for Defense Manufacturing and Machining has named **Schultz-Creehan** of Blacksburg an alliance partner. The NCDMM alliance partnership group is comprised of established technology companies, precision manufacturers, universities and government labs and emerging technology developers. Partnership with NCDMM provides several benefits such as advanced training opportunities to enhance current manufacturing capabilities.

Gift for Hollins

Frank Batten, retired chairman and CEO of Landmark Communications in Norfolk (owner of The Roanoke Times), and his wife, Jane, have given \$3 million support of **The Hollins Campaign for Women Who Are Going Places**. The

Battens' gift will support Hollins' Batten Leadership Institute, create in 2002. It provides an array of programs and initiatives focusing on students.

Lab in a box

The National Science Foundation recently awarded the **College of Engineering at Virginia Tech** an almost \$500,000 four-year grant to expand its Lab-in-a-Box program for electrical and computer engineering classes to reach online students, while helping Blacksburg students with after-hours questions.

Financial reports

MainStreet Bank-Shares has suspended its five cents dividend after losing \$561,180 during the fourth quarter of 2008.

The interest rebate program at **Roanoke Valley Credit Union** returned \$54,031 to its 1,501 members at the end of 2008.

Good Samaritan moves

Good Samaritan Hospice has moved into a larger headquarters on Electric Road in Roanoke County. At 10,000 square feet, the new office is double the size of the previous location and features more training rooms, additional meeting and office space and natural light. "It's our mission that defines us, not our office," says Sue Ranson, executive director. "Yet, our new space makes our mission easier, with more room for family and group meetings, a comfortable environment for our staff, and a place where hospice care will be more visible and accessible to the community."

Lens patent

Roanoke-based **PixelOptics**, an optical technology company, has introduced an alternative to bifocal, trifocal and progressive addition lenses and the patent has been approved. The patent also covers a lens being developed that focuses automatically. The company's president is Ron Blum,



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5:00 - 7:30pm
Holiday Inn - Valley View
Roanoke
jsnead@roanokechamber.org

NCTC Lessons in Leadership

March 4
1:00 - 5:00pm
Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center
info@thetechnologycouncil.com

Understanding Mold in the Restoration Industry

March 18
8:30am
Salem Civic Center
Community Room
brendagiles@servepromp.com

Tourism Development Council Meeting

March 26
Montgomery Regional Chamber of Commerce conference room
azenobia@montgomerycc.org

Flourishing in Tough Economic Times

March 27
8:00 - 10:00am
Taubman Museum of Art
scott.burton@coxmedia.com

Your Business Looking Ahead

March 31
8:30 - 10:00am
Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce conference room
sbdcc@roanokechamber.org

Kiwanis Club of Roanoke

Contact: 540-344-1766

Cosmopolitan Club of Roanoke

Contact: 540-772-2778

American Business Women

Contact: 540-443-9832

Roanoke Toastmasters

540-342-3161

Valley Easy Speakers

540-389-3707

Blue Hills Toastmasters

540-983-9260

Talk of the Town

540-562-4276

Franklin County Toastmasters

540-484-5537

Christiansburg Toastmasters

540-231-6771

Blacksburg Toastmasters

540-231-6771

Virginia Tech Toastmasters

540-231-6771

who has a long history of innovation.

Imaging equipment

Lewis-Gale Medical Center has received a recommendation from the state agency in charge of such things to add new imaging technology equipment at the center. Permission for the equipment for **Carilion Clinic** is expected to be granted. The Virginia Commissioner of Health has the ultimate

say. Carilion lawyers have been seeking permission to use the PET/CT scanner for a specific, limited purpose that would not interfere with Lewis-Gale's intent.

Team for jobs

WBRA, Blue Ridge Public Television, and a number of media partners are teaming up to present jobs information to people in this region in a monthly, hour-long

program. The program is called "Job Quest" and features a news-style format with anchors, feature and news stories.

Executive changes

Roanoke-based **Advance Auto Parts** has named Jim Wade president and Kevin Freeland as Chief Operating Officer. Darren Jackson will retain the title of CEO and Wade and Freeland will continue

to report directly to him. Wade is responsible for Advance's customer-focused and sales-driving functions and will lead the execution of the Company's Commercial Acceleration and DIY Transformation strategies. Freeland is responsible for the day-to-day management of Advance's operational functions. Wade is based in Roanoke, Freeland in Minneapolis.

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