

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

\$3 • ISSUE 45 • JUNE 2012

vbFRONT.com

Strummin'
Up Business

Rail Station
Rehab

Legal
Journalist

Food
Demos

Keith
Humphry

Grocery Stores

John Bryant
Roanoke Natural Foods Co-op



NEW FACE AT VALLEY BANK

William Dixon



Having been in the financial services industry for more than 25 years, I have never encountered a bank more dedicated to its mission of serving the financial needs of the Roanoke community than Valley Bank.

What attracted me to Valley is the bank's three fold commitment to high quality service, community reinvestment, and all around excellence.

Adhering to these guiding principles has been the primary reason for the Bank's continued success in the Roanoke Valley.

My passion has always been to make a positive impact on the business community in this area and I am proud to be a member of the Valley Bank team.

Valley Bank▲

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Small Business Banking Officer

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WELCOME to the FRONT

A lot of us have been banging the “buy local” drum for some time now, but it appears the message is still not getting through to some. It needs to. This is about the health of our local economy, our local businesses, our local communities.

Buying locally does not promote provincialism so much as it preserves our society, piece by piece. You can call it “provincial” if you want to shop at farmer’s markets, to buy from small hardware stores and drink at the corner bar, to frequent local book stores and purchase appliances at locally-owned dealers. It might be a small-town mindset to have your printing done at a local print shop, your advertising and public relations created by a local firm, your home or business built and designed by a contractor and architect from this area and your banking through a home-grown institution. Eat at local restaurants, attend local live theater and music presentations, buy locally-produced publications that concentrate on local news. Listen to locally-produced radio.

All of that is part of the concept because by doing it, we support ourselves, we tell ourselves that we are important, that we are the equal or superior to the mega-companies. By staying home as much as we can—and it’s not always possible—we support community groups and keep ourselves unique. We diminish environmental impact and get better service from people we know. We invest in ourselves and we send our tax money to our local governments. In short, we encourage prosperity at a local level, the most important and personal level.

The responsibility here is to know who’s local and who’s not. Who cares about the community enough to have a firm home base here? Those are the people we want to deal with. It is a lesson we should not forget. No matter who we are.

Tom Field



Dan Smith



“Power To The People”

Wind turbines at the new William Fleming High School Stadium will generate a portion of the power required to run the stadium. When the turbines produce more power than the stadium uses, the excess power will flow backward through the meter into the APCO grid for use by other APCO customers. The Stadium’s electric bill is in turn reduced by the amount of power returned to the APCO grid.

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LewisGale Women's Center Alleghany

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540-862-6878

LewisGale Breast Center Salem

1900 Electric Road, Salem
540-776-4983

LewisGale Imaging Center Brambleton

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540-283-3700

Approximate size of tumors when discovered by mammography

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Average-size lump found — by **first** mammogram.



Average-size lump — found by **accident**.



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Valley Business FRONT

COVER STORY

DEPARTMENTS

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Beyond Paper or Plastic?

Our FRONTreport on Grocery Stores

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Cover photography of John Bryant by Greg Vaughn Photography. Art direction by Tom Field.

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JUNE



Anne Giles Clelland



Sheila Ellis-Glasper



David Perry



Anne Piedmont



Greg Vaughn



Randolph Walker

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 58.

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 serve as a sounding board throughout the 18 month rotational term that 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."

CONTRIBUTORS



Tom Field



Kathleen Harshberger



Gene Marrano



Michael Miller



Laura Purcell



Dan Smith



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen



hand out free goodies to people—
what's not to like about that job?

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The sales of
smart phones
surpassed the
sales of PCs

— Page 33

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John Williamson RGC (Tech/Industry)

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.

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Beyond Paper or Plastic?

Our **FRONT**report on Grocery Stores

A trip to the grocery store >

Executive Summary:
For grocers in our region one thing is clear: it's highly competitive; and keeping that customer satisfied is job one

Story & Photos
By Tom Field

The grocery store.

There's no single business segment that's more pedestrian. None that is more ordinary. Routine. Common.

We drive by them every day. Run through them on our lunch breaks. Stock up with them over our weekends. We storm them on Superbowl Sunday and when the weatherman mentions the word "snow."

It's not glamorous (though some stores are changing that perception), but the product suppliers to our kitchen tables, lunch boxes, bathrooms, medicine cabinets, and more make up a business segment that continues to serve us, continues to employ us, and continues to sustain us despite the economic climate. That's not to say the grocery, food and beverage industry never needs to change.

Change means more than the coins that slide out the return at your checkout register when it comes to the grocery store business. (A case in point right there: fewer grocery store shoppers even use cash these days.)

Today's grocery store caters to credit cards, debit cards, SNAP cards (previously called food stamps), and loyalty cards. Increasingly, stores are accepting scanned codes right off your mobile phone. If someone in line dares to write a check, she might very well get cold hard stares and rolling eyes from all the shoppers behind her.

The proverbial "paper or plastic?" question from the bagger isn't even asked in today's grocery store. You get the lightweight plastic bags, which you can return for recycling, or you bring in your own reusable canvas, hemp or other eco-friendly bags. (The reusable bags are becoming fashion statements, with graphics or logos that reflect the shopper's preferences.)

Except for the tiniest and almost extinct mom-n-pop stores, usually tucked away within an urban neighborhood (principally serving people who don't own or drive their own transportation), today's grocery store isn't the place that just stocks your bread, milk and canned goods. What is considered the "essentials" has expanded far beyond feeding ourselves.

Order flowers. Get a flu shot. Attend a wine tasting. Sample products. Fill up your car with gas. Rent a movie. Have your event catered. Do some banking. Install new tires on your car. That's what we do at today's grocery store.

COVER STORY

Super-Size or Super-Niche^{or}

In the past two decades the grocery retail business has experienced a fundamental change. For grocers older than 20 years that are still in business and for the new ones that have sprung up since then (through start up, merger, or assimilation by expanding product line), there has been a deciding split. The business either expands to a supermarket model—or the business adapts a super-concentrated model, becoming distinctive in very selective areas. The grocery stores that didn't convert to one of these models went out of business or exist in a very limited presence.

In either case, the change in our grocery stores is simply a direct application of the oldest principle in economic theory: give the customer what he wants.

Grocery trade groups are always trying to figure out what it is, exactly, that today's consumer wants. Given the number and intensity of reports and analyses, the battles in advertising, the high state of competition among stores that are merely minutes (or seconds) away from each other, one might think grocery store shoppers change their minds every day.

It's what Supermarket News calls the “discerning” and “careful” consumer, as one of its reports recently stated:

The current economic situation has exacted a heavy toll on consumers, putting many into a hunker-down mode when it comes to spending. Necessity has driven some of the change; many consumers simply have less money. Others, though, are making a more conscious choice to watch their spending and even upend their habits.

The implications for food retailers could be profound. A more discerning and careful consumer means that both marketers and retailers may have to work harder to meet their needs. But it also opens up opportunities for companies that understand the new consumer mindset and respond appropriately.

While the industry tries to figure it all out, Old Mother Hubbard continues to stock her cupboard. Along with men, women, children, single, married, old and young. Today's grocery store demographic is all across the board more than it has ever been in history, the Journal of Marketing reports. Though the shopping habits differ according to gender, age, and vocation, a grocery retailer simply has to address “more than mom” if the statistics mean anything.

“Super Market” or just a “super” market?





June Cleaver may ask her husband Ward to pick up ready-to-eat chicken at the grocery deli on his way home from work not because she's setting the dining room table for dinner—but because she's still at work herself. And besides, he can give Wally a ride home from his part time job as a bagger / stocker (make that "sales associate"). The Beaver, meanwhile, has texted his promo code to dad, so he can rent that just-released action movie at the Redbox vending machine.

Choices and more Choices

We chose which grocery store we patronize in a much more intentional manner than we used to. That's because we have so many more choices. Even the stores we "don't choose to choose"—the one we pop in simply because it is

The FRONT mystery shopper experiment

The assignment was simple. Select the three largest grocery store brands and two independent stores in our region. Pick only one store location from each. Make the selection completely random, but see that all five stores are spread across our FRONT coverage region. Visit each store all within a day, dropping in unannounced. Ask to speak with the store manager on duty. Explain the "meet your grocer" assignment and ask the manager three questions and write down the responses. Find one customer who's willing to share the reason why he or she shops at this store. Report the findings in this story.

Why all the mystery?

Our grocery store story is unique. The typical "state of the industry" article is one in which we interview key players and corporate executives. We wanted to present the main stores in our region, and it didn't take long to find out they all say the same thing if you go that direction. We're the best store, we support the community, and we're all about serving our customer. However, one other perspective that was vehemently shared by all is the admission that it is very competitive out there... like never before. So, we decided

to present our story from that very starting point. On any given day, regardless of the manager's mood, staff morale, current state of merchandise inventory, time of day—whatever... each grocery store has to be on top of its game. Because on any given day, any given customer can say to himself, "I'll keep coming back to this store," or "I'm never coming back."

Was our mystery shopper tactic fair? No. Anyone can have a bad day. But in another respect it's about the fairest approach of all. No store knows when you might step inside. And each needs to be consistent at least on the basics of service if you are going to continue to give them your business.

The Route

Okay. Hop in the car. It's a regular weekday in early May. We're going on a 70 mile ride, from Bedford to Christiansburg. We're wearing regular clothes (not a suit); and we're not carrying anything in with us (no clipboard, recorders, etc.). Only if the manager meets with us will we pull out our notepad. We'll go back to the car and get our camera once we're finished meeting. This experiment is a one-shot deal. The store, the staff, the customer... get one chance.

This has all the signs of being a complete disaster.

COVER STORY


in direct route to where we commute—is in fact, still a choice. There's usually another one practically on the other side of the road (or within a few minutes).

In the Roanoke and New River Valley region alone, there are approximately 210 grocery stores (City Data; classified as "grocery store" only). And more retailers, from Big Lots to Target are getting into the game. Target in Christiansburg already carries most grocery items, and Target in Roanoke opens up its expanded grocery section this month.

Some people aren't all that loyal to any particular store or store brand; and that represents a significant change in shopping patterns since at least the 1970s, according

to Supermarket News. Still, the majority of regular grocery store customers prefer a specific store, and they will seek that same store brand whenever possible when they are elsewhere (traveling or just in a different part of town).

Even the most loyal customers aren't taken for granted if you believe the annual reports from the leading stores.

Competition is recognized as a credible and constant threat, and with each new year the grocery stores reinvent themselves to one degree or another to keep Mother Hubbard and the rest of the community passing through the sliding glass doors. 

Meet Your Grocer

8:48 am

Wal-Mart / Bedford

1126 E Lynchburg-Salem Tpk

I'm not off to a very good start.

There is a line at customer service, so I walk over to the bakery, since it's right by the door. They may get me the manager for the grocery side anyway, I think; since I don't really need someone over the entire Super Wal-Mart. The lady behind the display case seems suspicious of me when I ask for the manager. That's fine; she's probably not used to that request. She makes a call, and within minutes, sure enough, Steve Wilmoth comes up front, walking briskly. The response time: very satisfactory.

But it goes downhill after that.

Steve tells me he can't talk to me. About anything. I tell him I'm not writing a story about Wal-Mart. I'm merely doing a little "meet your grocer" feature, and want to tell "his" story. How he got into the grocery business and what he likes about it.

No dice. Steve apologizes, and says he cannot talk to me as it is against corporate

policy. Okay; I've ran across that before. I tell him I'm reporting back to our readers; and could he not just share his personal perspective. Again... no. To his credit, Steve makes a call right there on the spot, just to check (though I have no idea how far up the chain he had to call). One last plead, and I remind him that if the other stores don't have a problem sharing, then this experience might not make Wal-Mart look so good.



Steve smiles and says he is a good employee and follows company rules. He hopes I understand. I do. I understand Wal-Mart does not trust its own employees.

As I exit, Steve hollers something about his beginning as a "bag boy" at King's (grocery store) way back in 1967. Too bad I didn't get to hear the story. I can tell Steve's a likeable guy.

MANAGER TAKEAWAY:

Wal-Mart does not trust its own employees

Gayle Hamrick lives down the same road from this Wal-Mart in Bedford County. She loves the store.

"It's very convenient; and I really like the one-stop shopping you get here," Hamrick says. "I can get everything I need, even medicine... and I love the lawn and garden center."

Hamrick commutes to her job in the lodging industry near the Roanoke airport. She's not going to shop for perishable items on the way or during work. Like most people, she picks a place close to home. The Wal-Mart in Bedford County gets her business, and there is little incentive to shop anywhere else for someone who is busy and can benefit from picking up most anything she needs at one place.

CUSTOMER TAKEAWAY:

Positioning your store near residences (even bedroom communities) could be the smartest decision of all.



10:11 am Kroger / Roanoke

4404 Brambleton Ave

The lady at the customer service desk doesn't even blink when I ask for the store manager. I could be in a positive state or negative state; I don't think it matters. She doesn't even ask why, and immediately picks the phone up. Sure enough, store co-manager David White approaches out of nowhere, before the customer service rep hangs up, it seems. White appears a little thrown by my strange request (three questions for a feature), but he agrees to chat. It turns out he's relatively new to the grocery store scene (two years) but he's been in

retail for many years (Davidson's clothier) and graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in management science.

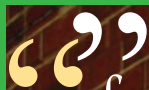
White says what he likes most about the grocery store business is the customer interaction. He grew up in the very same neighborhood as the store, and both his father and brother worked for Kroger. He goes on to say he believes people pick his store because of the service. Interestingly enough, there is another Kroger store just one-half mile up the road (Cave Spring Corners); and I could feel a bit of "bragging rights" as White hints at customers choosing this store over the other one.



“very convenient”

— Gayle
Wal-Mart shopper
Bedford County

Kroger's
David White



fresh produce

— Kammy
Kroger shopper
Roanoke County



MANAGER TAKEAWAY:

Each store has its own personality; and people claim it as their own.

Kammy Poff is walking in to the store. The Roanoke County resident quickly cites three reasons why she chooses this particular store.

"[Kroger] is convenient; they have fresh produce; and I live nearby," Poff says.

CUSTOMER TAKEAWAY:

Make the shopping experience as easy as possible.

12:57 pm

Tinnell's / Roanoke

2205 Crystal Spring Ave

When I walk into Tinnell's, I'm told the managers are in a meeting. All it took was a little frowning of my eyebrows (as if I didn't know what to do about that statement) and the clerk says, "but let me see what I can do." Within seconds, beverage manager Adam Markham is summoned.

Markham does not hesitate when I tell him I have questions. If there are corporate policies here, I think they're primarily embedded in the

brains of all the staff, or perhaps scrolled on a rafter in the roof. Markham says the rafters are signed by people who have worked for Tinnell's over the years; and that's just one of a thousand stories about the history of this little community grocer.

Markham appears genuinely in love with his work, if not the very building itself. He launches into story after story, from the "little ol' ladies who come in here, who used to come here as little girls when their mothers brought them" to the posting of holiday cards on the community board, and how "people race down here every Christmas to get the best position."

In one sense, Tinnell's is a step back in history (founded in 1937), but today it is also a hip little enclave, where people attend wine tastings

and have the butcher prepare their smoked trout. The "locavore" movement is alive and well here, along with the handmade world-class cheese and sausages. Markham says he loves the merchandising end of the business, making things pretty in the store, and ordering just what the customer wants if it is something that can't be found in the store that day.

Though Tinnell's has earned its spot as a landmark in the Crystal Spring community, its ambience suggests a special niche "boutique" and Markham says new visitors are surprised at the well-stocked selection and competitive prices.

MANAGER TAKEAWAY:

Act like you own the place; like you're one of the family.



Tinnell's
Adam Markham

Barbara Lemon is passionate about Tinnell's even as she talks while pushing her cart.

"It's the finest establishment within the City of Roanoke," she states emphatically. "Owner Rhett's mother and I were contemporaries," Lemon says, "and the store stocks over 1,500 different items." I don't think she counts them all, but the fact that she provides the statistic says a little about her investment in this little store.

CUSTOMER TAKEAWAY:

Tradition can still play a role.



2:16 pm Food Lion / Salem

50 Wildwood Rd

Assistant Manager Kevin Lyle is called up when I ask for the manager on duty. He not only answers the questions, he tells the story. We even go into a special conference room (which I discover is the one used for area store managers' meetings, because it's large and easy to get to, right off I-81 between all the various stores).

Lyle has been with Food Lion for 24 years, starting when he was 16-years old (though he doesn't look a whole lot older than that). Although Food Lion is a corporate giant (employing 73,000), Lyle doesn't describe his employer that way. When asked about the current branding strategy that's being heavily advertised, he says that was

"Cathy's idea" (the COO, as if he just bumped into her on some recent jaunt out in the neighborhood).

There doesn't appear to be any burnout, as Lyle says what he enjoys most about the grocery store business is "meeting people, it's high-paced, and there is always a lot of stuff to do." He continually praises the company for "providing for my family" and says the company was "great" to grant him time off through the Family Medical Leave Act on the recent birth of his son (he has four children).

Lyle wants to talk about Food Lion's new branding initiative (I think he believes this is one reason for the story) and says the lower prices are real, and that he likes the clean, "clutter-free" environment, and improved eye-appeal. He loves to talk about his family, and it's just as clear to me he loves his work.

“”
the finest

— Barbara
Tinnell's shopper
Roanoke City



Food Lion's
Kevin Lyle

MANAGER TAKEAWAY:

It's OK to be a cheerleader for your company if you're not faking it.

Michael and Melanie Brizendine don't usually shop at this Food Lion. They're regulars at the Food Lion in Daleville (just north on I-81). However, today they were passing through on their way back to their home in Craig County, and "this store was a Food Lion, and the one that was on our way."

Both Brezendines say they like the pricing at Food Lion.

They also like "My Essentials," a house brand of value-priced merchandise.

CUSTOMER TAKEAWAY:

Lower prices are very attractive.



“low prices”

— Michael & Melanie
Food Lion shoppers
Craig County



Our FRONTshopping expedition went East to West, trekking from Wal-Mart to Wades, Bedford County to Montgomery County

4:06 pm

Wades / Christiansburg

510 Roanoke Street

"Gary!" the girl at the front counter hollers out. "A customer wants you!"

To be clear, Wades grocery store has paging. But why bother to use a microphone if you see your manager walking across the other side of the store? I don't mind. I tell the clerk I will catch him. It isn't easy. The manager disappears around one tall row of shelves; and I finally find him midway down another aisle, marking cans of beans or something.

Gary Willard is happy to talk with me. He says he could use a little break.

We ascend (literally) to his loft-office with the half-wall (so he can look over the entire store floor) and sit at his very cluttered desk. Willard is the classic grocery store manager I remember. He even looks like Mr. Whipple of "Don't Squeeze the Charmin" commercial fame.



Willard doesn't even ask what or why I'm here. He freely tells his story. He says, "I love my customers, I know the families, and a lot of them are my classmates."

Willard graduated from Christiansburg High School, attended New River Community College and Radford University, and is married with four kids. He says Wades is community-oriented and he likes that the store gives him the freedom to support local charities and organizations.

When asked about changes in the business, Willard surprises me by mentioning something so specific.

"Scanners," he says. "We were the first to have a scanner in our area."

The automation really did lead to significant changes, apparently, from inventory control to labor and scheduling.

Willard does talk about competition. He says "everybody's after that piece of the pie, from CVS to even Target" but that Wades is really a good size. Easy in, easy out.

MANAGER TAKEAWAY:

Get to know your customers.

Joyce Keith is from Riner. She responds as if there is no good reason on the planet why anyone would shop any place other than Wades.

"I won't buy my meats nowhere but here. They have good sales and good people. They're sweet."

CUSTOMER TAKEAWAY:

Be sweet. 

“ ”
good
people

— Joyce
Wades shopper
Montgomery County



Quick Stats

Food Lion Salisbury, NC
1957
1,300 stores / 11 states
73,000 employees

Kroger Cincinnati, OH
1883
2,460 stores / 31 states
338,000 employees

Tinnell's Roanoke, VA
1933
1 store
14 employees

Wades Christiansburg, VA
1925
4 (plus 15 convenience stores)
500 employees

Wal-Mart Bentonville, AR
1962
10,130 stores / 27 countries
2,000,000+ employees



“The Co-Op”

The Roanoke Natural Foods Co-op is located in the historic Grandin Court neighborhood of Roanoke. The store is built on the concept of “community-ownership” and is self-governed.

The most recent report says the Co-op is experiencing significant growth; and director of marketing and communications John Bryant (yes, that’s him on our FRONTcover) believes one of the reasons for it is “a renewed interest in supporting locally owned businesses.”

Bryant has been with the Co-op for three years. He likes the marketing side of the business and says the only other time he worked in a grocery store was back when he was in high school. He worked the midnight shift as a stocker for one summer at Winn-Dixie.

“Food is the centerpiece to so many aspects of our lives,” Bryant says. “Our commitment to high-quality organic, local and natural products makes me proud to promote the Co-op. It’s gratifying to serve the community’s needs.”

Bryant says the rise of interest in organic and local food has been “off the charts.”

“People want to know what’s in their food and where it came from, which is a far cry from the ‘Bigger, Cheaper, Faster’ demands that dominated our food system for so many years.”

He reiterates the emphasis on “buying local” and says, “Our shoppers like knowing that the money spent at our store goes back into the community.”

Grocery Stores We Wish We Had

In a recent poll and research we conducted, we discovered people are quite passionate about their favorite grocery store. Here are a few some of you want in your neighborhood, including some that used to be here before they left the area or closed (and a few that are here, but just not close enough to the shopper who wants it):

- BI-LO
- BJ’s Wholesale Club
- Costco
- Fresh Market*
- Giant Eagle
- Harris Teeter
- Piggly Wiggly
- Publix
- Safeway
- Trader Joe’s
- Wegmans
- Whole Foods
- Wright’s

* Fresh Market operates one store in our region (Colonial Ave., Roanoke)

“”

I can
 spend
 hours
 in a
 grocery
 store...
 I go
 crazy...
 arranging
 my basket
 so that
 everything
 fits in and
 nothing
 gets
 squashed

— Cameron Diaz

Whatever Happened To...?

A&P

Old-timers remember A&P because it was so prolific. Its grown-up name is The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company; and yes—it's still around. Just not here. In fact, A&P (began in 1859; headquartered in Montvale, N.J.) at 300 stores in the northeast, is in the top 20 largest grocery stores' list on both the Supermarket News ranking and Directory of Supermarket list.

Mick-or-Mack

A Roanoke relic. First opened in 1927, the number of stores actually surpassed 50 at one time, extending to West Virginia. It was sold to a private investor in the 1970s, who then sold off the properties through the following decade. You may see a Mick-or-Mack sign or two (New Castle) but it will be co-branded with an independent chain such as IGA or Galaxy.

Ukrops

Tried and failed. The Richmond based popular grocer (since 1937) opened a Roanoke store with much fanfare, but quickly closed in 2009 due to underperformance. The Ukrops family sold the business to a Dutch conglomerate in February 2010 for a reported \$140 million, which included 25 stores.

Harris Teeter

Common thinking from industry insiders says Harris Teeter (1960; Matthews, N.C.) was run out of the Roanoke and surrounding markets by Kroger. Much of that perspective comes from the fact that so many former HT stores are now Kroger. The company operates over 200 stores in eight states, and just makes the Fortune 500 list at number 498 (as a subsidiary).

Winn-Dixie

The popular grocer (1955; Jacksonville, Fla.) was a household name here in the region until it began to decline financially and eventually file bankruptcy. This year, the company was completely bought out by BI-LO. Combined, the stores number nearly 700, concentrating in eight states in southeastern US.

From vbFRONT Facebook

I hate going to the grocery store. I hate looking for things. I hate the music they play. I hate checking out. Something always seems to go wrong at the self checkout at Kroger. The Fresh Market

is fun to shop, but it's too expensive. I would love to see a Trader Joe's here. <J.E.>

Target's... since they opened the food section... prices beat Kroger. Less crowded and

more compact than Wal-Mart, plus you save 5% with your red card. <S.M.>

When I was growing up, we lived across the street from Wright's Grocery. It was the 1950s and the supermarkets were not so widespread.

TOP U.S. SUPERMARKET & GROCERY CHAINS (BY GROCERY SALES)

Wal-Mart	BJ's Wholesale Club	Houchens
Kroger	Hy-Vee	Schnuck
Safeway	Wegmans	Weis
SUPERVALU	SuperTarget	DeMoulas
Costco	Pathmark	Smart & Final
Sam's Club	Bi-Lo	Basha's
Ahold USA	Roundy's	Brookshire
Publix	Stater Brothers	K-V-A-T
Delhaize America	Raley's	Big Y
H-E-B	Aldi	Foodarama
Albertson's	Trader Joe's	GFS
Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co	Golub Corp	Marsh
Winn-Dixie	Harris Teeter	Fiesta Mart
Meijer	Ingles	Wild Oats
Giant Eagle	Save Mart	Inserra
Whole Foods Market	WinCo	Lowe's Food
		Penn Traffic

Source: Directory of Supermarket, Grocery & Convenience Store Chains

We had a food account, so the family would charge and then my dad would pay up at the end of the month. They also delivered. People would gather there just to talk. <J.D.>

I had a part time job at Mick-or-Mack in the '70s. I was

horsing around once with my co-worker throwing merchandise. My pants split in a very big way, and I had to tie my apron on backward until my girlfriend could bring me an extra pair of pants. <T.F.>

We would be so tired, and the

store was supposed to close at 10 p.m. If someone came up to the door at 9:59, we still had to let them shop. If the person grabbed a cart, we knew we'd be working late. Wet mopping the aisles right in front of them wouldn't even speed them up. <R.B.>



The way we are >

I am sometimes asked by international colleagues to give them information on what to expect when they visit the U.S. on business. It struck me that we can learn a lot as professionals by remembering the advice we give to our visitors.

Handshaking: Modern etiquette says men and women shake hands in the U.S. and it doesn't matter who extends the hand first.

Eye contact: Americans make direct eye contact.

Space: Americans have a greater need for space between people than in some other cultures, so try to keep at arm's length.

Hospitality: While Americans are friendly, outgoing and gregarious, they usually keep a small circle of close friends. A conundrum for our international friends is that, even if Americans welcome them warmly, they may not spend a great deal of time with them.

Clothes: It's fine to ask about the dress code for an event.

Parties: People usually introduce themselves at parties. Although you will see people sitting at gatherings, most prefer to stand up and start moving around. When attending parties, make eye contact, smile and introduce yourself.

Smoking: Is a major no-no in the United States. If you smoke, do it outside and not in a doorway. As a guest in a home, never smoke in your bedroom with the door closed.


Perceptions: Americans emphasis punctuality, so if your host says, "The meeting is at nine," best be on time.

Privacy: Americans value individual freedom and privacy. If a door is closed, knock and wait for a response.

English words: Can have multiple and different meanings. For example:

- In America, we call them faucets, and you might call them taps.
- A dinner napkin is what some would call a serviette. A napkin is the word for diaper in England, Canada and New Zealand.
- What we call a "check" in a restaurant, you might call a "bill."

International issues: Newspapers in this area do not carry much international news, so don't be surprised if we are not as knowledgeable as you about international issues. That doesn't mean we are not interested.

Note: As in other nations, criticism of our country is not welcome. Avoid giving your opinion on our system of government, our politics, religion, race relations, the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan, and other sensitive topics until friendships are more fully developed. Genuine interest is welcome, but avoid statements that can be perceived as judgmental. 

Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:

It's nice to know how people overseas properly interact, but we need to know how we do it, as well.

A picture's worth 1,000 words >

Dress codes for workplace attire have changed dramatically over the last two decades. More companies accept business casual attire and even jeans in the workplace—which can lead to confusion, improper attire, and misrepresentation of the company brand. A recent addition to social media may offer companies the opportunity to do some damage control and set expectations clearly.

Pinterest is a new form of social media that allows users to create “boards” and pin photos and graphics to those boards that can be viewed by followers. It’s a novel way to share inspired ideas quickly and easily.


At first glance, Pinterest seems simply a way to showcase personal preferences. However, recently Brazencareerist.com published an article entitled “Five Ways to Use Pinterest To Wow Your Dream Employer.” One of the ideas was particularly intriguing.

Brazencareerist cited university career centers at Penn, UNC-Chapel Hill, and Bucknell University as using Pinterest to show what to wear for a job interview. Each school has boards devoted to resumes, internships, branding, great places to work, etc. Among their many “boards,” each school has one that shows what articles of clothing are appropriate for a job interview or workday. A picture is indeed worth a thousand words. It’s hard to misinterpret what attire is being discussed when it’s clearly demonstrated with pictures, graphics, or live models.

This tool may prove useful for companies, too. Each company could create a Pinterest account, assemble boards for different aspects of their company culture and show specific examples or graphics accessible by students interested in their company. A board showing business professional, business casual, or casual Friday attire could depict what is expected of all employees, heading off any claims that “I didn’t get the memo!” As a bonus, viewers who dislike shopping can determine where to buy the products and their price.

Beyond students interviewing for the workforce, this “show and tell” tool holds possibilities for:

- Dress codes for existing employees
- Older employees who need to update their image
- Casual dress days
- Examples of what not to wear in the workplace
- Special events and company retreat attire

Pinterest offers a solution to the “What should I wear?” question that so many workers confront every day. It has the potential to demonstrate exactly what attire is expected so employees or interviewees can relax and proceed with the business at hand. 



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

What should you wear to the job interview or to the job? Here's a clear definition in terms—photos, actually—anybody can understand.

Business advice at home >

Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:

Advice is not always welcome. Wait to be asked, then confine the advice to the specifics.



If you, in casual conversation, mention doubt about your business, that heightens the fear. Unaddressed, fear will spill like wine at a candlelit dinner into unsolicited advice.

Dear Anne: I'm in my second marriage and my second career and I've started my own business. My wife owned her own company and was able to sell it at a profit. I greatly respect that she did this. The trouble is that I now have an in-home lover, companion and business advisor. While I appreciate that she might be right when she gives me advice, I'm not appreciating being given the advice, especially when I don't ask for it, especially when it's offered when I want just like to relax at home and not think about work. I want my wife back. What do I do? (And this time, I am asking for advice.)

Dear Advised: A great deal of unsolicited advice from those who have done before what we are doing now is pure enthusiasm. We all want to share our experiences, to matter, to be important. Especially at group functions, when people mention a venture they are about to launch, a business trip they are about to take, or a purchase they are about to make, most people expect to hear in reply, "I did that! What you should do is ..."

In one-on-one conversations, whether at work or home, unsolicited advice is usually about more than enthusiasm. Fear is often at the core of advising someone to do, or not do, something. To make the reason for the fear "go away," people try to use the persuasive power of advice.

What would a spouse have to fear when we start our own businesses? Plenty. Let's start with cash, or the increasing lack of it, as expenses rise and revenues don't. Let's add entering business partnerships which, in spite of due diligence, always rely to a certain extent on judgment calls—which could be ruinously wrong. And let's finish with time—the time it takes to build a business, work in the business, then do the paperwork at night—all time spent away from the spouse.

Fear of money problems, people problems, and relationship problems are legitimate concerns for the spouse of a business founder. If you, in casual conversation, mention doubt about your business, that heightens the fear. Unaddressed, fear will spill like wine at a candlelit dinner into unsolicited advice.


Most couples have the conversation that businesses involve risk, usually in angry voices, after the business is started, but the point is that fear accompanies business endeavors and nothing can be done to ease all of it. For fear not to have the power to undermine businesses or relationships, it must be managed, both by individuals and by the parties involved.

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Agree to find individual and separate ways to self-manage fear—conversations with other advisors or friends, supportive literature, listening to music, whatever works. Make an agreement to hold a weekly appointment on a set day and time for one hour to talk about the business. Use a timer and at 5-minute intervals for the first 30 minutes, 3 turns each, take turns sharing without interruption. Listen Carefully to the other. Use the last 30 minutes for open discussion.

Outside of that weekly business meeting, discussion of the business is off limits—with one exception. You, as the new business owner, can ask directly for specific advice from the experienced business owner, your wife. She can answer or not, her choice, depending on whether answering will help or hurt her own self-management.

Then you can have that candlelit dinner, talking about subjects around which the business of your relationship will grow and evolve. 

Need help with a personal problem at work? E-mail your question to Anne at anne@handshakezo.com.



Damon Williams



- *Community Development Officer at First Citizens Bank*
- *Va Military Institute graduate*
- *Serves on Roanoke City Economic Development Authority*
- **Vibe Radio Listener**

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Gene Marrano

John Weber: "Good people do bad things."

It's more than a hand in the cookie jar >

Executive Summary:

Embezzlement is the crime of "ordinary people," but it is no less a crime for that and it can destroy your business.

By Gene Marrano

Embezzlement occurs when a person with a fiduciary duty to handle money or personal property takes the money or property for personal gain. For example, an accountant or bookkeeper may be suspected of "skimming" the books. Or, an employee may be accused of falsifying company records and funneling the proceeds to her personal bank accounts. (Weber Law Firm PC website)

Embezzlement happens to be one area of the law that ensnares many "ordinary people," according to John Weber. His Weber Law Firm in downtown Roanoke is in an old house that was once an ice cream parlor.

In recent years people who have skimmed

money from Girl Scout troops and recreation clubs have made the local news. Trusted bookkeepers are guilty culprits. A former partner of Weber's was involved in a case involving the Famous Anthony's restaurant chain.

"There's no particular profile necessarily—its mostly [about] opportunity," says Weber, who defends those charged with embezzlement. A conviction on those charges in Virginia is classified as a larceny. Grand larceny will get you 1 to 20 years, large fines, restitution and community service.

It happens when "people in places of trust, places of opportunity," succumb to their worst instincts, says Weber. They are often people who otherwise would not think of committing a crime. At times the need for extra money to pay a bill—or to buy something they normally could not afford—trumps common sense. Whether its financial strain or "pure greed," Weber has seen embezzlement indictments brought for a variety of reasons.

At least in this area, says Weber—who sometimes works as a substitute judge—smaller businesses and organizations are

the most likely targets. They don't have the checks and balances seen at larger firms. Accountants and bookkeepers specially trained and afforded access to funds are the most likely to be embezzlers, since they can write checks and balance the ledgers.


Another typical scenario finds a family member, perhaps responsible for the care of an elderly parent or relative, who has access to bank accounts and is entrusted to make financial decisions. "In all cases it's someone who is trying to have some financial gain at the expense of somebody else," says Weber.

Virginia sentencing guidelines limit the flexibility judges have when it comes to embezzlement convictions. Placing a person behind bars makes restitution more difficult. That's a balancing act for the courts: "What do I do to make sure that I punish, but also

[provide] an opportunity to make sure that they can pay back?" asks Weber.

Restitution is often never fully realized, according to Weber. Failure to pay restitution means that a convicted person can be hauled back into court and sent to prison if the judge believes the criminal has not attempted to pay back the money.

Embezzlement and other white-collar crimes have been "more prevalent" over the past few years with the economic downturn, says Weber, a University of Richmond Williams Law School graduate. "Between state and federal courts there seems to be more awareness of financial crimes and more attempted prosecution of those crimes."

"Certainly I like to think that the quality of people is generally good," says John Weber, but "good people do bad things." 

Joy Sutton



- *Former WDBJ TV Anchor/Reporter*
- *TV Host, "The Hour of Joy"*
- *Howard University and Virginia Tech graduate*
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Randolph Walker

Peter Vieth: 'You can't look away'

Keeping lawyers up to date >

Executive Summary:

Peter Vieth covers Virginia courts to make sure lawyers don't miss cases affecting their practices.

By Randolph Walker

Peter Vieth knew this was a case that would get lawyers' attention.

"It was a tragic auto accident that led to sanctions against a major Virginia law firm and a lawyer who gave up a longstanding successful practice," says Vieth. "It also resulted in a jury member writing a letter criticizing a judge's ruling."

Lawyers statewide followed the case, a Charlottesville civil suit, in the Virginia Lawyers Weekly (VLW). The Richmond-based print and web periodical ran a series of articles on it in 2011.

For Vieth, it was must-read legal journalism.

"First, lawyers are always interested in large verdicts," he says. "Second thing that gets lawyers' attention is the prospect of sanctions by a judge. It means a lawyer did something he was not supposed to and there's going to be punishment. Third, lawyers are interested in how judges handle cases when unusual events happen."

Keeping lawyers apprised of developments statewide is the daily mission of Vieth, legal editor for VLW and its sister publication, the Virginia Medical Law Report (valawyersweekly.com). Both are owned by The Dolan Company, a publicly-traded media company headquartered in Minneapolis.

Legal journalism is a calling for which

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Vieth is uniquely qualified. He worked as a reporter, then as a lawyer, before combining the two professions.

After graduating from the University of Maryland with a broadcasting degree, he worked as a reporter for several Virginia radio stations. "I was fascinated covering legal cases as a news reporter. I sat through many a trial, got to know a few lawyers and admired what they did."

After obtaining his law degree, he practiced first with WootenHart in Roanoke, handling medical malpractice, product liability and personal injury, and then with the Crandall & Katt personal injury firm. In 2008 he joined the four-person editorial team at VLW and Virginia Medical Law Report, working out of his home in Roanoke. His colleagues—two out of three are lawyers—are based in Richmond.

"We write news for lawyers," he says. "We talk to lawyers and lawyers call us with information about cases that they think are important, and we cover the government activities of interest to lawyers. That includes the Virginia State Bar which regulates lawyers, the Supreme Court of Virginia which makes the rules for court practice, and the Virginia General Assembly which elects judges and makes the laws."

"We read opinions from the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the Virginia Supreme Court and the Virginia Court of Appeals, and as many trial courts as we can get, including federal and state trial courts."

Like other periodicals, the VLW is evolving in response to technology.

The VLW "is changing as we struggle to

Dr. Guy Sims



- *Assistant VP of Student Affairs, Virginia Tech*
- *Graduate of Lincoln University*
- *VT Services Board Member*
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figure out the right formula for web publishing," Vieth says. "We think of ourselves as innovators in this. Many of the same stories appear [in the web edition] but the look and feel are quite different from the print edition. We update the website daily. We send a daily e-mail blast called the Daily Alert."

The sister publication, Virginia Medical Law Report, is mailed six times a year to more than 14,000 physicians and health care providers. "Doctors get a lot of stuff, but I am told by many doctors that they see it, they pick it up and they read it."

While the recent economic downturn has affected general-interest newspapers, trade publications such as VLW have been somewhat insulated, Vieth says. "I suspect [it's] because the subscribers need the information ... When lawyers see a half-million dollars changing hands because of some kind of misdeeds, you gotta read it. You can't look away." 

In Brief

Name: Peter Vieth
Age: 59
Company: Virginia Lawyers Weekly, Virginia Medical Law Report
Type of Business: Legal journalism
Position: Legal Editor
Location: Publications headquartered in Richmond; he works from his home in Roanoke
Background: Born in Washington, D.C., Vieth graduated from a private high school in Bethesda, MD. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland (1976) and law degree from the University of Richmond (1992). While in law school he served a summer internship with Virginia Lawyers Weekly, which later hired him. He lives in Southwest Roanoke County and is married with four children.



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Randolph Walker

Dr. Ed Humerickhouse of LewisGale Medical Center

A specialist for the hospital >

Executive Summary:

Hospitalist, a fast-growing new medical specialty is helping hospitals reduce stays and lower costs.

By Randolph Walker

When Dr. Ed Humerickhouse tells people his profession, the most frequent response is a puzzled look.

"Any time I meet someone, even on a personal basis, I have to explain it to them," says Humerickhouse, a hospitalist with LewisGale Medical Center in Salem (lewisgale.com).

If recent trends are any indication, everyone will soon know what a hospitalist is.

Traditionally, patients in the hospital have been managed by their primary care physicians, who had to see outpatients as well. While some internal medicine and family doctors continue to travel between hospitals and clinics, seeing both inpatients and outpatients, many inpatients are now managed by hospitalists, doctors who specialize in the management of hospitalized patients.

"It is considered to be a specialty now," says Dr. Susan Lee, a doctor of osteopathic medicine and a hospitalist with Carilion Roanoke Memorial. "The explosion has occurred over seven or eight years, with tremendous [growth] over the past five years."

The term "hospitalist" was coined in a 1996 article in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. From 2003 to 2009, the percentage of hospitals employing hospitalists grew from 29 to 58 percent, according to the Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM) website



Randolph Walker

Dr. Susan Lee of Carilion Roanoke Memorial

(www.hospitalmedicine.org). Among hospitals with more than 200 beds, 89 percent were using hospitalists by 2009.

A study published in 2007 by the New England Journal of Medicine and quoted on the SHM website found that patients treated by hospitalists stayed in the hospital four-tenths of a day less than patients managed by general internists and family doctors.

SHM also reports a 2009 study by Loyola University Health System showing that patients who were co-managed by a hospitalist had an average length of stay of 3.8 days, versus 5.5 days for patients

managed by other doctors. There was no negative impact on quality.

SHM cites other case studies showing that hospitalists reduce lengths of stay and costs per case. "That is one of the reasons why hospitals, insurers, and economic and quality forces are condoning the shift to hospitalists as a way to improve the efficiency of care for hospitalized patients."

"It's a matter of us being there," says Humerickhouse. "We don't have to come in from the clinic. If there's a problem with the patient, we can actually be at the patient's bed side. We can sometimes head off things a little bit earlier."

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Internists are starting to differentiate into inpatient specialists and outpatient specialists, says Humerickhouse. "These days many of the residency training programs in internal medicine have a separate hospitalist track."

Members of the Society of Hospital Medicine are 86 percent internists; the rest are family practitioners or pediatricians.


As yet, there is no board certification specifically for hospital medicine. Hospitalists at LewisGale are either board certified in general internal medicine, or they in the process of obtaining certification.

Humerickhouse and his colleagues at LewisGale are employed by HCA. Roanoke Memorial budgets for 20 full time positions, and is filling some vacancies with contracted

physicians while continuing to recruit, says Lee. All of the 10 Carilion hospitals (www.carilionclinic.org) have hospitalists.

On a typical day at Roanoke Memorial, eight or 10 hospitalists will see a total of 125 patients, Lee says. The number of patients admitted by hospitalists doubled from 2008 to 2011.

What is the specialty's future? "Grow, grow, grow," says Lee. "The physicians in the house are going to be the emergency physicians and hospitalists," while other specialists come in and out. "Eventually we're going to manage the whole house."

On Roanoke Memorial's medical/surgical units, approximately 35 percent of patients have hospitalists as their attending physician, but eventually, says Lee, "everybody's going to have one." 

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Tech Scoop

There's an app for that... >

Executive Summary:

The dramatic changes in technology have altered the very basics of the Internet over the years.

By Michael Miller

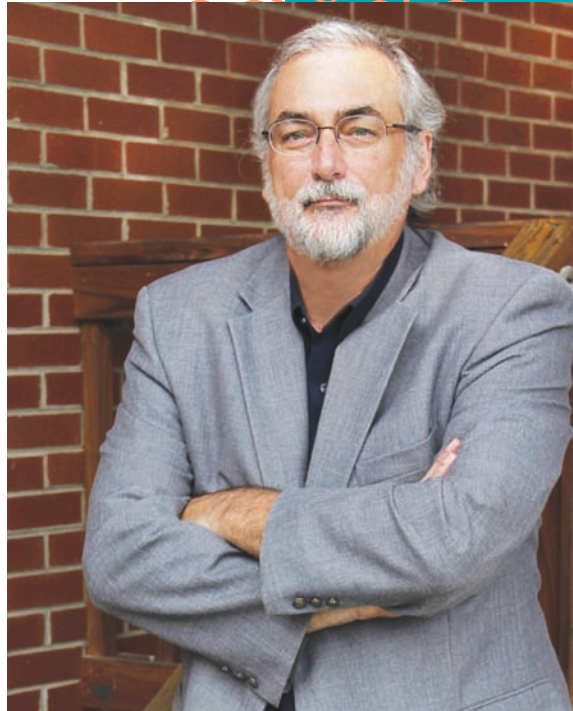
The first e-mail was transmitted over an experimental computer communications network in 1971. Ten years later the "internet" consisted of about 200 host computers, half of which belonged to the military. In 1991, after hearing a report on the successes of the original ARPANET (as it was called then), Sen. Al Gore authored the High Performance Communications Act, effectively establishing funding for the commercialization of the Internet as we know it today. (Yes, he sort of did create the internet.)

Whole economic empires have been built and destroyed since those early days, all based on the idea of breaking messages up into small pieces, scattering them out over a hundred electronic pathways and then putting them back together in order. While many can easily remember a time before information and instantaneous communication were so ubiquitous, it's getting harder to remember how we functioned back then.

One example of how much the Internet has changed the world is that the publishers of the Encyclopedia Britannica recently announced they would cease publication of the paper version of their trustworthy reference. They have been replaced by the Google Search Engine and Wikipedia. Sigh.

But wait, there's more.

As commonplace as the home computer



Michael Miller

has become, in the middle of 2010 the sales of smart phones surpassed the sales of PCs at about the same time the tablet platform was introduced. By the end of 2011 smart phones and tablets made up 60 percent of computer sales.

And if you own a smart phone or tablet, you can guess what's coming next. By the end of 2011 the amount of time Americans spent using mobile applications (apps) to access the Internet exceeded the amount of time they used web browsers by a ratio of about 60/40. This was especially true when we were shopping online. In fact, tablets have become predominant shopping platforms to the extent that the relatively recently coined term "e-commerce" has been replaced by the newer "t-commerce." Heaven help the online store whose display is not scaled for a tablet.

The original Internet, which was once handcuffed to land lines and slow transmission speeds, has matured along with cell phone technology so that it is no longer a thing to itself, but merely the road by which we travel. It's now just a channel used to deliver product (you and me) to the customer (advertisers).

And increasingly, there's an app for that. 



all photos: Dan Smith

Landon Gregory (from left), Skip Salmon and Jim Cosby at the station

Saving the railroad again >

Executive Summary:

The Virginian Railroad station in Roanoke could easily have been bulldozed, but a coalition that includes several organizations and a bunch of old—and dying—railroad buffs wouldn't let that happen.

By Dan Smith

Skip Salmon leans forward, holds up the Virginian Railway Station brochure like a baton and makes his point: "If you canvas 100 people on the street and ask them about Roanoke's railroad history," he says, "maybe three will remember the Virginian. We want to change that."

Changing the incorrect perception means renovating a 100-year-old shell of a building that once housed what began with the confluence of the Deepwater Railway and the Tidewater Railway in 1907. One of the products of that merger was the only brick station along the new Virginian Railroad line, the one sitting under the Jefferson Street



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The Virginian Station station under renovation

Bridge near the VTC campus, which housed the bulk of the railroad's operations. The station burned 10 years ago as negotiations were underway for history buffs to purchase and preserve it.

Because of the gutting fire, Norfolk Southern Railway (the one people know about) gave the building to its saviors and in March, after a Herculean effort to raise money for the project, ground was broken for Phase I. The entire project should be completed in about a year and a half with the first phase scheduled to be ready this summer.

It is a pity that few remember the Virginian, but it is understandable. The railroad merged with Norfolk & Western (which later became

Norfolk Southern) in 1959 and faded into the woodwork. Few people who worked for the Virginian are still around, but some of them are part of the renovation effort. Since the project began nearly a decade ago, nine of those taking part [of an original 40] have departed, says Salmon. "They'll never see it," he says, "and we want to get this done before anybody else leaves us."

The men are in their 60s, 70s and 80s and most are former railroad workers at all levels. Three sat down to talk about the renovation, including Salmon, 67, who was a supervisor in the electrical department at NS (and N&W) for 37 years; Landon Gregory, 75, who worked for the Virginian for three years before the merger as a telegraph operator and became a chief dispatcher



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Allison Blanton of the Preservation Foundation

at N&W and NS; and Jim Cosby, 73, a retired Justice Department lawyer with an intense interest in railroads. They worked on the project as members of the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, one of several groups involved. Among others in the middle of the effort was Allison Blanton of Hill Studio (architecture), who is the new president of the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation and an expert in historic tax credits. Alison was one of those responsible for pulling in about \$750,000 in historic tax credits (the figure is not final yet).

Architect Barry Rakes worked from original drawings of the building to re-imagine it. The building will house an historical element and half will be rented out in order to help maintain it. "That was a suggestion from [former Carilion CEO] Ed Murphy," says Salmon. "He said the city doesn't need another non-profit looking for a handout and that the station should sustain itself."


Fundraising was not as big a challenge as originally anticipated (thought it took some time) because of the organizations involved, including the Friends of the Virginian Railway. "It was a dependable source of donations," says Gregory. "A lot of the members are former supervisors." Still, says Skip, "the process was three steps forward, two steps back" at least partly because of the detailed requirements of

the construction and the bid process.

At this point, asbestos and lead are being removed from the building, the terra cotta roof is being replaced and it is being thoroughly cleaned. The interior and landscaping will be completed in Phase 2 and the entire project should come in at about \$1.2 million.

The building, emphasizes Gregory, "is the only thing of any size in the Roanoke Valley left of the railroad. There's a small building over in Salem, but that's it. If we had lost this building, we would have lost the railroad."

The people involved have been all-in. "I never thought this would take as much of my life as it has," says Jim Cosby. "It requires a lot of time and attention in complying with all the regulations." Though he is not the project's legal representative, "I know how to write letters" and move the project along.

The others, too, have their areas of expertise—all of it well-seasoned—and it's been put to use to save this old and meaningful structure for generations to come. 

(Writer Dan Smith is on the board of the Preservation Foundation, but did not work on this project.)



The average person sees thousands of messages a day, weakening the reach and strength of each one. Sampling events are impactful and have a dramatic impact on both acquiring and retaining consumers for the long run

—Will Minton



Randolph Walker

Tonya Cox and Kimberly Andrews provide samples at Kroger: "You have some customers that come in on Saturday just for the samples."

Food demos: Not as simple as you think >

Executive Summary:

Supermarkets outsource their in-store product demonstrations to event specialists.

By Randolph Walker

Handing out free food samples is a time-honored sales technique. In the 21st century, however, it's not as simple as a store employee setting up a cart in the cheese section. Product demonstrations at Western Virginia Walmarts, Sam's Clubs, Krogers and Food Lions are handled by outside promotional specialists.

On a recent Saturday at Kroger on Brambleton Avenue, Tonya Cox and Kimberly Andrews were in the produce section offering fresh fruit. Tonya and Kimberly are employees of PromoWorks of Schaumburg, Ill., which also contracts with Walgreens and Food Lion. "Over a normal demo we try to get out 150 to 200 samples over six hours," says Tonya, coordinator of the PromoWorks district stretching from Blacksburg to Lynchburg.

Demos are usually held Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Some customers, mostly older

women, form friendly relationships with the demonstrators. "You have some customers that come in on Saturday just for the samples," Cox says.

A human connection is key to the success of product demos, says Jill Griffin, president of Integrated Marketing Services. Based in El Segundo, Calif., Integrated has 18,000 employees nationwide. Integrated event specialists handle product demos in Western Virginia Walmarts and Sam's Clubs.

In-store product demos are one form of experiential marketing, which also includes festivals, parking lot events and grand openings.

"We view experiential marketing as anything that entails a one-to-one interaction with a person, and we believe it is one of the most powerful marketing tools when executed really well, particularly in a retail environment," Griffin says. "There's nothing like this one-to-one human interaction to provide a differentiated experience to the customers."

An experiential marketing campaign can be initiated by either the brand or the retailer. "The process can work both ways, where a brand has an overall marketing strategy, and part of that strategy is some sort of experiential activation, or we will work directly with a retailer to understand the kind of experience they are trying to

create for all of their customers."

Integrated's fee can be paid by either the retailer or the manufacturer, Griffin says. "It really does depend on each particular situation."


Integrated's parent company is Advantage Sales and Marketing of Irvine, Calif.

"Traditional media alone won't cut it anymore," says Will Minton, senior director at Advantage. "The average person sees thousands of messages a day, weakening the reach and strength of each one. Sampling events are impactful and have a dramatic impact on both acquiring and retaining consumers for the long run. This is partially explained by how disruptive these events are—disruptive in a positive way. There is nothing like a live person to draw the attention of shoppers on 'autopilot' and inspire them better than the best display or sign can."

At Food Lion, in-store promotions are held

in conjunction with grand openings, special events or new product promotions, according to spokesman Benny Smith. "For example, in March, we introduced our new Food Lion store brand, "my essentials," into the Roanoke area. We held more than 200 in-store demonstrations and introduced our new value-tier brand in [a] creative way to increase brand awareness."

Many different kinds of products benefit from demos, according to Carl York, advertising and public relations manager for Kroger's mid-Atlantic marketing region. "Companies launching new products/new items utilize demos quite often. At Kroger we demo many of our Kroger brands because the combination of quality and price [is] compelling to shoppers."

By the way, Cox is looking for product demonstrators to work weekends for Promo Works. Ten dollars an hour to hand out free goodies to people—what's not to like about that job? 

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“ ”

I was made to work for myself, and feel like I'm doing what I should be doing.

—Anne Vaughan

A bauble for business >

Executive Summary:

A former science teacher combines her organizational skills with her artistry to create popular jewelry at Anne Vaughan Designs.

By Laura Purcell

In autumn 2006, Anne Vaughan was driving with her husband from their home in Floyd to Roanoke when she had an idea.

"I told him I was going to buy jewelry making materials, enough so that I could sell pieces at the Roanoke City Market on Black Friday," she recalls.

Thanksgiving was only a few weeks away, and Anne's son was still an infant, but her husband responded enthusiastically. With

his support, she got to work creating one or two new pieces of jewelry each day. Her pieces sold successfully, and she was bitten by the entrepreneurship bug.

Since then, her business, Anne Vaughan Designs, has grown every year. Last year, the business grew 13 percent. That's



Anne Vaughan and her daughter Autumn

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Laura Purcell

Anne Vaughn's Floyd studio

impressive by most standards, although Anne has seen annual growth as much as 120 percent.

With the fast pace of growth, Anne learned quickly that she couldn't do it all by herself. "I thought at first I had to make every single piece," Anne says. She has two employees who "do what it takes to get the job done, are trustworthy and accurate," Anne says.

"I love it. I was made to work for myself, and feel like I'm doing what I should be doing," says Anne, who worked as a science teacher in Maine and Richmond before moving to Floyd. She applies her scientific training to her business, dutifully recording every piece of jewelry she creates in a spreadsheet that

documents when it sells, where and for how much. "Everything is numbers driven," Anne says. "Eight years of teaching made me a records-keeping master, but it takes discipline to keep those records and use them."

The heart of Anne's business is her creativity. The varied demands of being a mother and small business owner requires her to schedule creative time, but she finds this organizational structure allows her to be more productive.

Anne finds her inspiration everywhere—from interesting beads and stones, the seasons, or a new duvet cover. "I find creativity builds exponentially," Anne says. Another inspiration is the positive reception her work has received.




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Laura Purcell

Allison Sutphin creates a piece of jewelry

"I love that people love the jewelry," she says. She also stands behind her work. "Jewelry is fragile," she says. If a piece breaks, she asks customers to simply send it back to her for repair at no charge. This integrity has formed a loyal customer base. She's also garnered some press and industry attention for her work, and was recently featured on the cover of *Stringing* magazine.

When she started her business, Anne sold her work by doing trunk shows—setting up a mobile shop in people's homes. While she enjoyed the work, it is time consuming. Anne has cut back on trunk show work, and in addition to Saturdays at the Roanoke Market, has her pieces in some retail shops and sells at shows like Blacksburg's annual Steppin' Out festival. Anne's goal for 2012 is to increase her online presence (www.annevaughan.com). "I want to double the income I'm making through our website," Anne says.

Anne also wants to

focus more on giving back. She organizes virtual trunk shows on her website to support fundraisers for nonprofits and also donates jewelry for charity auctions. In addition, Anne wants to explore helping other women launch their own businesses. "In the past, I've donated to the YMCA and cancer charities, but I am very interested in helping educate others about entrepreneurship," Anne says. "Cottage industries are the backbone of communities. I'd like to find a specific cause that is a good match for what we do." 



Anne Vaughan's jewelry pieces are regularly available on Roanoke City Market



Dan Smith

Keith Humphry: "It has become nonsense, self-aggrandizement."

A new adventure begins >

Executive Summary:

News anchor Keith Humphry has been out of the news business—and into education at Hollins—for a year now and he's still adjusting to the changes.

By Dan Smith

It's been more than 12 months since Keith Humphry retired from WDBJ7 as its 30-year news anchor and he's had time to settle in and make the kinds of decisions retirement forces upon a 62-year-old whose day job has gone elsewhere.

But he's still thinking about it.

Keith's teaching broadcast journalism classes at Hollins University and riding his Harley, but beyond that there's nothing pulling him at the moment. He's perfectly comfortable with this new dynamic. It gives him time to think, to evaluate and to consider.

During the last couple of years of his

tenure at the region's top-rated news show, a new administration came on board and that bumped up against ratings that slipped. So he retired May 27 of last year. Nobody says "forced" or "asked to" or anything like that, but when ratings go south, so do anchors and when administrations change, a lot changes. Keith had been in broadcast 35 years and was a respected newsman, not just an airhead anchor of the Ted Knight variety.

He specialized in covering big trials and loved that part of his job. Still does. So much so that he'd like to figure out a way of packaging trial coverage and selling it, he says. He believes he "knew as much criminal procedure as some defense attorneys," though he is not a lawyer. "I understand the process and I've delved into it. This is fun, but you're rarely given the time to do those stories" they way they should be done.

He laments that "several days of working a story has rapidly gone away" and that newsies now have to work their stories, the web, blogs and other outlets and that "they have quotas." All that, he says, makes money for the station "and that's what it's about." The pace does not promote deep thought.

After Keith left, ratings dived with a

new news team, co-anchored by a young redhead less than half Keith's age (Chris Hurst), but the ratings edged back up and WDBJ reclaimed its spot at the top. Recently two other WDBJ news professionals, weatherman Robin Reed and journalist Joe Dashiell, celebrated a combined 65 years of experience, so it's not a case of clearing the cabinets of all the old guys, as some would suspect and is often the case these days in the news business where "old" often correlates with "expensive."

Keith answers the obligatory question about whether he misses news with an emphatic, "No!" and says, "It has become nonsense, self-aggrandizement." There are, he says, "a lot of reasons why I left and the ones I talk about are legitimate. There's always a balance [on TV] between news and entertainment and to be fair, it almost left me behind. I did it my way and [in doing that] I may be wrong."


These days, he's in process, trying to "reconnect with who I am." Part of what he is looks like a single guy, 62 years old and appearing 50 with two grown kids (19 and 22). He says it "took me six months to quit being 'Keith Humphry, TV Guy' and be my own man." He "set about trying to decompress, take stock, slow down, especially the public person. It is a mistake to think that is your life."

In short order, Keith says, he realized that "I need to be busier." He's become "busier"

at Hollins teaching college students a skill they may or may not need, depending on what happens with journalism in the next few years. Not many of his students, he says, aspire to a life in TV news and the way he teaches it could be compared to teaching a driver the standard shift, as opposed to automatic transmission. Teaching, he insists, "is the one thing I would [have done] if I didn't do 'it' [that, of course, being TV]. I enjoy helping to develop these novice writers."

What he teaches at a school known for producing writers is a different skill than they imagined. The writing he teaches at Hollins, he says, is "not to be read, but to be spoken." It's a different skill. With TV writing, he says, the reporter doesn't want the written word "to get in the way of the pictures." And of course, "you don't have the means to do it as fully as you'd like" because of time constraints.

Keith likes the Hollins setting. He earned his degree in history at Wooster College in Ohio, a small liberal arts college. He went into the Army (drafted '71-'73) and picked up his master's degree at American University where he wound up with an internship at NBC news and an addiction to the news business.

And next? Who knows? But Keith Humphry understands that the adventure doesn't end with a change. It simply begins again. 

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David Perry

Mike Scott: "Amphibians seem to be lacking in our ecosystem."

'So ... why not a pond'? >

Executive Summary:

Mike Scott, a Botetourt County teacher, is constantly on the prowl for things that work, for solutions to problems.

By David Perry

The shop-worn bromide dictates, "When life hands you lemons, make lemonade."

In Mike Scott's case, when life handed him leaking gutters on his 1920s-era foursquare home in southwest Roanoke, he made toads.

Well, not yet, anyway, but he's trying.

The 52-year-old instructional technology resource teacher at Troutville and Greenfield Elementaries, as well as the Botetourt Technical Education Center, has a rock-rimmed pond dug in his back yard, complete with a water-circulating pump and a few newts and fish.

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"My house doesn't drain well," Mike says. "Getting gutters fixed for an exorbitant cost isn't really an option right now, so I thought I could just catch water and divert it away from the house. It's got to go somewhere, so I thought why not a pond."

But the former science teacher wasn't looking at the pond as a decoration or ornament. "Amphibians seem to be lacking in our ecosystem. I haven't even seen a toad. I think a part of the problem is this part of the city seems to be devoid of their habitat," Mike says of his surroundings.


"If you did have a permanent wet area, you might be able to get something started. It might help with the bugs. It might develop a little population of toads—they're probably the most hearty—so we're going to put in tadpoles. Things that live off those wetlands will probably show up."

Scientific studies have shown that pesticides are a major contributor to the decline of amphibians around the world. So it's only natural that Mike's interest in saving our web-toed friends overlaps with another of his projects, the roanokevalleylocavore.org website, which Mike started in 2010. Roanokevalleylocavore.org is an online directory of local, and in many cases, organic farmers in the region. Listings include everything from honey to flowers, cheese and lamb.

Mike has worked closely from the start with Virginia Tech's Christy Gabbard of the Catawba Sustainability Center. With the help of some VT interns, the website is about to expand its offering to include an interactive, GIS-style database that will allow local food seekers quicker access to the growers in the area.

Says Mike of the website, "It's just a real informal way to get the word out that



local food is under production. There are people who are real good producers that are willing to sell you some high quality stuff if you're willing to look for it." 

In Brief

Name: Mike Scott
Age: 52
Employer: Botetourt County schools
Position: Instructional technology resource teacher

Background: A Hokie plucked from the hills of Hinton, W. Va., Mike is a former nuclear power plant worker in the southeast U.S., where he monitored how long employees could stay in parts of the plants before they'd get sick, or worse. When his first wife took a teaching position at Ferrum College, Mike took a master's degree in instruction technology and landed a job as a science teacher in Franklin County. Today Mike is in his ninth year with Botetourt County schools, plays guitar, bass and mandolin in a band, does some online teaching and runs the roanokevalleylocavore.org website. Remarried and relocated, Mike and his wife Theresa Bell, also an educator, live in southwest Roanoke.



David Perry

B.B. Rierson: "They would come back in worse shape than they went out."

Worth a dime >

Executive Summary:

B.B. Rierson's Big Bear Guitar Works was born as a hobby, but quickly took over as a full-time job.

By David Perry

Bivian Budge Rierson III, is a drummer-turned truck driver and the owner-operator of Big Bear Guitar Works near Glenvar. Going by the easier-to-remember moniker of "B.B.," his company does maintenance, repair and custom guitar builds from his home-based shop.

It all started for B.B. as a teenager in southwest Roanoke County. "I started

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playing drums when I was 13 and I was in a lot of different bands," says B.B. "After enough people came and went in these bands, I decided to pick up a guitar because you could learn some songs and stick with them. With the drums you had to start over every time."

After graduating from Cave Spring High School, he worked at Star City Music and put a lot of miles in the seat of commercial trucks: he estimates on the order of a half-million.

Still playing in bands, he began to learn to repair guitars out of necessity. "I had to maintain a couple of archtop guitars that are finicky, so I carried around a big toolbox," B.B. says.

He quickly learned that his own work was better than the work done by the shops to which he'd sent his own guitars. "They would come back in worse shape than they went out," he says. His wife suggested that he learn to work on the guitars himself.

He joined the Blue Ridge Luthiers, a group of southwest Virginia instrument makers, and then headed for Big Rapids, Mich., for two months at the Galloup Guitar School of Lutherie, where he became a Certified Fretted Instrument Repair Technician. He opened Big Bear Guitar Works in September of 2010 and will repair a little bit of everything.

"If it has frets, I'll look at it, and if it's over my head I have pretty good resources

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of who to send them to," B.B. says.


He's worked on upright basses and violins and does work for Roanoke City Schools and other local guitar shops. While he custom builds, most of his business is repairs because it's a better investment. "When it comes to building a guitar, you have to spend a lot of money out of your pocket and you might not get it back for a long time," B.B. says.

B.B.'s current patient list includes a bass guitar whose owner backed over it with his car. "I didn't even ask him how it happened," says B.B. "I felt too bad for him. I told him I'd fix it on the back burner. It wouldn't be worth me doing first priority because it would cost too much."

On the design front, B.B. says "I'm sticking to traditional designs right now. People want what they see. They

don't want a square guitar." However, he says "They're more apt to take a chance with a new design on an electric guitar because the shape doesn't affect the sound as much."

B.B. builds from woods like alder, maple, rosewood, spruce, mahogany and ebony that he orders online, although he hopes to start using local woods in the future. His guitars are painted with an older finish called "nitrocellulose lacquer" that was originally made in the 1920s for automobiles. "Whatever colors the cars were, that was the color the guitars had because they were making paint for cars, not guitars."

A current custom build project includes a guitar with a dot hole on the neck that B.B. drilled too large. To cover his mistake, B.B. drilled the hole even larger and inserted a dime. "Now no one can say that my guitars aren't worth a dime," he says. 



Coming Up...

July 2012
Volunteering

Volunteer opportunities in the region are growing as non-profits' budgets shrink. Business and individuals are contributing a great deal to keep vital services thriving. Raise you hand... we'll call on you to read our FRONTcover story on volunteering in July.

August 2012
Parentpreneurs

As more and more people work from home-based businesses and take care of home and hearth at the same time, somebody looked around and came up with the job title of "mompreneur." That's not accurate, however, as many of these mothers are Mr. Moms. They all do double duty, some quite successfully. Sarah Beth Jones takes a close look and lets you in on what she finds out.

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A change of heart >

My View

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

Excutive Summary: *Sometimes it doesn't work out the way we expect. Sometimes it's better.*

When last we visited Sherita Simpson, things were different. Way different.

A few months ago, Sherita sat for an interview with one of our writers. We were interested in her because she was passionate young lawyer at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke that those around her believed had a crackerjack future in store. She was young, single and on a red hot legal career track. I had met her when David Paxton brought her along for a talk about writers' legal rights to a group I'd put together. David had to leave about halfway through the talk and Sherita took over without missing a step. She was impressive.

But, alas, the law wasn't for this South Georgia native, a young woman who'd grown up admiring an entrepreneurial mother and a machine tinkering dad who loved books. She was exposed to a broad range of options and told repeatedly that she could have any of them. The law was the one she thought she wanted—from an early age all the way through law school at West Virginia University and into a good position as an associate at one of the largest firms in the region.

But like so many kids who have it all mapped out and are so dead certain that the future will be just this way, Sherita discovered that her dream wasn't exactly what she wanted. She had a passion for the law, adored the firm, had a marvelous mentor in Matt Broughton of GLRM. But something was missing.

A piece of the personal puzzle fell into place when she met Delvin Wallace, a young professional who doted on her and was "so supportive" of whatever she wanted for her personal fulfillment. That was Change No. 1. Change No. 2 came when she became Sherita Simpson Wallace, married woman. "He was the first guy I'd ever met that when I was stressed, he'd say, 'Let's pray for peace.' I thought, 'Man, I'm marrying him.'"

She started looking around and seeing old friendships that were gone, church activities and involvement that had slipped, pieces of her life that had been set aside. "I didn't want to continue losing out" on those things, she says now. "I was just unhappy." The law represents an enormous investment for a young person recently out of school. Like a lot of the professions—accounting and architecture come to mind—the demand for time all but erases the rest of the lives of many of these young people and Sherita didn't want that.

"Believe me," says Sherita, "I could have been successful [at law] if I had chosen to stay." But "at one point something changed. Something shifted in me that I couldn't identify." She recognized the change. "Matt said that it's one of the

continued on Page 52



The silent couple >

By **Tom Field**
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

Eleven seconds. That's how long I see her.

I go to three different places for my daily runs (very slow jogs, actually); and I often see the same people at each. One of my routes is on an easy little flat trail, and that's where I see the lady of sorrows. I see her coming around the bend, we're approaching each other, and I have eleven seconds before I pass her. She never looks up. She never waves or lifts a finger. She doesn't even give the slight head nod.

And she never smiles.

I don't know the reason for her pilgrimage. Her husband (or companion) never smiles either, but he doesn't look sad like her. He's expressionless.

The couple walks in silence.


It's not such a rare thing to see. We've all seen the couple who appear to be giving each other the silent treatment. But it does seem unnatural when the silence is everlasting. The old couple at the restaurant who never say a word to each other through an entire dinner. You notice that. Particularly when it looks like they're been married to each other for a lifetime. This couple on the trail... they never talk. Never glance toward the other's direction. Never get too close to the other person's body. Never ever say a word.

And yet they're together.

It seems unnatural. Even a squirrel will chase another squirrel around a tree. And everyone else on the trail will acknowledge you in some way, whether it's one second of eye-contact, a little finger flick, or a full blown high volume audible greeting.

It amazes me how we are still working on this game of communication. With all the social and technological progresses, I'm not sure our ability to communicate has really improved since the Ancient Egyptian period of 3,000 B.C. We still have our mis-communications and non-communications, and even Al Gore's Internet hasn't brought people closer, though it certainly has brought people together. Passing somebody on a path—dirt or cyber—doesn't mean much more than the fact that you know somebody else is out there. Maybe that's enough.

But I still see advantages in front porches over Facebook.

Maybe we should all replace our mail boxes (who needs those any more anyway?) with big blue thumb's up "Like" buttons. Our new "friends" would have to see us in person to press it. Starting off the first communication that way wouldn't even take eleven seconds. 





Dan Smith

Sherita Simpson Wallace

Smith / My View


from Page 50

things you have to figure out when you go to work for a firm. They wanted me to stay but Matt helped me through the transition." That was Change No. 3. Change No. 4—another biggie—was right around the corner. This outgoing, intelligent, smiling young woman had worked enough at her parents' Christian book store in LaGrange, Ga. ("LaGrange means 'the barn,'" she laughs), to know she understood how it functioned and that she liked it. A lot. "I talked to my husband about alternatives" to the law, she says. "As usual, I didn't believe in myself enough." Delvin believed enough for both of them. He'd become a senior financial analyst at Advance Auto in Roanoke, so their financial state was stable, though one does not drop a lawyer's salary and not notice it.

Delvin encouraged Sherita. "You're the one with the entrepreneurial spirit," he said. That

spirit led her to look into opening the online book store, Good Seed for Christians (www.goodseed4christians.com). It would have a loose association with her parents' store, but would be independent. She and Delvin had computer skills, so that wouldn't be an issue. There was enough money, though she had pause. "I thought, 'Oh, God, our standard of living ...'" But she stopped, smiled and plowed on.

The store, she says, is "a celebration of my core beliefs. It has a Biblical foundation and when you merge work and your core, you're merging the Kingdom with your business."

Some would call it "following your bliss." There seems to be a lot of that going around these days and even a 27-year-old with what looks like a stable future in the law can have a change of heart and a change of mind. 

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Letters

When the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce announced in early May its already formed alliance with a Richmond / Hampton Roads publisher to move into the chamber office and provide what it calls a “first venture into a region-specific” monthly business magazine, we received more than 50 letters in a two week period. Below is a very small representative sample with content abbreviated:

Shame on the Roanoke Chamber!
I am not surprised, however—angry
but not surprised.

Glenna Johannessen

It sure seems that this is not in keeping
with what their mission is, to support the
existing businesses in the Roaoke Valley.

Kathleen Northern

It seems they want to control media and
profit from it too. Most people will not be
able to distinguish between bias and
unbiased media. It is a slap in the face
no doubt.

Stuart Mease

I STRONGLY dislike and am disappointed
with this decision by the chamber. This is
a great example of small minded thinking
from “leaders” in Roanoke—smells like
politics.

Stacy Hairfield

It’s sad news to learn of the alliance...
Roanoke’s own Valley Business FRONT is
first and foremost a business publication,
based here, with writers and contributors
familiar with the business as well as cultural
and political milieu of Roanoke and the
surrounding region. Does the fact that the
Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce
overlooked the publication say anything
about how it views local businesses?

Or does it say more about what it
knows about local businesses? What
does this decision say about the Chamber’s

commitment to the region? How does
going outside the region for partnerships
speak on behalf of the region’s businesses?
Why not use the best local resource on
Roanoke business to do the work to
broaden the access to this area?

To say the least, it sounds like a poorly
reasoned decision. To say the most, it’s
an affront to the FRONT and the local
business community.

Kurt Navratil

The Roanoke Regional Chamber of
Commerce did not feel the need to look
within its membership which they are
supposed to be serving to meet the needs
of their own organizational development.
The RRCC has chosen to compete directly
with its membership, specifically Valley
Business FRONT Magazine and Leisure
Publishing. Not only were their members
not given an opportunity to bid on the
new publication, notice was made public
only after the deal was sealed! This decision
will have a ripple effect on the businesses
of our region... When people do things
like this, which happens every day, and
say “it’s business.” that’s a poor excuse.

Bonnie Cranmer

What a slap in the face of LOCAL
businesses!!

Beckie Spaid

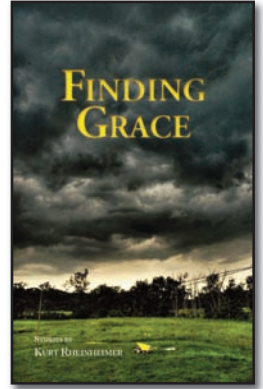
Very poor decision by the Chamber.
Very disturbing to hear of the lack of
support for a local business—especially
a local business entrenched in the
community, committed to the success
of other local businesses and always
supportive of the Chamber. My support
goes to local business, especially the
FRONT...not the Chamber.

Dina Bennett

*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*

Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our publishers and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit 150-word reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to Editor Dan Smith at editrdan@msn.com



More Rheinheimer

I suspect many of you know that one of my favorite writers is my friend Kurt Rheinheimer, longtime editor of Roanoker Magazine. His new collection of short stories, *Finding Grace* (Press 53, \$14.95 paperback) will tell you everything you need to know about why. This is Kurt growing up, trying to understand the world of his mom and dad, his siblings, his friends, Baltimore, all of it. He struggles sometimes and he trips and he fumbles and sometimes a light comes on.

The prose is vintage Rheinheimer: crisp and to the point with a Superman eye that penetrates every detail and shares it with you. Kurt has primarily been known for his baseball fiction in the past, but *Finding Grace* should change that and give you an idea why his baseball writing is so appealing (hint: because it isn't baseball writing; it's just superb writing with some baseball in it). Buy this one and put it in a special place so you can read it and savor it bit by bit (mine's in the bathroom).

—Dan Smith

A woman's story

Roanoke author Judy Light Ayyildiz has produced a fascinating and historically significant story in her first novel, *Forty Thorns* (Remzi Kitabevi-Remzi Book House, \$18.99). The well-researched, beautifully crafted chronicle is based on the life of her courageous Turkish mother-in-law, Adalet, a name that in Turkish means Justice.

The Ayyildiz flair for storytelling is evident in retelling Adalet's stories, told during a visit to Istanbul before her death at 92. The strong, feisty Turkish mother and her equally feisty American daughter-in-law, who might ordinarily have clashed, developed a loving and respectful bond that melded two times and cultures.

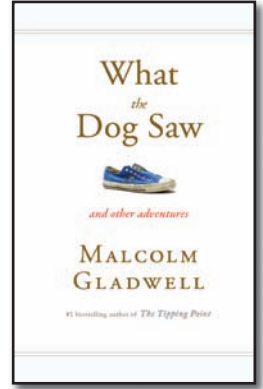
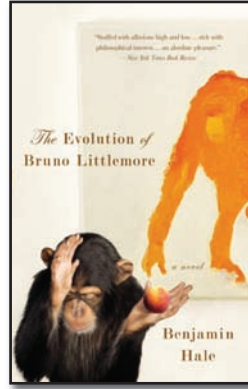
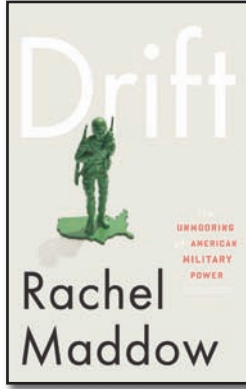
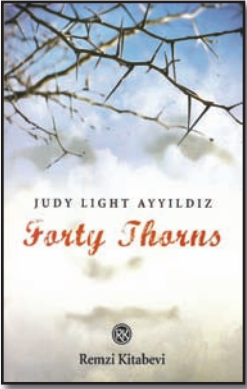
Through keen attention to detail and a natural gift for poetic writing, Ayyildiz paints scenes steeped in Turkish tradition and culture over nearly a century, using a full array of color and the lively flavor of the era. The novel is multi-layered with the turbulence of war-ravaged regions and the engaging story of a young, romantic Turkish girl, who blossoms into a loving, brave, and politically defiant woman — a woman far ahead of her time in her beliefs, thinking and actions.

—Carol Willoughby

At peace with war

In 1792, Thomas Jefferson saw no reason to keep an “unnecessary soldier” on government payroll. His belief that ordinary citizens would sign up to defend the country in times of peril worked, up through Vietnam. Somewhere after Vietnam the U.S. developed a defense infrastructure including a standing army and government contractors that can't survive without taxpayer dollars.

In *Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power* by Rachel Maddow (Crown, \$25), she argues that the U.S. has made peace with the idea of perpetual war, citing the rise



of executive authority, outsourcing much of our war-making capabilities to private companies and the reliance on an ever-decreasing number of families willing to send their sons and daughters off to war. From the Department of Homeland Security to the Department of Defense, Maddow explores the cost in money and human capital. Cries of prioritizing national security drown out political discourse in today's media arena. Like her politics or not, she gives the reader something to think about.

—Betsy Ashton

Erasing lines

Imagine seeing the world through the eyes of a chimpanzee. An intelligent one. Male. Able to speak and read. Uncomfortable about his appearance. Lusting after women. Loving fine art, music, literature and the theater. Afraid of his own strength and capacity for violence. Not so different than you or me.

Much stronger than wimpy *homo sapiens* and able to remember the exact layout of an apartment in astonishing detail. Fond of ripping up the mattress to build nice nest.

I loved *The Evolution of Bruno Littlemore* by Benjamin Hale (Hachette Book Group, \$25.99) because it dares to erase the bold line between humans and other animals. Scary at times and full of truth. It is told in the first person, and there is an odd discomfort in occupying the mind of a realistically portrayed ape. The discomfort comes from the fact

that such a mind seems very familiar.

—Diana Christopulos

What the Dog Saw

For the first time, with *What the Dog Saw* (Little Brown, \$27.99), Malcolm Gladwell has collected his favorite essays first published in *The New Yorker* magazine into a single volume. His curiosity seems boundless as he introduces the reader to the man who invented the birth control pill, a dog whisperer, a pasta sauce pioneer. His essays, at once humorous and poignant, ask what hair dye tells us about the history of the 20th Century, about what football players can teach us about hiring teachers, about how companies in the Silicon Valley bumped into each other to hire the same college graduate.

From the secrets of ketchup to the perils of too much information to the fallacy of equating genius with precocity, Gladwell's writing succeeds in "its ability to engage you, to make you think, to give you a glimpse into someone else's head." Once again, Gladwell takes the reader on journeys into the "hidden extraordinary."

—Betsy Ashton

(**The reviewers:** Roanoke-based Carol Willoughby is Saint Francis Service Dogs co-founder. Betsy Ashton is a Smith Mountain Lake-based writer. Diana Christopulos is a retired small business owner and a leader in Cool Cities Coalition. Dan Smith is editor of Valley Business FRONT.)



Technite Awards >

Trish and **Ken Ferris** (left, Brookwood Management), **Ray Pethtel** of Virginia Tech and **Russ Ellis** chat before the **RBTC** awards dinner on May 10. A record crowd of 460 people showed up. Business winners were Minnis Ridenhour of Virginia Tech, Regional Leadership; ADMMicro co-founders, Entrepreneur; PowerHub Systems, Innovation; LuJure, Rising Star; MoGo Mobile, People's Choice; and Ed and Katherine Walker, Ruby Award.



Rain-Free Festival >

A notorious weekend for rain in the past, **Roanoke's Festival in the Park** was weather-perfect over Memorial Day weekend 2012. That's especially good news for the sand sculptor, one of many artisans on display.

Research questions >

A group of economic developers from around the New River Valley visited Virginia Tech May 24 to learn about the types of research that might appeal to companies considering moving to the region. The group visited the Kroehling Advanced Materials Foundry, a metal casting facility just off campus on Plantation Road in Blacksburg, and also heard from researchers at the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute. In a debriefing meeting, **John Provo** (from left) and **Patrick O'Brien** of the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development, **John White** of the town of Pulaski, **Shawn Utt** of Pulaski County, and **Lindsay Hurt** from the city of Roanoke chat.



Valley Business FRONT is FRONT'n About at many events each month. Check the blog links at www.vbFRONT.com for more coverage.



Dan Smith

Local Colors >

The colors of Poland and Korea are proudly waved at **Roanoke's Local Colors Festival** on May 26. Local Colors celebrates its 22 year as a multi-cultural enrichment program that hosts events all year long, including the annual festival.



Botetourt Chamber's Annual Dinner >

The **Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce** hosted its 43rd Annual Dinner at Hollins University on May 24. The evening included a silent auction (bidder pictured above, right), dinner and entertainment (The Downing Group jazz trio and Lord Botetourt & James River high schools' combined all star chorus). Awards presented included the Kiwanis Club of Botetourt County for community service (**Chuck Geiger**, accepting on left); Oakey's Funeral Service & Crematory for business leadership (**Lee Arritt**, accepting on right); and student scholarships to **Brooklyn Giles** (BTEC), **Kaleb Cahoon** (JRHS), and **Toni Costanzo** (LBHS).

Food talk >

First Citizen's Bank President **John Francis** (left) and Convention & Visitors Bureau Director **Landon Howard** chat May 14 at GFD&G's Food Festival 2012 in downtown Roanoke on May 16. It was a celebration of locally-grown food in its second year.



Dan Smith

CONTRIBUTORS

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is the founder of business news site Handshake 2.0 (handshake20.com) and President and CEO of Handshake Media, Incorporated, makers of Handshake mobile applications. She is co-founder of She Chooses (shechooses.com), the social network for women. [anne@handshake2.0.com]

Sheila Ellis-Glasper has several years of newspaper experience including reporting for a daily paper in Roanoke, Associated Press and the Topeka Capital-Journal. She's a graduate of Kansas State University. She also owns her own business making handcrafted and custom jewelry, Precious Heart Designs. She lives in Vinton with her husband and their young son. [sheilaellis.09@gmail.com]

Tom Field is a creative director, marketing executive and owner of Berryfield, Inc. in Salem, and co-owner of Valley Business FRONT magazine. He has written and produced programs and materials for local and international organizations for more than 30 years. [tfield@berryfield.com]

Kathleen Harvey Harshberger is a graduate of Radford University and the Protocol School of Washington. She conducts seminars in business etiquette, international business protocol, and dining skills. She has an international clientele in business, government, and higher education. She is a certified Protocol Officer. [harshberger@aol.com]

Gene Marrano, a former sales and marketing executive in various manufacturing fields, is one of the most prolific journalists in the Roanoke Valley. He not only writes for several publications, but he has a television show ("Interview With Gene Marrano" on Cox Channel 9) and a radio show ("Roanoke This Week with Gene Marrano" on Fox Radio 910). [gmarrano@cox.net]

Michael Miller is senior licensing manager for Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties in Blacksburg. His consulting company is Kire Technology. With more than 25 years as an inventor and technology consultant, working with Fortune 500 companies and startups, he screens businesses for the World's Best Technology Showcase and mentors tech startups through Development Capital Networks and the National Science Foundation. [mcmiller2@gmail.com]

David Perry, who works for the Western Virginia Land Trust, is an accomplished freelance writer. He is a native of Blacksburg and a James Madison University Graduate. His writing has appeared in Blue Ridge Country and the Roanoker, among other publications. [dave@davidperryonline.com]

Anne Piedmont is the president of Piedmont Research Associates, a marketing communications firm she has started after working for the Roanoke Regional Partnership as director of research for more than 18 years. She's also worked in public relations and journalism. She loves numbers and wants them to make sense for you. [annepied@yahoo.com]

Laura Purcell is a mother, wife, rat-terrier wrangler and writer living in Blacksburg. Her website is purcellink.squarespace.com. [lmspurcell@gmail.com]

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 and has won many journalism awards (writing, photography and design). He is a member of the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame and was a 2009 recipient of the Perry F. Kendig Literary Award. He was Virginia's Business Journalist of the year in 2005. He is the founder of the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference. [dsmith@vbFRONT.com]

Kathy Surace is FRONT Business Dress columnist, an image consultant and owner of Peacock Image in Roanoke. She was a fashion consultant for a major clothing chain for a number of years. [kssurace@aol.com]

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Randolph Walker

graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a journalism degree in 1983. He has been a daily newspaper reporter in Roanoke and an advertising copywriter for the Edmonds Packett Group. He is now a freelance writer as well as a performing musician and guitar teacher. [rwalker25@cox.net]



Alison Weaver

May 2012 > Contributor of the Month

For the umpteenth time in the brief history of this magazine, Alison Weaver is again the contributor of the month. Alison's work on the cover story "Writing for Grants" is cited as the best of the May 2012 issue. Alison is a former Contributor of the Year and has scored Story of the Year twice, as well as a number of monthly citations. Her cover stories have consistently been exemplary in their research, organization and presentation. Her writing is always crisp, clear and full of creativity and we appreciate having her on our side. You can read Alison's current and back issue articles at vbFRONT.com



you gotta read it—you can't look away

— Page 28

The local economy is experiencing the right kind of “ups and downs.” Unemployment is down and the number of people working is up. Gas prices are down and air traffic – both people and cargo – is up. Could it be that the recovery is starting to stick?

10.6 percent over the year. (Claims fell in the Roanoke MSA by 29.5 percent.)

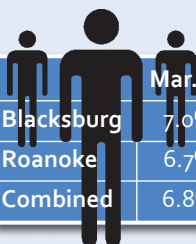
UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS

Week 17 2011	Week 17 2012
330	295

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Unemployment/Employment

Unemployment rates in the Roanoke and Blacksburg Metropolitan Statistical Areas fell over the month and the year. Within the region, the Blacksburg MSA has had the lower unemployment rate for the past several months, but interestingly, saw an increase in initial unemployment claims for Week 17 (April 20-26), up more than 65 percent over the year. Unemployment in the combined region fell at a faster rate than Virginia’s (6.3 percent in March 2011 to 5.7 percent a year later).



	UNEMPLOYMENT		
	Mar. 11	Feb. 12	Mar. 12
Blacksburg	7.0%	6.1%	5.9%
Roanoke	6.7%	6.5%	6.1%
Combined	6.8%	6.3%	6.0%

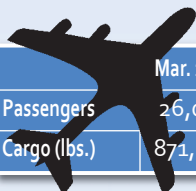
Fewer people unemployed means more people were **employed** in the region in March. The number of people working was higher than a year ago, and a month ago.

	EMPLOYED		
	Mar. 2011	Feb. 2012	Feb. 2012
	227,362	234,355	284,216

Despite the uptick in the Blacksburg MSA, initial unemployment claims in the region fell

Transportation

People and packages left the Roanoke Regional Airport in greater numbers in March than in the previous month. **Airplane passengers boarding** in March rose 19.0 percent from last month and 3.5 percent from a year ago. Departing cargo fell slightly over the year.



	AIR TRAVEL		
	Mar. 2011	Feb. 2012	Mar. 2012
Passengers	26,079	22,681	26,997
Cargo (lbs.)	871,506	776,361	864,090

Source: Roanoke Regional Airport

While it still is painful at the pump, late April and early May saw **gas prices** drop in the region, according to the AAA.



	GAS PRICES		
	May 3, 2011	Apr. 3, 2012	May 3, 2012
	\$3.787	\$3.856	\$3.562

Sources: AAA Fuel Gauge Report

—By Anne Piedmont, Piedmont Research Associates

Read the FRONT online

vbFRONT.com

Also get more stories and pictures at morefront.blogspot.com



Sheila Ellis-Glasper

Duke Curtis (left) with Mike Hamlar of Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home.

The upbeat funeral >

Executive Summary:

Hamlar-Curtis has been doing this for 60 years, but not quite this way.

By Sheila Ellis-Glasper

A funeral home is not the first thing that comes to mind while watching a commercial with a kid playing a video game while his mother is trying to get his attention. And that's how Duke Curtis and Mike Hamlar, co-owners of Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home, like it. It's the modern version.

The company was founded by Duke's mother and father, Cecil and Marilyn Curtis and Mike's great-uncle, Lawrence Hamlar.

In 1952, segregation was the law of the land, and African-Americans were not welcomed in white funeral homes. There were five black-owned funeral homes in the Roanoke Valley when Hamlar-Curtis opened its doors and within six years, Hamlar-Curtis was one of the last ones standing.

Hamlar-Curtis has helped thousands of Roanokers at a time of sadness over the past five decades. For its 60th anniversary the company has launched a marketing campaign that redefines the respected family business built on tradition while staying relevant to its clients.

The new Hamlar-Curtis slogan: Carrying your story forward. Faux vignettes of different family stories are used in advertisements. The mother in the commercial got her son's attention by telling him a little-known story of an aunt who jumped out of air planes in the service.

"Everyone has a story," Hamlar says. "Sometimes it is not until a person dies that you learn their whole story."

The goal is to create a more upbeat image than a typical funeral home and reflect the theme of celebrating life by tell people's life stories.

"We don't want to be the funeral home that has the commercial with dreary organ music playing in the background," says Curtis, who has worked at the funeral home for 34 years.

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

The Curtis' owned a building on 10th and Moorman, in the same location the funeral home is today. It served as a two-chair barber shop and a drive-in restaurant called the Cozy Corner. Lawrence Hamlar, Mike Hamlar's grand uncle and a family friend approached the Curtis' about opening a funeral home.

There were challenges in the beginning, Curtis says. Roanoke banks—owned by white people—would not give Lawrence Hamlar and Cecil Curtis a business loan. A black-owned bank in Danville and other blacks in Roanoke invested in their business.

Five decades later, the company has changed with the times. The clientele has broadened. Hamlar-Curtis serves several immigrant groups and religions in Roanoke. And it has embraced social media: about 800 friends on Facebook and many followers on Twitter.


The Hamlar and Curtis families haven't done all the work by themselves. Ten employees, some whom have been there almost 50 years, work alongside Duke and Mike to create the family atmosphere at Hamlar-Curtis. They have done business in other states and countries including France.

"We have put our blood sweat and tears to get trust," says Curtis. "People trust that we will get the job done well and right."

While some may say the funeral business is "recession-proof" the economy has a direct impact on the business. A funeral 50 years ago averaged about \$700; now the average funeral can cost around \$6,500, according to the National Funeral Directors Association.

There's new emphasis on the importance of pre-planning funerals, including helping people in their 30s with a put together packet with a will and life insurance policies. There are more merchandise options, such as caskets, vaults at a wide-range of price points for customers, Curtis said.

The Curtis and the Hamlar families have given back to the Roanoke Valley through community service serving as athletic coaches for local schools, chairmen for various community organizations and in the earlier years the company's founders were active in Roanoke's desegregation efforts and the stabilization of the community at a time of racial tension.

"We are a part of the community and here to serve our community," Hamlar said. "We wouldn't be here if the community didn't support us." 



Sheila Ellis-Gasper

Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home in Roanoke.

Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Banks

Jessica Miller has been named financial center manager for the Corporate Research Center office of Stellar One Bank in Blacksburg.



McEntire



Caldwell

SunTrust Bank, Western Virginia has named **Holly McEntire** VP and client advisor within its Private Wealth Management Division in Lynchburg. SunTrust has named

Brandon Caldwell banking relationship manager within its Commercial Division in Roanoke.

Credit Unions

Freedom First in Roanoke has added mortgage loan representatives **Carol Day** and **Martha Sowers**.



Metheney

Insurance

Nelson Metheney has joined Brown Insurance in Blacksburg as surety bond manager.

Investing

Mark Gobble, who has been a Financial Advisor in Merrill Lynch's Roanoke office for 21 years, has been named resident director,

responsible for managing an office of 14 advisors and nine support staff.

LEGAL FRONT



Rakes

Firms

William R. Rakes, a partner of Roanoke-based Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore, will receive the initial Leadership in Education Award named in his honor and established by The Virginia State Bar Section on the Education of Lawyers in Virginia, in partnership with Gentry Locke. The award was created to recognize those in the legal community who make significant contributions to the improvement of legal



Pace

education in Virginia.

G. Michael Pace Jr., managing partner of Roanoke-based law firm Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore, has been selected by The Wilson Center for Leadership in the Public Interest at Hampden-Sydney College (where he graduated in 1979) as the recipient of the Patrick Henry Award, recognizing his outstanding career as a dedicated public servant.

Woods Rogers attorney **Bill Poff** of Roanoke has received the Roger Groot Professionalism Award for legal professionalism, ethics, civility and competence from the Ted Dalton American

We Never Forget It's More Than a Box.

where
creativity
unfolds



From the first time we attacked a refrigerator box with paint, scissors, glue and tape, we knew it could be anything we wanted...

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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.



Poff

Inn of Court, an organization made up of lawyers, judges and students from Southwest Virginia.

WELLNESS FRONT

Counseling

Edward Magalhaes



Magalhaes

has been elected to serve as President-Elect for the Virginia Counselors Association for the 2012-2013

fiscal year. He is the director of academic and counseling services and assistant professor Department of Neuropsychiatry and Behavioral Sciences for the Via College of Osteopathic Medicine in Blacksburg.

Blue Ridge Women's Center of Roanoke, (a crisis pregnancy center) has named



Katie Fagan director of development and advancement.

it's here

Valley Business FRONT

mobile app for the iPad

AVAILABLE NOW AT THE APP STORE



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Career FRONT



Buth

Hospitals

Allison Buth has been promoted to Media and Public Relations Advisor for Carilion Clinic in Roanoke.



Moskal

Dr. Joseph Moskal of Carilion Clinic has been honored by the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons for his scientific presentation, "Improving the Accuracy of Acetabular Component Orientation: Avoiding Malposition." It was one of three to receive the Award of Excellence, out of a total of 88 exhibits.

Nursing

Maribeth Capuno of the Salem VA Medical Center is the new president electe of the Virginia Council of Nurse Practitioners. **Laurie Buchwald** of OB/GYN of Radford is the Blue Ridge region president.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Construction

Michelle Harvey has joined Roanoke's Lionberger Construction as a project manager and **Adam Parker** is a new project LEED coordinator.

Ram Jack of the Commonwealth in Roanoke has named **Charlie Kuehn** sales manager.



Parlo

Thor General Contractors in Roanoke has hired **Larry Parlo** as construction project manager.

Equipment

Rish Equipment Company in Salem has named **Wesley Burke** its new president. Other appointments include: **Jack Davis II**, vice president of business analysis; **Myron Jones**, CEO; **Dale Hall**, vice president and COO; **Steve Hamilton**, vice president CFO and secretary/treasurer; **Buddy McGlothlin** VP of sales; and **Chip Bohlen** VP and general manager of Virginia operations.



Quesenberry



Dalton



Quintana

Housing

Eddie Quesenberry and **Jeff Dalton** of CMG Leasing in Blacksburg have received the Certified Pool/Spa Operator certification from the National Swimming Pool Foundation. **Greg Quintana** has received the HVAC EPA Section 608 Universal Certification.

EDUCATION FRONT

Colleges

Kay Lucas was recently installed as director of standardized patient for the Virginia Campus of the Edward



Lucas

M. Via College of Osteopathic Medicine at Virginia Tech. **Anny Furry** has been installed as clinical affairs administrative assistant.

National College in Salem has named **Rebekah Motley** office assistant for the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. **Eddi Hobson-Hardy** and **Matthew McBride** have been named instructors for the ESL program.

National College in Salem has named **Adam Bailey** a financial planner, **Amelia English-Brown** a student loan representative, **Nancy Simmons** communications manager and **Allison Clarkson** communications specialist.

CULTURE FRONT

Athletic Clubs

Jenna Bartlett has been promoted to director of wellness development at the Roanoke and Botetourt Athletic Clubs. The

Botetourt Athletic Club has named **Jason Bunn** as fitness manager and **Aaron Washington** has been appointed site supervisor at RAC Xpress.



Miller



Williams



Salinas

Country Clubs

Hunting Hills Country Club in Roanoke has named **Tommy Joyce** general manager.

been promoted to director of project management at the Roanoke Regional Partnership.

clerk of the year.

Media

Bryce Williams has joined WDBJ7 in Roanoke as a multi-media journalist and general assignment reporter. **Orlando Salinas** is the new New River Valley Newsroom reporter.

OTHER FRONTS

Economic Development

Ann Blair Miller has

Government

Virginia Municipal Clerks Association has named **Patricia Keatts**, clerk of Rocky Mount, its



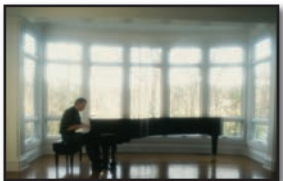
ADVANCE AUTO



MEDECO



BERTRAM FIRESTONE



BRUCE HORNSBY



ROANOKE TIMES



ROWE

gregvaughnphotography.com



Dan Smith

Shenandoah Life Building in Roanoke

Shenandoah out of receivership

Roanoke-based **Shenandoah Life Insurance Company**, following a \$60 million capital infusion, has successfully exited receivership—a rare occurrence in the industry. Shenandoah Life will

continue to be based in Roanoke as a subsidiary fits new owner, privately held Prosperity Life Insurance Group LLC. Prosperity Life is led by an experienced group of insurance and investment professionals, including Jose Montemayor, the former three-term Commissioner of the

Texas Department of Insurance, who will join Shenandoah's newly appointed Board of Directors.

The transaction, finalized by order of the Virginia State Corporation Commission, means the company will resume normal operations, including continuing to fulfill all of its commitments to policyholders. "Very few insurance companies have emerged from receivership to resume business. Shenandoah's ability to do so is a tribute to the company's solid operations and talented employees," says Montemayor, president of Prosperity Life.

The company introduced industry veteran Hans Carstensen, former president and CEO of Aviva Life Insurance Co., as Shenandoah Life's new Roanoke-based President and Chief Executive Officer.

45 laid off at Cycle Systems

Cycle Systems, a recycling company thought by many to be recession-proof, has laid off 45 people, blaming—what else?—a sad economy. Apparently scrap material is drying up, reducing business at the nearly 100-year-old Roanoke company that employs 195 people.

More jobs in Franklin

Franklin County will get 40 new jobs with the expansion of a **McAirlaid's** to 160 employees. The company will add 75,000 square feet at the plant where it makes absorbent materials used to package meat and other products.

55 jobs in Alleghany

A publicly traded company that manufactures ingredients used in



Hans Carstensen

food, pharmaceuticals and animal nutrition announced will establish an operation in Allegheny County, investing approximately \$10 million and creating 55 new jobs within two to three years.

Balchem Corporation, which is based in New Hampton, N.Y., will manufacture encapsulated ingredients for global applications used in animal nutrition and health products. The company plans to acquire a vacant, 68,000-square-foot building owned by the county, located in the Allegheny Regional Commerce Center.

Cleaners merge

Roanoke dry cleaners **Skyline** and **Air-Lee** have been purchased by WDM Ventures in Roanoke. Between them, there are eight locations (two with different names: Peacock Salem and Vinton Dry Cleaners). Their owners were Eddie Thornhill and his sister Linda Ives and Bob Jones. The businesses will retain their names.

Campaign launched

The **Roanoke Regional Partnership** has launched a \$3 million private sector campaign to further promote the

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region's economic development initiatives. Partners In Prosperity, The Next Step is a five-year initiative in which a private sector goal of \$3 million will be matched by the public sector in Allegheny, Botetourt, Franklin and Roanoke counties; Roanoke and Salem cities; and the town

of Vinton to fund a \$6 million program of work.

Building plans

Bill Chapman, the Richmond developer who has put nearly \$11 million into downtown Roanoke already, plans to an old Roanoke building into apartments

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and much more (of course; hence, the name)



Sam Lionberger

with work beginning in early July. Chapman says the Shenandoah Building at the corner of First Street and Kirk Avenue will become 90 apartments with as many as two bedrooms. He has 35 parking spaces with the building.

Lionberger Jr. honored

Virginia Tech alumnus **Samuel L. Lionberger Jr.** of Roanoke, is the 2012 recipient of Virginia Tech's William H. Ruffner Medal, the university's highest honor. The medal is awarded at commencement each year to recognize an individual whose service to the university has been notable and distinguished.

City Market 'expands'

Roanoke City Market is expanding its offerings and was so efficient in announcing the changes

that it had three announcements in one press conference in May. Here's what's happening in a nutshell:

- The market is partnering with Kirk Family YMCA at the outer, western edge of downtown to expand the Market outward. Thursday evenings in June, the Market will move up the street to the outside of the Y, near the corner of 5th Street and Luck Ave. The regular Market vendors will be there.
- Because of a \$5,000 grant from the Foundation for Roanoke Valley and the Carilion Clinic Foundation, EBT/SNAP customers (low income, subsidized) will receive a \$1 match for each \$1 purchased up to \$50.
- The Market is launching a new

campaign, Friends of the Farmers Market, which will allow supporters of the Market to sponsor at different levels and receive small items. The effort will sustain the Market and provide signs and a beautification program.

Meanwhile, the association that runs the **City Market Building** has announced plans to take down the huge kiosk in the center of the main floor—a structure that has never been occupied—and replace it with more seating and a small stage. The kiosk was the centerpiece of the re-design of the Market Building, but mostly it just took up space.

Plow & Hearth opens

Plow & Hearth has a new store at The District at Valley View Mall, replacing Twist & Turns. Plow & Hearth sells clothing and accessories, as well as hearth and garden products. The store carries toolsets, fire screens and hearth rugs, as well as gourmet foods and regional favorites.

Award winners

Access Advertising & Public Relations has been awarded two 2012 Communicator Awards by the International Academy of Visual Arts for television spots produced on behalf of clients Carpet Factory Outlet and LewisGale Regional Health System.

The Virginia Press Association has recognized **the becher agency** (tba) in Roanoke for the best agency-created newspaper ad of 2011. The winning ad was created for Save a Ton, the energy-reduction campaign that offers ways to save money on energy costs. The award was presented during the organization's Virginia Newspaper Agency Advertising Awards luncheon in Roanoke.

Best in show

The Becher Agency (tba) won best of show at the 2012 Virginia Public Relations Awards in May. The Roanoke agency was recognized with two awards for its work with the City of Roanoke to create and promote the Eat for Education initiative—an award of excellence in community relations and best of show for public relations programs.

Neathawk Dubuque & Packett took home the Best In Show Capital Award of Excellence for Downtown Roanoke Inc.'s Facebook to Footsteps social media campaign at the 65th Annual Virginia Public Relations Awards hosted by PRSA Richmond.

Giles picked for film

Giles County has been selected as the location for the feature film "Wish You Well," the movie's producers have announced. The movie is based on author David Baldacci's best selling

novel, *Wish You Well*, and is planned to be shot in the fall of 2012. The producer is Sara Elizabeth Timmins, who did the recent "Lake Effects," which showed on the Hallmark Channel.

After launching a search throughout Southwest Virginia, the production team narrowed its search from 15 prospective counties to two: Alleghany Highlands and Giles County. The counties showed their support of the film by submitting extensive informational

packages and opening their communities to the team during location scouts in February and April. Though the final decision was a difficult one, the producers believe that logistically and artistically Giles is the best fit for the production and has numerous options for the locations in the film.

Advance earnings up

Advance Auto Parts of Roanoke, a retailer of automotive aftermarket

parts, accessories, batteries, and maintenance items, has announced its financial results for the first fiscal quarter whose earnings per diluted share were \$1.79, a 32.6 percent increase over the first quarter last year.

"We are pleased with our overall performance during our first quarter despite a meaningful slowdown in our sales trends in the month of April. Our commitment to lead in Service, while adapting our costs to the current business environment

allowed us to generate a solid comp store sales performance and a 21% growth in our operating income," said Darren R. Jackson, President and Chief Executive Officer. "Our second quarter sales trends remain challenging despite the positive long-term industry fundamentals. We remain committed to executing our key priorities while making adjustments to these short term sales trends."

Compiled by Dan Smith

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