

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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vbFRONT.com



The Producers

Dave Perry,
Dave Perry Cinematographer LLC

Valley Bank

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WE ARE PLEASED TO SHARE WITH YOU OUR MOST SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2013.

- The highest net income and earnings in our 18-year history.
Net Income of \$6.8 Million (\$6.2 Million to common shareholders)
- Return on Average Shareholders' Equity of 11.06%^[1]
- Due to High Level of Earnings, Declared a 14.3% increase in the Cash Dividend to Common Shareholders
- Total Assets reaching \$825 Million
- 100% Redemption of TARP Preferred Shares and Warrant held by the US Treasury without creating a dilutive impact to our shareholders or loss to the American Taxpayer
- Record Revenues produced by Valley Wealth Management Services^[2] and "assets under management" topping \$100 Million for the first time
- Built and opened our ninth full-service office in the Bonsack community
- Voted "Best Local Bank" by readers of The Roanoker Magazine
- Voted "Best Bank" by readers of City Magazine
- Voted a "Top 10 Best Places To Work" for the third consecutive year by Virginia Business magazine

As we look forward to the continued growth and success of our company, we continue to focus on the keys to achieving our goals and objectives, those being:

- Our Community
- Our Customers
- Our Employees
- Our Shareholders



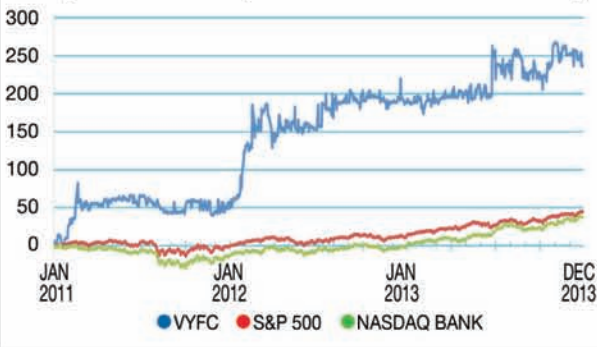
Ellis L. Gutshall
President and
Chief Executive Officer

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From the November 1st Grand Opening, our new Bonsack office opened 183 accounts (\$3 million in deposits) by year end.



Valley Financial Corporation Stock Price History



As of December 31, 2013, the stock price of Valley Financial Corporation "VYFC" has risen more than 237% since January 1, 2011, compared to the NASDAQ Bank Index increase of 38% and the S&P 500 increase of 45%.^[3]

(1) Annualized (2) Valley Wealth Management Services is a Division of Valley Bank. Investment Centers of America, Inc. (ICA), member FINRA/SIPC and a Registered Investment Advisor, is not affiliated with Valley Bank or Valley Wealth Management Services, Inc. Securities, advisory services and insurance products offered through ICA and affiliated insurance agencies are *not insured by the FDIC or any other Federal Government agency *not a deposit or other obligation of, or guaranteed by any bank or their affiliates *subject to risks including the possible loss of principal amount invested. (3) Past performance is not necessarily indicative of future results. For more information regarding our company, please see the filings we make with the SEC, available on our website at myvalleybank.com.



WELCOME to the FRONT

It doesn't take long to discover that the Roanoke Region, New River Valley, and Lynchburg Region serve as quite recognizable little pockets for creative production. One area really getting extra attention as of late is cinematography. We have an enclave of sorts in this part of the state, and good work is not the only thing being produced: we're getting more choice assignments. For movies and commercial sets, the natural calendar scenes from Virginia's Blue Ridge are hard to beat. But we've got two other aces up our sleeve that are missing from many other scenic locales and traditional production towns. We've got lower labor and operational costs, to be sure. More importantly, for the first time, we have more professional grade talent to get the work done. This edition of FRONT showcases six video production firms with the credentials to serve a diversity of projects from quality raw footage capture to high end post production, all within a mere 50-mile radius. Interestingly, most have worked for one another or collaborated on various jobs, even as they scout out opportunities while building their own businesses. In any case, you're going to be seeing more from these producers. Just take a look at a screen near you. Televisions, computer monitors, mobile devices, and yes—theatres. Who says, "we oughta' be in pictures?" We already are.



Tom Field

“”
they have tremendous dreams
about America and want to be
successful here — Page 42



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Going the Extra Mile Page 40

Cover photography of Dave Perry by Tom Field.

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APRIL



Cathy Cooper



Sarah Cox



Gene Marrano



Michael Miller



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 68.

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



Keegan Divant



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Kathleen Harshberger



Pete Krull



David Perry



Anne Piedmont



Laura Purcell



Anne Sampson



Samantha Steidle



Randolph Walker

“Everybody with a chain saw and a lucky streak was doing tree work

— Page 41

2014 Members

Nancy Agee Carilion (Wellness)
Laura Bradford Claire V (Retail)
Nicholas C. Conte Woods Rogers (Legal)
Warner Dalhouse Retired (Seniors)
John Garland Spectrum (Development)
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Nancy May LewisGale Regional Health System (Wellness)
Stuart Mease Virginia Tech (Education)
Mary Miller IDD (Tech/Industry)
Ed Walker Regeneration Partners (Development)

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.

“You don’t know what you don’t know — Page 49

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Lights Camera... Action!

The FRONT6 Cinematographers

The Producers >

Executive Summary:
*Roanoke film makers
are focused on growth
and producing a
quality product.*

By Laura Purcell

Roanoke might not be the first location that comes to mind when you think of filmmaking, but there's movie magic happening in the Star City and a burgeoning film community to support it. The film production community is small and collegial. It is a small-town, everybody knows everybody else industry. If a local client or advertising agency has a project, it is pretty likely that a few, if not all, of the filmmakers in this article might go up for the job. Then, depending on the size and scope, the filmmakers may end up hiring each other to get the project done.

Films are big business, but even the smallest mom-and-pop companies may need the services of filmmakers to produce a commercial or web short. A well-designed visual experience can create a more powerful and memorable effect for companies looking to build and expand their brands for local, regional, or national markets.

Fortunately for Roanoke and the surrounding area, there are dedicated and creative film professionals eager to use their talents to help meet the needs of a wide range of clients. What follows are profiles of six local filmmakers and producers who are pushing the boundaries of visual media.



Justin Rossbacher and Won Novalis, Abandon Films



Justin Rossbacher
Abandon Films
 Lynchburg, Virginia
abandonfilms.com

Justin Rossbacher founded Abandon Films with his business partner, Won Novalis, in 2007. Rossbacher focuses on project development and directing, while Novalis, takes over in post-production. “We compliment each other really well as far as our skill set,” Rossbacher said.

“To accomplish anything great, you must have an act of abandonment,” says Rossbacher, discussing the genesis of his company’s name. The letting go, or leaving what is familiar, is what leads to great things. “For all the projects we work on, we want to bring that storytelling to the audience—simple storytelling that connects to the audience both visually and emotionally. Our goal is to always create something that’s visually captivating, with humorous or emotional appeal and a sense of wonder and awe.”

For Rossbacher, helping clients tell their story is the most important thing. “Clients have a need, or a problem,” Rossbacher says. “We’re there to solve that



Book study is wonderful and school is a wonderful thing, but there is no replacement for just being around people who are doing it.

— Justin Rossbacher,
 Abandon Films



Abandon Films studio is in Lynchburg

problem. Once we understand a client's needs and end goals, we brainstorm. We'll talk with people not even involved in the project, just fun, creative minds. We take those ideas, and start refining a few of those down—choose the intuitive, gut ones. We evaluate what we've got based on goals and client needs, and if it doesn't fit, we modify or start again from scratch. For a branding spot, the audience needs to recognize the client's name and associate a feeling with that name, whether it be carpet or hospitalization."

For some projects, Abandon's office in Lynchburg's Brewery Building can get pretty crowded. "We like to have a base camp. During production, our studio is packed. For one project with heavy post-production work and a tight turn around, some of our vendors transferred here so we could all work together collaboratively," Rossbacher said.

But work doesn't always happen at the office, or even near the office. "We also have a mobile editing suite, so our editor can finish a project on location. I think it is just an example of how flat the world has become," Rossbacher said. "We can travel pretty much anywhere. And there's a lot we do remotely. Even if our client is in the same town, we might still do a screen sharing session."

"Wherever you are, do the best work you possibly can," Rossbacher said. "Always go beyond what is asked. There is always another level to refine or craft an art. We haven't arrived yet, and we're searching to create the best until the day we die."



You're always learning. If you're not, you're going backwards.

— Kirk Wray, *Motion Adrenaline*



You'd probably tell someone a novel in the elevator.

— Matt Sprigings, *when asked what Kirk Wray's elevator speech for Motion Adrenaline might be.*



Kirk Wray, Motion Adrenaline



Kirk Wray
Motion Adrenaline
Roanoke, Virginia &
Raleigh, North Carolina
motionadrenaline.com

Kirk Wray started Motion Adrenaline in Roanoke 15 years ago and opened an office in Raleigh in 2012. "I've been doing the two hour commute for a while now," Wray said. "The talent pool and client pool in Roanoke is amazing, but to grow your business, you have to expand."

"We have to fight, as filmmakers," Kirk Wray said. The industry is "saturated with crew guys and directors who can be called on at a moment's notice. In this small market, it is a more intimate setting with crew people. Even with our competition, we get along and do stuff together. Filmmaking is community and teamwork. You'll never see just one guy doing it. If you do, watch out."

"We like to think we shoot and edit very well," Wray said. With art director and animator Matt Sprigings, they've expanded their 3D offerings. "3D is thirty to forty percent of our business. In the future you'll see a lot more animation, and it has its place," Wray said. "It won't ever be all 3D, but our tools are faster and things are looking more realistic."

"You're forced to stand out," Wray said. "To be the best at what you're doing, but also compete. You don't want them



You have to hook them in the first fifteen seconds, give them something to bite on.

— Kirk Wray,
Motion Adrenaline



Storytelling and filmmaking on whatever level, documentaries, films, commercials, higher ed work, can really alter and change people's perceptions. Inform, evoke emotion that creates change or a new perspective, new outlook, and can really positively cause people to act, help, give and think differently about a subject.

— Steve Mason,
Red Velocity

all, but you put your best out there. Every year, we look at our stuff and think, how do we step it up again next year? What can we add to it so we can get bigger work, so bigger companies will hire us?"

For Wray, it is about planning, and deadlines. "Pre-production is the hard part. Hire the best talent—make your job easier. Don't waste time and waste money. The shoot time is fun, everyone is working together."

"I want the audience to come away with what I want to get them to see," Wray said. "I'm editing when I shoot. When I'm directing, I'm editing in my head. I know when I get the shot, and the strongest shots tell the story the quickest. Pacing is everything to keep the audience's attention."

In film, and advertising, time is of the essence. "Everything in this business needs to happen yesterday," Wray said. "All of us as a creative group wait until the last minute. But sometimes the best stuff comes out then, and you don't worry yourself to death because you have to get on with it and make a decision. If you ponder over it, you can make it worse."

Wray's business philosophy is experimental and holistic. "I look at every project and try to make it great," Wray said. "I love advertising, and I love working with creative directors and creatives, the stuff they come up with. Then we take what they're thinking and make it come together visually. That's the best part, when it works out and the looks on their faces, like 'I can't believe it actually worked!'"



Steve Mason
Red Velocity
Roanoke, Virginia
redvelocityinc.com

Steve Mason is a recovering journalist, having worked at WDBJ-7 in Roanoke as a videographer and sports reporter. "I had a camera on my shoulder every day of the week," Mason said. "I learned how to tell stories visually, and I really just fell in love with the camera." He loves his Red Epic so much that when he decided to start his own business in 2004, he named his company, Red Velocity, after his camera.

"The camera is incredibly powerful," Mason said. "It captures an image more than 5500 horizontal pixels, and we usually watch movies at 1080 or 2000. Really good filmmakers are not just good, but also quick. This camera is forgiving in low light, and you can push whites and blacks in post-production, push colors extremely far. It also captures raw format so you can alter the final image, you have incredible latitude in post-production."



Steve Mason, Red Velocity

Camera quality can mean a high quality production, but it isn't all about equipment. "I think it is cool when you can go on a set to do a commercial and say to the client, 'Your commercial is being shot with the same kind of camera that filmed the latest Hobbit movie.' But anybody can have a great camera," Mason said. "Who is telling that story? Who's operating that camera? Every job we have, I make personal to me. I think you have to do that to be successful."

For Mason, that's often finding just the right setting. "I'm a location scout junkie," he said. "In my mind, that starts with, 'What's the client's message? What's the story's message?' That dictates location. Once I have that in mind, I get in my car, drive, park, knock on doors and say, 'Hi, I'm Steve. Can I just look at your space?'"

For a documentary about military veterans, Mason used an abandoned building on Campbell Avenue in Roanoke. "The structure is intact, but the interior has been really beat up. Paint stripped off the walls, rubble on the floors, stairways



Red Velocity is named in part after the Red Epic camera

covered in dust. It immediately evoked a serious emotion, and it complimented the story."

Cooperation and support from a number of entities is critical to pulling off a successful production. When Mason filmed a music video, the City of Roanoke closed down four blocks and the Virginia Museum of Transportation provided a vintage 1980s bus, with a driver. "We worked from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m.," Mason said. "Their cooperation gave us scale, and the emotional part of the story."

Evoking emotion is a key component to Mason's approach. "I see things in my imagination of how it is going to look, and when it is the right shot, I feel like I know. Visual storytelling is very personal, and it is really most about what the client feels about the shot."



**Robyn Vaughn &
Steve Hobbs**
VPS Studios
Roanoke, Virginia
thevpssite.com

Steve Hobbs started VPS in 1986 after working for several years in video production and higher education. Today, VPS has seven employees and Hobbs takes care of much of the business side and does some post-production work. He hired Robyn Vaughn in 1993 as an assistant and editor; over the years Vaughn's



William Mahone Photography

Robyn Vaughn

So, You Wanna Be in Pictures?

Robyn Vaughn has spent years as an actress in addition to her work at VPS Studios. With connections in both the film and theater communities, Vaughn became a source for talent and other production needs. "People were always saying, 'Robyn, can you find me this or that?'" So Vaughn started a side business from VPS called Casting Call, which provides acting and voiceover talent, location scouting, props, styling, hair and makeup services, and other needs as they come along.

"I can see somebody, how they're talking, the way they're animated, and I can just tell right away they'd be really good. I do approach people on the street," Vaughn says, much to the chagrin of her son.

"People think you have to look like a model, and there are a lot of people who send me pictures, but I have no use for any of that," Vaughn said. For talent, which might mean actors or models for still photography, there's a need for every age range, especially people in their 40s-70s. "I'm always looking for people who look real," Vaughn said.

She also knows the ins and outs of the details that go into making a production just right. "The streets can't be noisy, and sometimes there are legal considerations. If [a client] needs an interior shot, the rooms have to be big enough for the equipment," Vaughn said.

But she's clearly excited by the challenges a new project might bring. "I've gotten permits, knocked on every door on a street to let the residents know there will be a shoot, found farm locations, cats and dogs, and all kinds of cars," she said.

"It is interesting, and I feel like my life is different every day," Vaughn said.



Steve Hobbs, VPS Studios



Music can make or break a production. If you pick the right kind of music, it can really be what makes it a success. You might think a piece of music is good, but if it steps on the voices in a commercial, you can't use it. It has to fit the production.

— *Steve Hobbs,*
VPS Studios

duties have changed and expanded; today she directs and produces.

Hobbs began VPS at a time when equipment costs were going down. Equipment today is by no means inexpensive, and he still deems it a worthy investment. "We really keep up with equipment, and we have a lot of equipment other people rent from us. It's hard, because it changes all the time and the life of a piece of equipment is very short," Hobbs said.

Much about the business has changed over the years, but a big change is viewers—and their expectations. "Viewers are very savvy," Hobbs said. "In the beginning, you could pretty much do anything and it was new and it would touch people. Now you have to be ahead of the curve."

"But we're all viewers, too. All of us watch, and it gives us a sense of what works and what doesn't," Robyn Vaughn added.

Increased viewer expectations means VPS must provide higher production values and savvier storytelling. This challenge, however, keeps Vaughn's imagination



Robyn Vaughn, VPS Studios

sparked. "It is a constant thing, thinking about clients and upcoming projects," she said. "Even before we have meetings, I might call a client and say, 'This concept came into my head. I thought I would share it with you, because it will work perfectly,'" Vaughn said.

"We've done enough to know what gets people's attention," Hobbs added. "Our customers know their business. They're the experts, and they need to educate us."

However, the business is not one size fits all. "I want video production to be a good experience for the client, and for us. It is not just a moneymaking thing. We want to establish a long-term relationship. If we throw something together and it doesn't work for them, it is bad for everyone—their industry, our industry in the valley. A poor spot will make the company look bad, and there's no point in doing that," Hobbs said.

"It is easy to get burned out in this business," Vaughn said. "But it is enjoyable to be surrounded by people with a passion for it. It keeps Steve from being burned out after 27 years."

Hobbs admits he might have gotten burned out, "if I'd stayed smaller. But surrounding myself with people with love, knowledge, and creativity has been a great experience."

“ ”

When I was first learning how to do this, I'd see a movie that would touch me from an aesthetic point of view. Like *To Kill a Mockingbird*. That movie is shot so well, lit so well, it was the first time I made the connection of film to art. Not just something to entertain, there was an actual art to it.

—Steve Hobbs,
VPS Studios



William Mahone Photography

Dave Perry, Dave Perry Cinematographer LLC



Dave Perry
Dave Perry
Cinematographer, LLC
Roanoke, Virginia
daveperry.net

Dave Perry has always worked in creative fields—as a potter, musician, and web designer before getting into film and video production. On May 24, 2013, he decided to take a chance and hang his own shingle.

“A perfect storm of things came together, in some regard,” Perry said. He’d worked for himself before, and he explained “I didn’t want to have my own business again for a long time. I didn’t want the insecurity. But now, in some ways, I can’t imagine going back. I’m really glad I did it.”

Just a few years ago, Perry considered ditching the creative life and finding a job that was, he says, “just a job.” He was going through a divorce, and he says, “I thought my creative endeavors would be a safe haven, but the divorce drained me.” He calls that period his creative death.

“Some people get out of it, give up, and if they’d just hung on a little longer, it could’ve really blossomed into something. I’m glad I didn’t leave,” Perry said. Instead, he started a blog and wrote about the creative process as a way to connect to others. He shot some footage at the

COVER STORY

Salem Fair, a favorite event of his, and then directed a short film for a friend's new business. That film won an award, and it was just the spark Perry needed to keep going. "After that, people started asking me, 'what are you doing?' I started thinking about it, and if other folks in the creative community supported the idea of me going out on my own, I should give it a try," Perry said.

"I don't ever want to go back to that place of creative death," he said.

Of the film and video industry in the region, he says, "We compete, but we also connect. You can't afford to burn a bridge or annoy someone in a small community. You have to be able to develop relationships. Sometimes it is as simple as going out to lunch, because you never know who you might meet at the Market Building," Perry said.

Connecting to peers and connecting to clients is important to Perry. "I ask my clients to trust me before we get too far into it," Perry said. "I have them look at a rough cut after a shoot, so if they don't like it, we can change direction. Ultimately, the clients are the ones who are right. You've got to step away from the work because it is theirs once it is done."

Perry shot some footage for a film producer who plans to film a movie in Roanoke later this year. "She told me, 'The way you have this framed introduces some tension,'" Perry said. "And she mentioned that's not typical for this kind of piece. I asked her if that was a problem, and she said no, she thought it was a good thing because she could get a sense of my style."

“ ”

Sometimes I'll be on a crew with people I've never worked with before, but this career field is almost like a traveling band of gypsies. Six months later, working on a totally different project, someone you know is on that crew.

— Dave Perry,
Dave Perry
Cinematographer LLC



William Mahone Photography



Richard Boyd Photography

Carter Media began in Roanoke in 1995



Leonard Carter
Carter Media
Roanoke, Virginia
cartermedia.tv



There are so many good films out there; even films that aren't considered favorites of the critics are favorites of mine, not for what the movies did, but what they didn't do.

— Leonard Carter,
Carter Media

Leonard Carter grew up in Roanoke and always knew he wanted to work in film. "I knew when I watched Star Wars in 1976," Carter said. He studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York City and then went to Wilmington, North Carolina, to work for film producer Dino De Laurentiis. "My days down at the film studio were a great education," Carter said.

Carter worked on movies like *Manhunter*, *Blue Velvet*, and *Silver Bullet* for De Laurentiis. He stopped in Roanoke for a visit on his way to New York to work on a film, but that project got delayed. "So, I started working for a production company in Roanoke," Carter said. "And ended up sticking around." After a few years of working for others, he started Carter Media in 1995.

"I do a lot of travel," Carter explains, "and spend equal time in Roanoke and Los Angeles." While he used to keep editors, camera operators, and writers on staff, "now it is on an as-needed basis," Carter said. "There is so much talent specializing, from a producer's standpoint, it is easier to pull together a team for each project."

"It is actually pretty exciting to see how things are starting to pick up in this region. There is a great resource for crew here, and the town is here to support anything," Carter said.

For movie making, Carter says, "Roanoke is an ideal location. Driving three hours to Charlotte, Raleigh, Richmond, is nothing. And it is nice to be able to have a creative profession in a



Leonard Carter, Carter Media


town where you feel like your kids can be safe. It is a great place to be raising a family and exercising your creative muscle," Carter said.

Carter spends a lot of his time producing and developing film and television shows. He's helping a few independent filmmakers with projects slated to film in Roanoke and shopping some television series ideas to networks. "And I'm always doing commercial work," Carter said.

"It is a lot more fun now to shoot than it was about five years ago," Carter said of the technological changes to cameras and digital film. "I'm able to use more of the cinematic training I learned in film school." But he attests to the ephemeral nature of the equipment. "Cameras are for Christmas, lenses are for life. If you have a really good quality lens, with good mechanics and good glass, you can adapt that to whatever camera you buy next," Carter said.

"I'm glad I'm good at what I do, because it is the only thing I like to do," Carter said. "I'm very excited about everything that is opening up here in Virginia for filmmaking."

While all of the filmmakers interviewed talked about different aspects of the business—technology, equipment, development, production—there's a lot they have in common. Despite being competitors, they like each other, and it seems to be a healthy competition. They're all also passionate about what they do and excited to go to work every day, which only serves to benefit the rest of us.

The next time you see a commercial for a local company, a movie with familiar-looking surroundings, or stumble across a really smart short film on the web, keep in mind the talented people in the Roanoke valley may be behind the cameras. 

“ ”

When you watch a bad movie, you problem solve for them. When I watch movies I think about why a scene is lit the way it is, and I always see continuity problems.

— Leonard Carter,
Carter Media



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Being well dressed shows respect...for yourself and for the company interviewing you.

Let the Interviews Begin! >

It's spring and once again college students are interviewing for jobs. With skills and diploma in hand, savvy students should consider how their appearance will make or break the interview process.

Expectations about workplace attire have evolved over the last decade. True, casual dress predominates, however, various departments within the same company demand different attire.


Wondering what type of work wardrobe former students find they're expected to wear once they snag a job, I interviewed a 2012 graduate of VT, Elise Rokisky. She received a wardrobe consultation as a graduation gift.

Elise was a perfect subject for my service – she had an existing wardrobe that reflected her personality, however she welcomed suggestions on coordinating it to look professional for upcoming interviews. She understood that the point was to secure a job offer, not to express herself. Elise was successful in her job hunt and has over a year of work under her belt.

I asked her if her new job's dress code is business professional or very casual. Elise replied. "I work in HR which would normally be business casual, however, because I work in a manufacturing environment where you have to wear safety gear (including sometimes steel toed boots!), it is very casual. Most of the time now, unfortunately, I even wear jeans - but with a business-type casual top and blazer/jacket to dress it up some. When I get the opportunity to travel for recruiting trips or to our Division office, I most certainly take it up a few notches and wear Business Dress/Casual for those occurrences - those which I'm now trying to network to work full-time!"

Elise understands that although she can dress casually for most workdays, she should stand out from the crowd when engaging with the division office. She knows that if she wants a promotion, she must look professional, not relaxed. She dresses appropriately for each environment in her workspace.

Students looking to interview for a job should:

- Research the company culture and dress code.
- When interviewing, dress up beyond the company's everyday dress code. Dressing too well is forgivable; sloppy is not.
- Get a good haircut and manicure your fingernails.
- Polish your shoes. No sneakers, flip-flops or boots, please.
- Remember - all companies, even tech startups, expect you to be your best – in knowledge and appearance. 

Comments or questions? Kathy@peacockimage.com

A Tip of the Hat >

Have you noticed that more men are wearing hats these days? I teach business etiquette classes in colleges and universities, and I am always struck by the number of young men who attend class wearing baseball caps. Most are baffled when I ask them to remove their headgear. They find it curious when I explain that removing one's hat indoors is a traditional sign of respect.

If you look at old movies from the thirties, forties, and fifties, you'll notice that all men wore hats. Some say President John F. Kennedy triggered the decline in the wearing of hats, and thus the decline of a whole industry, when he appeared hatless at his inauguration on a bitter cold January day in 1961. That, technically, is not true; there are photographs of President Kennedy, wearing a high silk hat to and from his inauguration. The elegant topper was clearly visible on his chair as he delivered his inaugural address. There is little doubt, though, that President Kennedy usually preferred to go hatless.

The custom of removing one's hat seems to date back to mediaeval times when knights either lifted their visors or removed their helmets entirely in order to identify themselves. Failure to do so could have fatal consequences.


It is true that hats are no longer a necessary part of a wardrobe, but they are coming back into fashion for both men and woman. There are some pretty specific etiquette rules for men wearing hats, but not so many for women. So let's look at the rules, which I admit, like most things, are changing:

A man can leave his hat on:

- Outdoors
- At athletic events
- On public transport
- On elevators
- In public buildings e.g., the post office, hotel lobbies

He should, however, remove his hat, and this includes baseball caps:

- In a private home
- At mealtimes
- When being introduced – that's both indoors and outdoors
- In a Christian place of worship
- While at work indoors
- In schools, libraries, courthouses, town halls
- In restaurants
- At movies or indoor performances (women also, if the hat is big!)
- When the National Anthem is being played
- When the U.S. Flag passes by, e.g. in a parade

Remember, removing a hat at the appropriate time, like standing for a superior, is a mark of respect and courtesy. 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
Wearing hats, including baseball caps, requires attention to the rules.



Nurturing Entrepreneurship in Corporate America >

Before starting my own business, I worked in plenty of offices in “corporate America.” Despite being surrounded by a lot of people and taking part in the daily buzz of productivity, I often felt alone. I felt different. I knew I was an entrepreneur on the inside. Yet it was something I felt I needed to keep secret.

You can't tell your boss you're an entrepreneur. She'll think you're trying to say you're leaving the company to be her competitor. You can't tell your coworkers. They'll think you're nuts for questioning the good job you have.

You probably don't want to talk about it with your significant other, either, unless he or she shares your vision of entrepreneurship, in which case you might consider starting a company together!

So what's an entrepreneur-trapped-in-corporate-America to do? The first remedy is to seize on a piece of creativity at work. It should be something small enough to be yours alone and large enough to be of consequence to the company. One idea is to identify a project you can do that will add clear value to the company, and make a proposal to your boss. He or she may applaud your initiative.

Your project should have a clear objective, timeline, and measures of success. But, most of all, it should be entrepreneurial. It ought to be something you can do without compromising your regular work duties. Ideally, it will be integrated into what you already do.

The experience you get from practicing “entrepreneurship” at a full-time job not only helps the company succeed, but it also helps you succeed when you decide to start a business of your own. It's hands-on experience you can use.

Tapping employee creativity

Employers would be much more productive, and their employees would be happier, if they would encourage the spirit of entrepreneurship in traditional jobs. Sometimes it's as if employee creativity has been bottled and “stopped up.” The creativity is there, but it can't get out. The workplace seems stale, even miserable.

It's much better to engage your employees and keep them interested in what they're doing, so they'll produce new and unexpected things.

Interactive Achievement, an educational software design firm in Roanoke, Va., allows employees to spend some time

Small Business

By Samantha Steidle


Executive Summary:

Stifling creativity benefits no one, not the company, not the employee, and not the economy.

working on projects of their choice that make a positive impact in the community and the region.

My message to companies is: When you engage the creativity of employees, it can help you design your next product or improve what you already have. Employees can be a source of innovation for your company. My message to employees is: Speak up if you have ideas. If you see yourself as an entrepreneur, find a way to ask for a new responsibility that exercises your talents of ideation, innovation, and business growth.

Creating a culture of innovation in the workplace is something that benefits every employer and employee. These days, we all have to find ways to be innovative in order to keep our jobs and our livelihoods. That's as true for workers as it is for industries. We should embrace entrepreneurial thinking in the traditional workplace and in the startup marketplace, because we need it.

Let's try to make sure all those entrepreneurs out there don't feel lonely anymore. Entrepreneurs may be good at working alone, but there's no reason they have to. 



Sometimes it's as if employee creativity has been bottled and "stopped up." The creativity is there, but it can't get out. The workplace seems stale, even miserable.



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Financial Matters

Building a sustainable stock portfolio >

Executive Summary:

The right "green" portfolio is good for the earth and can result in rewards for the investor.

By Pete Krull

About a year and a half ago, a friend asked me to design a special stock portfolio for him. While our firm does not typically create custom stock portfolios, his request really interested me. He wanted a portfolio of stocks specifically focused on sustainability. I looked at it as a challenge and off to the drawing board I went.

It's not a stretch to think that I should develop this portfolio. My firm focuses on socially and environmentally responsible investing, but we typically use mutual funds as our main investment vehicle. Coming up with a portfolio of individual sustainable stocks would be a new venture.

The first order of business was to define "sustainable". It's one of those words that I don't ordinarily love. In fact, I agree with the green architect Bill McDonough who is quoted as saying, "If I were to ask you how your marriage is, and you answered sustainable, I'm sure your spouse wouldn't be too happy." But sustainable is the term currently in use, so it will have to do for now.

The first iteration of the portfolio was mostly focused on alternative energy, energy efficiency and water technologies.

These are the typical core of sustainable businesses. The second iteration, however, took a broader view of sustainability to include lighting, transportation, real estate, home furnishings and organic foods. We looked at companies, not only in the US, but abroad as well. Europe has a head start on many green industries, and excluding them would be ignoring a major market.

We did want to exclude, as much as possible, the effect of fossil fuels. It is virtually impossible to eliminate fossil fuels totally. From gas and diesel for transportation to electricity generation, fossil fuels are a major part of our economy. Coal and natural gas currently generate about 2/3 of US electricity according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

One issue we had to keep in mind is green washing. Green washing refers to a business that advertises itself to be green, but on closer inspection, is no different than a traditional business. We did our best to look under the hood, and at peripheral businesses. Some large corporations have many divisions including both renewable energy and fossil fuel divisions. We made the decision to eliminate any company that had a hand in extracting, processing or transporting fossil fuels.

We looked at many different companies. We created our list of potential companies from sources such as socially responsible mutual funds and Exchange Traded Funds; input from other knowledgeable managers and finally, good old fashioned research. By the time we were done, there were 93 companies that fit our selection criteria.

We then went through a typical fundamental analysis of each stock. We looked at profitability, price/earnings ratios, debt, dividends, trading volume, etc. A portfolio is not worth investing in if the fundamentals are not sound.


We also looked at market capitalization. We wanted to have ten small, ten mid, and ten large capitalization companies.

This would give us a good cross-section of company sizes which would help to spread the risk. Typically, but not always, large companies are less risky than smaller ones.

Finally, we made the decision to have no more than four stocks per industry category. That way, we would have adequate diversification across several sectors.

When all was said and done, we finished with twenty-one domestic and nine international companies. The sectors included energy efficiency, lighting, organic foods, solar, wind, water, batteries, green building, furnishings, fuel cells, real estate and smart grid. A lot of work, but well worth it.

We decided to brand and offer the portfolio to other investors because several other people had asked for this kind of portfolio. We had gone from idea to individual portfolio to marketable product.

Traditionally, investment advisors have scoffed at the opportunity afforded in sustainability or green stocks. It's time to take a second look at how sustainability fits into your portfolio. 

Peter Krull is president and founder of Krull & Company, a socially and environmentally responsible investment management firm located in Asheville, NC. The firm serves many clients in the Roanoke region. He can be contacted at 877-235-3684 or pkrull@krullandcompany.com.



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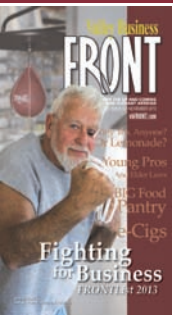
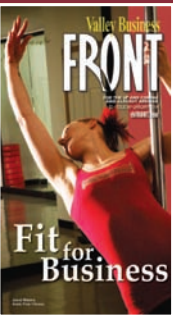


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Randolph Walker

Planned Parenthood picketers

Walking the line >

Executive Summary:

If your business is targeted by protesters, what recourse do you have?

By Randolph Walker

They say that any publicity is good publicity. But how about people standing outside your business, holding signs and protesting? The right to voice opinion is protected by the First Amendment, but businesses have rights too. What can or should a business do if it's targeted by picketers?

Planned Parenthood's Roanoke Health Center at 2207 Peters Creek Road has been targeted by pro-life picketers for years. "Hardly a week goes by without protesters out in front of our health

center," says David Nova, vice president of communications and strategic initiatives for Planned Parenthood in Virginia, West Virginia, and the Carolinas. "During the spring and fall, protesters picket every day for weeks at a time. In October, we had 295 protesters. We had only 10 in December. During the past decade most of the protesters have been generally peaceful, though some still display placards with gory color photos and inflammatory rhetoric."

According to 40daysforlife.com/roanoke.html, a vigil is planned for March 5 to April 13, 2014 at Planned Parenthood. Also on the website is a copy of a 2013 assembly permit, issued by the Roanoke Transportation Division. The permit specifies that the protesters will "use grass area between curb on Peters Creek Road and property line of Planned Parenthood."

"The visible, public centerpiece of 40 Days for Life is a focused, 40-day, non-stop, round-the-clock prayer vigil outside a



Randolph Walker

David Nova defends the property line at Planned Parenthood.

single Planned Parenthood center or other abortion facility in your community," according to the website. "It is a peaceful and educational presence."

Attempts to reach local and national representatives of 40 Days For Life for comment were unsuccessful.

Nova doesn't believe that protests deter abortion clients. In fact, "the protesters generate awareness of Planned Parenthood among prospective clients and donors. Our building is on a heavily trafficked road and we have good signage, but many drivers and their passengers who pass us every day don't recognize where we are until they see the protesters.

"Additionally, for more than two decades we have generated as much as \$28,400 a year in additional revenue through our Pledge-A-Picket program. Supporters pledge a specific amount of money per picketer per day. Though the program is designed to deter protesters, it also enables our low-income clients to receive



Randolph Walker

Victor Cardwell (seated) and Thomas Winn of Woods Rogers: Defend your property lines.

subsidized medical care they might not otherwise receive."

Another Roanoke facility that is the site of frequent protests is the City Market Building. After taking control of the building in 2011, the Market Building Foundation banned protests by the Plowshare Peace and Justice Center. In a federal lawsuit, Plowshare argued that a private group cannot declare a public sidewalk off-limits. The suit was resolved when Roanoke agreed to lease back from the foundation a five-foot wide strip of sidewalk and issued an assembly permit to Plowshare. The monthly antiwar vigil at the Market Building typically has 12 to 20 participants, says Michael Bentley, a member of Plowshare's steering committee.

At Woods Rogers (woodsrogers.com), a block from the City Market Building, Victor Cardwell practices law with a focus on labor/management relations, workplace violence, diversity, harassment and the Fair Labor Standards Act.


DO YOU NEED A TRUST?

"You have a right to continue operation of your business without undue interference," he says. "Similarly, protestors have a right to be out there voicing their concerns. The First Amendment gives them that right." However, "they have to be on public space. Any business has private property, and those people can't come onto private property. One of the critical issues is, as an employer or business, you have to make sure you've set your boundaries properly very early on—no trespassing, no loitering. If you put those in place after the picket has started, it may well be too late."

Thomas Winn practices labor and employment law at Woods Rogers along with Cardwell. "If things start to become unruly, or it's interfering with normal business operations, [businesses] can certainly contact local authorities to see if there's anything further that can be done," Winn says. "There have been occasions when we've had to file what is known as law and order injunction papers, where a firm has successfully sought and obtained court injunctions against violent conduct, disorderly conduct where things go too far."

Labor protests, or strikes, are in a unique category, says Cardwell. "There are special laws under the National Labor Relations Act and the Labor-Management Relations Act that limit an employer's ability to impede a strike, but also talk about the limitation on the union and employees and what they can and cannot do."

When a business gets wind of a possible picket, the first thing to do, says Cardwell, is reach out to the concerned parties to see whether the issue can be resolved.

"It may be simply a communication issue," he says. "I want to try that before it gets to [the next] level." 



J. LEE E. OSBORNE

Not everyone needs a trust, and not all trusts are created equally. A trust offers a flexible and often economical way to manage assets during your lifetime, and is often the only way to properly provide for others after your death.

If you are concerned about providing for children or grandchildren until they can manage for themselves, making sure assets are properly managed is imperative. Whether incorporating tax or business succession plans into your estate plan or providing for old age or when one or both partners becoming incapacitated, a trust is often the best vehicle for addressing these goals.

You decide who is in control by the trustee you select. All of these factors require a thorough review of your goals and options to design and implement a plan that is tailored for you. At Woods Rogers, we will work with you and your other advisors to structure an estate plan that meets your needs.



Sarah Cox

Diana Willeman-Buckelew, program director of the Health Sciences program at Jefferson College of Health Sciences, says that while online classes require a different kind of preparation from the instructor and that there is more responsibility put on the students, the majority of her students work in the healthcare field and need the flexibility that distance classes offer.

Virtual classrooms offer real degrees >

Executive Summary:

JCHS on-line degree programs open a world of educational possibilities.

By Sarah Cox

Nicole Schneider, a student at Jefferson College of Health Sciences (JCHS), takes most of her classes online. She needs her BS degree to apply for the Physician's Assistant program at JCHS and can't afford to relocate from Richmond or quit either of her jobs (medic and physical therapy assistant) to attend classes. The challenge

of distance learning, she says, is self-discipline, which took her a month to figure out.

Melanie Morris, a senior in JCHS's biomedical sciences program, has had such success as a distance-learning student that she is currently researching online master's degree programs in public health while also working three jobs. She said that through Blackboard Collaborate, an online collaboration platform providing web conferencing, mobile collaboration, instant messaging, and voice authoring, she has a lot of professor and student interface.

"It's comfortable sitting at home, and I've had really good professors that keep up with announcements and send reminders," she says.

One of those professors, Diana Willeman-Buckelew,

program director of Health Sciences, said her junior and senior level classes are mostly taught online. She says that there is no academic performance differential between distance and actual classroom students. "The students know to check Blackboard for grades, assignments, etc. They take quizzes, exams, surveys, and submit papers through Blackboard. This benefits students who work but still want to get a bachelor's degree," she explains. She says she uses Blackboard Collaborate for discussions and instruction, and that she's had an "overwhelmingly positive response from students." The program, she says, is user-friendly. The attendance for these lectures and discussions is mandatory, so there is no problem with no-shows. At the beginning of each semester, she sends out a calendar survey so students can

indicate time and day preferences; she then sets her on-line schedule accordingly.

Yes, students have to learn to manage their time well, but professors, like Willeman-Bucklew, have to adjust as well. Their hours are not the usual 9 to 5. For instance, this semester she had a discussion at 7 p.m. on Sunday evenings. And she is very familiar with distance classes, having earned her PhD in Public Health online.

JCHS is taking very seriously what is a national, if not international trend, having hired a new director of Online Learning and Continuing Education, which segues with their five-year strategic plan to grow the college, especially in the arena of online learning. It is pursuing a Title III grant for technology and faculty development expenses, has introduced Quality Matters, a nationally-recognized program designed to infuse quality in online education, and

Virtual classrooms- the real numbers >

In Spring 2014, 62.43 percent of JCHS students are taking at least one course online. According to a national 2013 survey of online learning conducted by the Babson Survey Research Group, the number of higher education students taking at least one on-line class now exceeds 7.1 million, a 6.1 percent growth rate from Fall 2011 to Fall 2012. Thirty two percent of higher education students now take at least one course on line. And there is a 21 percent growth rate for online enrollment, exceeding the 2 percent growth in the overall higher education student population.

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Sarah Cox

Rhoda Murray, associate program director of the Master's in Nurse Practitioner program, says her students must be self-directed. The first cohort, which will contain 12 to 15 students, is intentionally small to allow them direct access to all the professors, six of whom are practicing nurse practitioners.

initiated Blackboard Collaborate as well as evaluated all technology needed to run it.

The competition is certainly apparent, both nationally and regionally. But so is the opportunity to extend bachelor's and master's degree programs to students who do not live in the Roanoke Valley. Rhoda Murray, associate program director of the Masters in Nurse Practitioner program that will start in Fall, 2014, says that the program is amenable to working nurses, evidenced by the fact that all students in the first class are employed. As a recent PhD online student in education, Murray agrees there are challenges to on-line learning, most significant is time management and the ability to achieve a work-life balance.


Janet Phillips, director of the bachelor's (BS)



Sarah Cox

Margie Vest was hired to fill a new position at Jefferson College of Health Sciences - Director of Online Learning and Continuing Education. There is a three-part strategy to successful online learning programs - pedagogy, distance technology, and faculty development.

and Master of Healthcare Administration in Healthcare Management programs, says that in 2009 the BS program became 100 % on-line in answer to market demand. In August 2013, the new master's program was designed to be 100 % on-line. The JCHS distance programs answer the needs of all facets of healthcare, observes Phillips. Many regional organizations require their workers to advance their education and distance learning is a convenient way to do so. The results of a JCHS survey sent to regional healthcare organizations showed an "overwhelming interest in on-line instruction," she says.

While physical classrooms are still standard in many degree programs, for those whose need to continue working or cannot relocate or commute to attend classes, on-line programs like those at JCHS have opened a world of educational possibility. 

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life brought to you by the insurance specialists at Business Solutions

Many people describe sun-tanned skin as a “healthy glow,” but it’s not exactly the truth. There is no such thing as a safe, healthy tan.

Sun Damage

Any type of suntan is the result of sun damage caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. Other types of sun damage include wrinkles, age spots, freckles, tough or leathery skin, dilated blood vessels, sunburn and skin cancer.

The sun emits two types of UV radiation: UVA (which causes aging) and UVB (which causes burning). Both UVA and UVB rays are undetectable to a person sitting in the sun — you cannot feel them on your skin — and are damaging on cool, cloudy days as well as sunny days. In addition, both types of radiation cause skin cancer.

Skin Cancer

People are most susceptible to skin cancer when they are exposed to sudden, short bursts of sunlight while in places where the sun is very strong, such as locations near the equator or at very high altitudes.

The following characteristics place people at an even higher risk of developing skin cancer:

- Having a large number of moles on the skin
- Being a redhead or blonde, and/or having blue eyes, fair skin and freckles
- Difficulty tanning and skin that is easily burned
- A family history of skin cancer
- Taking medication that increases sun sensitivity

Preventing Sun Damage


The easiest way to prevent skin damage and lessen your chances of getting skin cancer is to avoid getting sunburn. Here are a few tips to help keep you safe in the sun:

- Stay out of the sun between 10am and 4pm when it is strongest.
- Wear clothes with tightly woven fabric and a hat that shades your face, neck and ears.
- Wear sunglasses whenever you are outside to avoid developing cataracts and damaging your retinas.
- Use sunscreen that has at least 15 SPF every day, especially on your lips and the tips of your ears and nose.
- Avoid using tanning beds — they are just as damaging as the sun.
- Protect children from sun damage. Most sun exposure occurs before age 18.

Are You Safe in the Sun?

Avoiding excessive sun exposure and sunburn is the best way to protect yourself from sun damage and skin cancer. Routinely inspect your skin for any changes, and if you suspect that a spot on your skin is new, or has changed color or appearance, consult a dermatologist.

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Tech Scoop

Who's your daddy... >

Executive Summary:

Exploring the ethics and wisdom of DNA research.

By Michael Miller

I recall being introduced to DNA back in high school biology class, but since it was discussed vaguely in relation to human reproduction, the only thing I remember about it is the smell of the new perfume being worn by the girl who sat in front of me. Her name was Penny, and we were lab partners, which was great for me because in addition to being incredibly beautiful, she was very squeamish about dissecting things. So I got to be all manly with the scalpel while she stood behind me, peering over my shoulder (from a very close range) as I liberated various organs from a frog. Unfortunately that was the closest to a DNA exchange I would ever get with Penny.

Since those days, we have been inundated with DNA from every direction. DNA testing is now commonly used to identify crime suspects and reconstitute dinosaurs (at least in the movies). Genealogy websites now sell kits that allow you to trace your genetic ancestry for a thousand years, proving that you are, in fact, 98th in line for the throne of England. Actually, such a kit allowed a friend of mine to track down his biological parents, and at the age of 50 find a whole new family that has enriched his life considerably.

Understanding the genetic code allows us to reprogram organisms to work for us. Genetically engineered organisms can be used to manufacture synthetic insulin, vaccines and other kinds of medicines, produce food and fuel, clean up toxic waste sites and soak up atmospheric carbon dioxide.

Like most modern technology, working with DNA has both promising and cautionary




Michael Miller

aspects. Take for instance the idea of sequencing DNA to build a copy of an organism such as was described in Michael Crichton's book *Jurassic Park*. While some of the details were fictional, the basic idea is sound. If you can get enough DNA from an organism, it is possible to reproduce a copy of that organism.

And that brings up some interesting possibilities in the area of space travel and alien beings, according to J. Craig Venter, one of the biologists involved in decoding the human genome. Venter apparently thinks there was once life on Mars, and he thinks he can reproduce it on Earth without actually bringing it here. He plans to send a kit to Mars that will read Martian DNA and transmit the code back to Earth where it can be reproduced under controlled conditions. He calls this device a biological teleporter, and has already built a prototype with the backing of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

Of course, reproducing 'synthetic life' brings up all sorts of ethical issues, which will no doubt be the subject of debate for generations while providing fodder for a whole bunch of really cool movies and books.

But for now, I'm just kicking myself for not keeping that lock of hair I got from Penny in tenth grade. 



Destination Farm >

Executive Summary:

Sinkland Farms is Christiansburg's most popular farm—all those cars pulling off Riner Road prove it.

By Tom Field

When is a farm not a farm?
That's a trick question.
Because at the heart of it,
a farm is always a farm.
Even when it's used to host
weddings and special events.

Don't believe it? Ask a farm girl.

Susan Sink isn't wearing boots
this breezy, sunny afternoon.
And to be honest, you're not

inclined to call her "gal" or see her holding
a pitchfork. Not today, anyway. She's
the perfectly refined savvy business lady.

But Susan will be the first to tell you she
is married to this farm that sits just off the
side of Riner Road in Christiansburg.

You get the clear message she loves this
piece of land like life itself, a family legacy
she holds close, despite the attractive offers
by prospectors who frequently call on her.

But farm life is no piece of cake. And today,
what happens on this spot of land is quite
different than what used to happen not that
many years ago.

Farming implements and sturdy footwear
are part of Susan's life; but a planning
calendar is likely to be every bit as
important as a tractor at Sinkland Farms.

"Farm and country is the new destination
location for weddings," Susan says.



DEVELOPMENT FRONT



all photos used by permission; courtesy of Sinkland Farms

She decided to capitalize on the “trend” even as she’s had to struggle like every other farmer with challenges facing how one makes a living in agriculture.

Just as a farmer pays close attention to every little thing on his sprawling acres, from the livestock to the barns to the crop yields to the planting and harvesting and never ending maintenance and equipment servicing—Susan translates all those necessary skills to her new business model. A business that now includes event planning and management at the highest levels for private and public occasions.

Renting out Sinkland Farms, particularly for weddings, is fast becoming an expanding business line for Susan. And it all starts with the “memorable vignettes” as she calls them, the glimpses of trees, ponds, hills and barns and farm life. A panorama framed by the Blue Ridge Mountains that sets the mood for a special occasion you simply never want to forget.

“There is a certain easiness of spirit about a farm,” Susan says. [I think] “It is good luck for a bride and a groom to be surrounded by such a rich abundance of life and nature when beginning their new life together.”

People all throughout the region primarily know Sinkland Farms from its tremendously popular Pumpkin Festival. The late fall September / October event draws thousands over weekends who enjoy hay rides, “punkin’ chunkin’”, the corn maze, and local music. The attendance grows each year, and helped set the vision for Susan to have her family farm work for her in this innovative and entrepreneurial fashion, above and beyond the traditional use.

Wedding ceremonies, receptions, parties... these events proved to be a natural extension for Sinkland Farms as a destination venue.

A 21st Century farm girl, indeed. 🍷





More than service, going the extra mile >

Executive Summary:

Current statistics indicated that more than half the restaurants in the United States fail during their first three years of operation. That fate was a distinct possibility for Bookbinders, which became Blackstone Grill, in Christiansburg. Then a new general manager came on the scene.

By Rachael Garrity

"Making do" and making money are not the same thing, and the career path that brought Ashish Malothra to his position as general manager of the Blackstone Grill in Christiansburg is a case in point. The ability to master a skill and then expand from that base to a constellation of assignments and organizations, keeping an eye on details that can mean the difference between stasis and growth, bespeaks a rich combination of ability and focus.

Having trained as a chef, specializing in pastry and confectionery, in his native India, Ashish came to the U. S. in 1986, working first at a restaurant in Rockefeller

Center in New York and then moving to Washington, DC. After four years with a high-end restaurant on K Street, he became assistant food and beverage manager for a hotel in Tysons Corner, then moved to the Willard Hotel, where he spent six years as director of banquets. Given the fact that the Willard, historic, imposing and spitting distance from the White House, regularly hosts national and world leaders, not to mention lobbyists and diplomats ("We did all of the White House laundry," Ashish recalls. "So far as I know, they still do."), that position required not only knowing what to do with food, but how to handle personalities – and one assumes dirty laundry in the figurative as well as literal sense.

A series of increasingly responsible positions in the DC area followed, and in 2010 Ashish was asked to move to Roanoke to help with the "reflagging" of the Sheraton there. Two years later, he declined to move to Alaska, and was headed instead back to New York. When his real estate agent mentioned that the Blackstone Grill was looking for a new manager, he began investigating. As he remembers it, "Bookbinders, the original restaurant was fine dining, and then it was rebranded and changed to an informal, sandwich menu. That meant a radical change in clientele, and the first year was extremely difficult."

RETAIL / SERVICE FRONT

The next year, however, brought 18 awards, and a 4.5 star rating on TripAdvisor, which hoisted the Grill into the top 10 percent of rated restaurants in the nation. And what is the magic?

Seems as if it is more mastery than magic. A fly on the wall in Ashish' small office will note that if the phone rings twice and no one else answers, Ashish does. Not only does he take the reservation, but if there is no request for special service he asks in silken tones, "Is this perhaps a special occasion for someone in your party?"

He also replies personally to every TripAdvisor review, positive or not and sends a note to every customer who reserves online. While other managers might bemoan the fact that nine out of ten servers are students, he sees that as an opportunity. "They want to work," he insists, "and they are eager to learn. I am all about convincing them they are not order-takers, but salespeople."

And that fly, if it wishes to observe, won't spend much time in the office. Ashish is on the floor constantly, calls many customers by name when they walk in the door, comfortably defines his clientele – "not many really young people, except for first and last dates, one to impress and the other to suppress the emotion" – and exults in competition. "We have a niche, and it's working."

Not to wonder why, fly! 🦋



Ashish Malothra (middle)



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Gene Marrano

Russ Merritt: "We teach English for the purpose of whatever your goal in life might be."

Teaching English as a gateway to future success >

Executive Summary:
Attaining the American dream often starts with learning the language.

By Gene Marrano

Anyone who has attended Roanoke's annual Local Colors celebration of diversity realizes how many different ethnic groups and countries are represented among the valley's general population. In some cases people who arrive here speak little or no English. Getting adults up to speed is the focus of Blue Ridge Literacy, a non-profit that also prepares people to become citizens.

In most cases English must be spoken and written before someone can become a U.S. citizen. Blue Ridge Literacy (BRL) offers one-on-one and group ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Language) classes, employing around 150 volunteer tutors to bridge the communication divide. The familiar term ESL (English as a Second Language) seems somewhat passé.

"We teach English for the purpose of whatever your goal in life might be," says executive director Russ Merritt, "it's not literacy for its own sake." Someone from the medical field for example may be brought in to teach skills that can help land a job as a nursing assistant. "Newcomers to the country...really want to do well," adds Merritt, "they have tremendous dreams about America and want to be successful here."

BRL may customize ESOL training for industries looking for workers. They also

work with agencies (Department of Social Services, Refugee and Immigration Services) that send people to them. Catholic Charities offers emergency literacy for the newest immigrants who have no English proficiency, but Blue Ridge Literacy takes it from there. (A counterpart agency in the New River Valley spun off from BRL.)

In some cases Third World immigrants are not proficient in their native languages. Generally within 2-3 years they will leave BRL programs. The literacy classes are free; grants, private donations and contributions from the state and local governments help fund BRL, which works with Roanoke City's public school system. That's often where the children of those adults get their education. "A lot of the learning for adults comes [through] their kids," notes Merritt; "they learn quicker than adults do."

In fiscal year 2013, Roanoke City public schools spent \$1,478,258 from its general fund on ELL (English Language Learners) programs. That doesn't include grants or funding from other sources that the system might have qualified for.

Corey Alder, coordinator for the ELL program, says students still learning English are also mainstreamed in regular classes. "We want them to be included of course." Children who speak Spanish first comprise the largest group but newly arrived immigrants and refugees come from all over the world (recently from Burundi, Nepal, Bhutan, Sudan.) Roughly ten percent of the city's public school students take ELL classes.

Before high school the classes are centralized; both Roanoke City public high schools have



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Annual Scrabble tournament fundraiser at Jefferson Center. The NRV does it also. Merritt says it's very popular.

their own ELL classes. William Fleming and Patrick Henry average more than 100 students in those courses.

"Once they are at higher proficiency they're moved right along with their peers," says Alder. ELL teachers don't have to be fluent in other languages but "have to be sensitive to the students needs - you're almost like a mentor to them." Often for older students that means working with them on specific language skills that may help land a job or prepare them for college.

BRL is almost three decades old. Early on it was mostly American-born people

that sought help with English literacy, perhaps after being pulled out of school early to work, but now about 90 percent are immigrants. BRL currently helps adults from 42 countries. Spanish speaking people comprise only about 15 percent of the 300-plus taking classes.

Merritt says Carilion and Norfolk Southern have hired quite a few foreign-born workers in recent years: "businesses recognize that for those folks to be productive parts of our society they need to be able to communicate. These are potentially good workers – truly willing take advantage of the American dream." 

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Gene Marrano

Rotary Roanoke Club President Paul Economy

100 years... and counting >

Executive Summary:

Roanoke Rotary has no interest in resting on their laurels. They're planning for the future.

By David Perry

Don't remind Paul Economy that in 1914, the Boston Braves won the World Series. Or that the Panama Canal opened after 10 years of construction. Or even that the world's first red and green traffic lights were installed in Cleveland.

He doesn't care. This is a man whose focus is solely on the future—the future of the Roanoke Rotary Club, that is. Founded in 1914, the Roanoke Rotary Club turns 100 this month, and Economy, who is president of the club during its centennial year, has big plans for the future.

"The past is the past. It happened," says Economy. "We're focused on the future and making the club as relevant to the Roanoke community as it's ever been."

Economy is referring to the decades-long decline in participation in civic clubs, as Americans turned to other outlets such as television, the internet and social media for their entertainment and community involvement.

In previous years, the Roanoke Rotary Club's membership was more than double today's, which sits at around three dozen active members. A club in Hollins folded in recent years due to declining membership. However, the Roanoke club is growing slowly, adding a few new members each year. Economy says being more visible in the Roanoke Valley is the key.

"We've developed a new website. We have a Facebook presence," Economy says. "And we have a new special event debuting in May, the Great Roanoke River Duck Race and Family Fun Day."



The club's original charter from 1914, showing "Number 123" at the top.

Economy says the club will dump 10,000 rubber ducks into the Roanoke River near Smith Park on the greenway. The community can purchase ducks ("A buck for a duck," he says) from the Roanoke Rotary Club or any of the six charities that are benefiting from the event, which include the local Girl Scouts council, the Bradley Free Clinic and Blue Ridge Literacy. Owners of the winning ducks will receive cash prizes.

The duck race, to be held on May 31, will also feature family activities, music and food vendors, Economy says.

The Roanoke Rotary club has an impressive history, being just the 123rd club chartered in the world,

So much more.

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So many FRONT readers just can't get enough in our monthly magazine. "Give us more!" they say. Well, we say, "OK." Read more stories and latebreaking updates on our moreFRONT blog.

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- > Ground Broken for West End Center Project
- > Startup Business Workshop in Roanoke March 29
- > Red Sun Farms Bringing Jobs to Pulaski


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

and the first west of Richmond in Virginia. Today there are over 34,000 Rotary Clubs worldwide with 1.2 million members, and the club has spawned 11 other clubs, including four others in the Roanoke Valley and clubs in Lynchburg, the New River Valley, Rocky Mount, Bristol and Martinsville.

The club estimates that more than 1,000 Roanokers have been members over the years. Throughout its history the club has been involved in numerous activities, ranging from a circus in 1915 to creating a scholarship program for area students and serving meals at the Rescue Mission. Roanoke Rotarian Ed R. Johnson was president of Rotary International from 1935-36—quite an accomplishment for a small city tucked into the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Traditionally, Rotary Clubs have drawn

members from the business community and focus on service. The Roanoke Rotary club's roster includes names many Roanokers will recognize: Bobby Sandel of Virginia Western Community College, Ken Tuck of Tuck Chiropractic, and Center in the Square's Jim Sears. Today, the club meets on the second and fourth Thursdays at noon at the Roanoke Country Club, where club members share a meal, listen to a speaker and plan for upcoming events.

To celebrate its 100th birthday, the club is planning a gala later this month on April 25 at the Hotel Roanoke. Former President of Rotary International Frank Devlyn will be the featured speaker at the dinner. 

For more information on the Rotary Club of Roanoke, Economy says to visit the club's website at rotaryroanoke.com.

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Chain, chain, chain >

I've talked about this before.
So often it hurts.

We need to pay more attention to skilled labor and the trades.

The way I've been putting it, is using the simple supply chain analogy. Rather than focusing on one end of it or the other — or even the middle — the best place to be is to ensure you have as much of the total chain covered as you can.

I'm not sure why it set me off, but I once got irritated when I heard a tech advocate tell a conference that our future would be secured by intellectual rights. His position was that technology was what America excelled at; but he didn't leave his point there. He went on to infer that he who owns the technology rules; and that all the other activities (more pedestrian I suppose, like actual manufacturing, production, distribution, resource management) were secondary at best. He believed intellectual pursuit and technical innovation trumped every other vocational sector.

If that's the most important contributor to a sustainable model and advancing society, then he's certainly correct: we should pursue it with great fervor.

I don't see it.

Not only does history disavow such a strategy, our current world screams against it.

What good is innovation if you can't produce what you innovated? What good is property ownership if you have no access to the resources that make it work?

What good is advancement in any engineering discipline (medical, technical, industrial, structural) if you have no labor pool to carry it along?

My high test high tech high brow friend says it's a global economy. We simply outsource for all those parts.

Perhaps his hefty scholarly academic achievements failed to include a history class. Perhaps his intense R&D keeps him from looking at current world events.

We need the whole chain. We need to be the chain gang.

Otherwise, the only chain we'll see is the one pulling tight around our neck.

From all the places holding links we don't have. 

On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
Are too many guidance counselors directing too many students to traditional four-year colleges?

Confessions of a Bootstrapper >

Keegan Divant is not a pretentious man.

He could be. He's 29, he dresses in sharp, bright colors, his name is pronounced "dee v' aunt." And he's just eight months into his own new venture. It's a web design business, yet another reason to be a bit flashy.

But pretentiousness is nowhere to be found in the code Keegan writes.

Today, he wears a lab coat. At first, the jacket appears like any business attire, a bit casual. But no, you look closer. It's a lab coat. A dark version. It suits him well, when you hear his story.

The jacket is a signature for the business he started in September 2013, Imagination Labs. And today he wears it at the open house for Co-Lab, a new co-working entrepreneurial center in the historic Grandin neighborhood of Roanoke. The lab idea: it all fits together.

What doesn't fit, is the expectation. The notion that Keegan would be buzzing. Highly animated and shaking everyone's hand. Handing out business cards. Reciting his elevator speech. Especially tonight, when the Co-Lab is packed to the gills with every person who has a business or professional connection throughout the valley.

"It took me ten years to realize I'm a horrible employee," Keegan tells me. The remark isn't entirely in jest. He's explaining how and why he made the decision to go into business for himself. He dropped out of college, got a job in cell phone sales and did quite well at first, until the market started to get saturated. After seven years, he moved to a technical sales position and then a marketing sales position, both of which only lasted about a year.

He decided to do web design. He doesn't tell me that's also a somewhat saturated market and certainly competitive. But what he does tell me is that he's specializing. Focusing on a niche.

"The first thing I did," Keegan says, "is I put 'consultant' on my business card. I found a lot of businesses paying too much for their websites. [Imagination Labs] is a web design company that is focused on the entrepreneur, the small business owner, and the self-employed."

The model sounds solid enough. Keegan points out the difficulty smaller, independent business owners face when they really need a professional site, but can't afford or

continued on Page 50



Keegan Divant

Guest Interview

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
*Not all startups are
 brash, in your face, take-
 on-the-world. One web
 designer's more cautious.*

Guest Interview

from Page 49

shouldn't expend the rates that most development firms charge. He believes there is a strong market for his lower cost structure; and one glance around this very Co-Lab location tonight, seems to confirm it. The place is configured with mini-offices all around the perimeter, leased by the smallest of business and boutique operators, like glass incubators for the next Donald Trump.

Nonetheless, with all the promise and possibility and projections, Keegan remains tremendously pragmatic as he stands in his lab jacket.

You get his clear message. Nothing is guaranteed. Success will take hard work. Be prepared for ups and downs.

"Fear." That's the first word out of Keegan's mouth when I ask him about his biggest challenge. An unexpected response. But when you strip away all the pretentiousness that can accompany a new venture launch, there's a underlying strategy to his thinking. He's clearly aware of the risk.

Many small business advocates and entrepreneurial coaches are more like motivational speakers. Quit your job and strike out on your own with enough confidence, and everything will not only work out perfectly, but you'll be living the dream beyond your wildest imaginations.

"You don't know what you don't know," says Keegan. But to combat the uncertainties that are supposed to go along with a new

business startup, he looks to the tools that will assist his planning, like a lab technician filling his pocket protector with backup pens.

"I haven't borrowed money yet. I'm a big fan of the LEAN startup model, and for certain products I can't afford right now, I'll use free trials."


He's also working a part-time job. His current schedule at the Co-Lab is 4pm to 1am.

The other challenges Keegan faces mostly involve his desire to gain more knowledge about the details of beginning and running your own enterprise.

"I wish there were more structured classes on the specifics. Things like taxes and legal and marketing," he says.

And despite all his pragmatism, there is one obvious mark where Keegan matches the nimble entrepreneur everyone imagines: he didn't wait until he was ready. When he found himself no longer selling for someone else, he had to move fast.

"If you have the opportunity to create a long runway where you can take off... great. I was in a 'burn-the-ships' scenario...and that worked for me."

Keegan Divant owns Imagination Labs [www.imaginationlabs.co] a web design business in Roanoke. Note the URL is "co" and not "com." 

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

Letters

Read with coffee

I just wanted to let you know that I thoroughly enjoy the Valley Business FRONT. Even a person such as myself, who has lived here his entire life, can always learn about businesses in the area I may not have been aware of. It is very refreshing to see some of the smaller businesses in this area getting some well-deserved recognition. The writing is superb and obviously the fact that you provide all of this information for

free at libraries and coffee shops makes it an incredible resource to consumers like me. Keep up the great work you are doing. I look forward to your future issues!

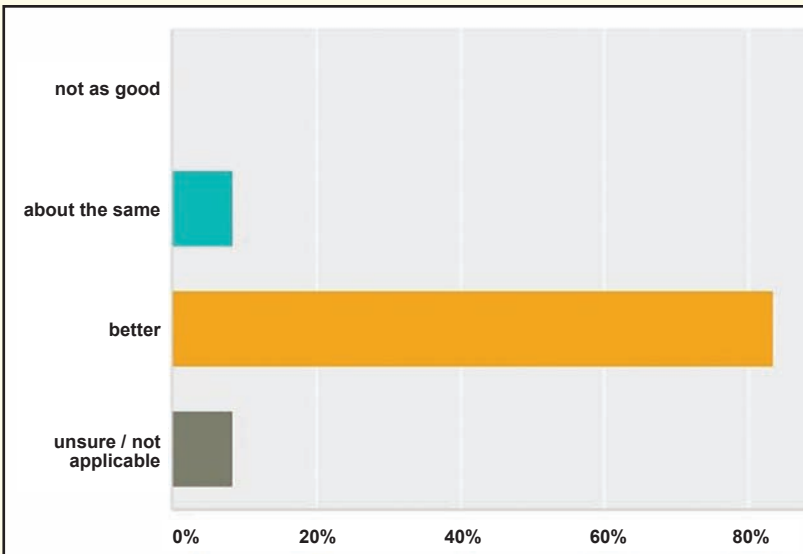
Marcus Dowdy
Roanoke

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

On Question 8 We're Feeling Great

Responses to our independent readership survey are coming in fast, and our favorite measure thus far is the following:

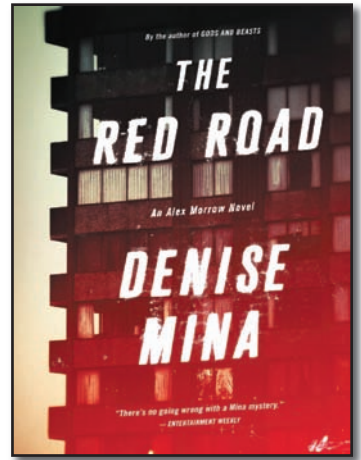
Q8: How does FRONT magazine compare to other MEDIA that reports on the same subjects or areas?



Nearly 85% of respondents say the content of FRONT is better than other comparable media. Remove the "not applicable" and the rating jumps to 93%.

Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our contributors 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 news@vbFRONT.com



Glasgow grunge

A 14 year old girl commits two grisly murders in one night. More than twenty years later the elderly and chronically ill barrister who represented her dies. His son, also a barrister, is missing, having gone into hiding to protect his family from the assassin he is sure will be coming for him. The fingerprints of a man being held in jail during his trial appear at another murder scene, one he could not have committed. The murdered man is a respected philanthropist.

Such is the tangled web of seemingly unrelated events in *The Red Road* (Little, Brown & Company, U.S. 2014). Scottish police detective, Alex Morrow, in this, Denise Mina's third Morrow novel, has her hands full trying to sort out the connections, or absence of connections, between these events and people.

Morrow is a complicated character. Happily married and a loving mother of twins, on the job Alex is tough and chafes at having her judgment questioned, mistrusts her commanding officer, and lives under the shadow of her brother, a known money-laundering operative. She is also compulsively likable (at least to the reader), honest, and thorough. Mina lets us listen in on Morrow's thoughts as she works through her life and the cases she is trying to solve.

The Glasgow that Morrow inhabits is grey and grungy. Mina weaves a complicated web and adroitly avoids the neat and tidy endings of less talented writers. Even in the answers are more questions. The biggest question of all is, how fast can the reader find and devour the first two Morrow novels?

—Cathy Cooper

Worthy lives

Rhett DeVane's premise, outlined in the title *Suicide Supper Club* (Writers4Higher, 2014), might not be plausible, but her four lead female characters couldn't be more lifelike. Their problems grow believable, though, as the women share bonds of loneliness. One is a widow whose late husband's tiny pooch hates her, while another elderly character suffers from a terminal disease. Two younger women are a battered wife and a divorcee with a fear of commitment.

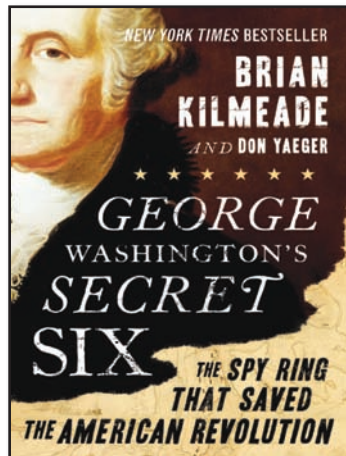
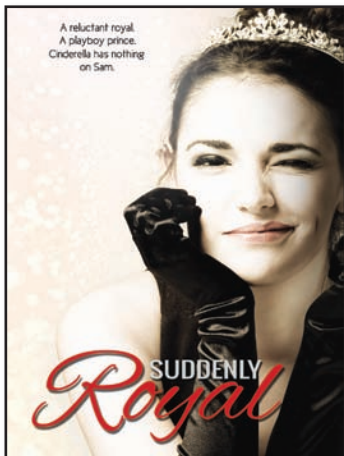
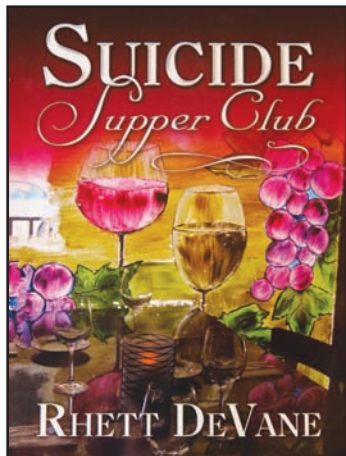
The book's chapters are divided into time elements, before-and-after suicide, so the reader knows some sort of attempt will be made and that terrible things will occur. Surprisingly, given its subject matter, the book is a frolic, replete with sassy women speaking Southernisms and alternately chiding and supporting each other. Choo-choo Ivey, the grand dame, is the most entertaining. Selfish, opinionated and tart, she livens up every scene where she has a part.

In her author's note, DeVane refers to her "brand of Southern crazy." She spins a tale employing authentic dialect straight from the heart of north Florida that also demonstrates an understanding of the heartstrings that bind women close.

—Andrea Brunais

A prince of a book

I don't usually go in for contemporary novels, but after reading so many reviews of *Suddenly Royal* (Avon Books, 2013) by Nichole Chase, I decided to give it a try and I'm SO glad I did! I can't get over how much



I loved this book. It was very much like getting swept up in a fairy tale, but done in such a believable way you could almost see it happen in real life - no fairy godmothers or magic here.

Samantha is a smart and funny 20-something who reacts like I imagine most of us would if informed we were royalty: "Um, I'm good." She's logical and considers her inner circle of people AND her career when it comes to her choices, which I don't see a lot of but was glad to read in this one. Her best friend had me cracking up every time she was on the page and I probably shouldn't even get started on Prince Alex. He was...everything you'd want and expect in a good-looking, caring, responsible prince. I kept worrying he'd turn into a jackass or betray her in some way, but instead I fell in love with him as much as Samantha does because beneath the royalty, he's just a good guy.

I kept waiting for something terrible to happen....the prince's psycho ex-girlfriend or a royal coup and was so glad when that clichéd plot didn't show. Instead, we get a sweet, sexy, believable love story between two good people who just want to do what's best for them yet right for their country. I really hope there's a second title because I can't wait to read more about Samantha, Alex, and everyone else in Lilaria!

—Liz Long

Spies you never heard of

In their new book, *George Washington's Secret Six-The Spy Ring that Saved the American Revolution*, (Sentinel, 2013) Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger bring the story of spy ring

that operated in New York from 1777 until the war ended in 1783 to vivid life. Extensively detailed and researched, the authors largely draw from letters between Washington and his spies to tell the stories of these five men and one woman, who were ordinary citizens, merchants, farmers, and socialites whose passion for the American Revolution led them to take extraordinary risks for the cause of freedom.

In August, 1776, New York fell to the British. Washington was determined to retake New York but knew he needed intelligence on British troop strength and movements to have a chance against the more numerous, better equipped, and trained British troops. To avoid detection the operatives needed to be locals whose presence and activities would not draw British attention. So was born the "Culper Ring". The ring devised a complicated method of passing along information in letters, including invisible ink and a numerical code that prevented any messages that might be intercepted from being understood.

George Washington's Secret Six focusses almost entirely on the activities of the spy ring and the war as it was pursued in New York. Not a history of the entire American Revolution, the book celebrates the courage and commitment of a handful of Patriots who played a critical, even pivotal role in the war for American Independence.

—Cathy Cooper

(The reviewers: Cathy Cooper is an executive assistant and project manager for Berryfield ; Andrea Brunais is a writer living in Blacksburg; Liz Long of Roanoke is an indie author and avid reader who enjoys fantasy, mystery, and getting lost in the pages.)



Sea o'green >

Roanoke's **St. Patrick's Day Parade & Shamrock Festival** was held to the annual tradition's largest attendance to date on Saturday, March 15, according to organizer Downtown Roanoke Inc. The parade, beginning at 11:00am was merely the start of the festivities as the downtown streets filled with celebrants all through the day and throughout the evening.

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



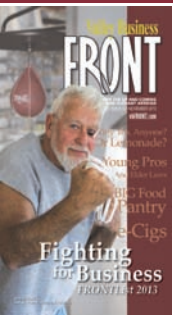
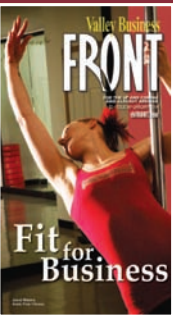
Co-Lab opens >

Co-Lab Roanoke, a community center for entrepreneurs and business startups held its public grand opening at the new facility in the historic Grandin neighborhood on March 19. Director **Samantha Steidle** (a FRONT columnist) cuts the ribbon with **Mayor David Bowers** to a packed house. The facility is configured with a large open center floor, glass-encased offices and suites around the perimeter, two conference areas, featuring contemporary design and amenities with 24 hour access to tenants.



Reviews >

Ad 2 Roanoke, an advertising club for young professionals, held its annual Portfolio Review on March 22 at the VCOM II facility at the VT/Corporate Research Center in Blacksburg. About two dozen attended the four hour session where reviewers from the professional advertising community critiqued the design portfolios from students and freelancers either seeking career opportunities or building their books.



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By the Numbers

Where is the Growth? A Look at the Current Population Estimates >

By Anne Piedmont

Who's growing? And who isn't? The Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia has released its 2013 population estimates. Our region has some winners and some, well, non-winners. First the good news: the overall Roanoke and New River Valley region has seen population growth of 1.5 percent since the 2010 Census – with the Blacksburg Metropolitan Statistical Area growing by 2.0 percent and the Roanoke MSA by 1.2 percent.

February's Census Column focused on the Cooper Center's population projections and on the expected growth of Montgomery County and the New River Valley. While

Roanoke City is projected to fall to third place behind Montgomery and Roanoke counties by 2040, it retains first place in the new estimates, up almost two percent from 2010. Fast-growing Montgomery County moves into second place, up an estimated 2.6 percent since the census.

The combined region experienced a small population growth over the 2012 estimate, but the Roanoke MSA saw a very slight decline. Within the MSA, Franklin and Roanoke counties lost population over the year. In the Blacksburg MSA, only Giles County lost population over the year. Pulaski County is the only community to have lost population since 2010, but regained a small amount from 2012 to 2013. The region's three cities – Radford, Roanoke and Salem – all gained population.

Like the projections, the population estimates point to the importance of Virginia Tech to Montgomery County and the region. The year-to-year growth, while interesting, is not as important as the long view, which shows overall growth, and stronger growth in the New River Valley. The return of residents to the cities – a topic we've discussed in various past columns – also is an interesting trend. For several decades, Roanoke City lost population, and now is gaining it to a healthy degree.

	2010 Census	2012 Estimate	2013 Estimate	% Change 2012-2013	% Change 2010-2013
Botetourt Co.	33,148	33,293	33,423	0.4%	0.8%
Craig Co.	5,190	5,258	5,305	0.9%	2.2%
Franklin Co.	56,159	56,616	56,574	-0.1%	0.7%
Roanoke Co.	92,376	93,256	92,703	-0.6%	0.4%
Roanoke City	97,032	98,641	98,913	0.3%	1.9%
Salem	24,802	25,267	25,274	0.1%	1.9%
Roanoke MSA	308,707	312,331	312,192	-0.1%	1.2%
Floyd County	15,279	15,542	15,726	1.2%	2.9%
Giles Co.	17,286	17,486	17,446	-0.2%	0.9%
Montgomery Co.	94,392	95,626	96,867	1.3%	2.6%
Pulaski Co.	34,872	34,599	34,657	0.2%	-0.6%
Radford	16,408	16,714	17,139	2.5%	4.5%
Blacksburg MSA	178,237	179,967	181,835	1.1%	2.0%
Combined MSAs	486,944	492,298	494,027	0.4%	1.5%



Anne Sampson

Trident Tree Care prepares for work at a site on Bent Mountain

Professional Tree-Hugger >

Executive Summary:

Prolonging the life of a tree is a job that requires skill, not just a chain saw

By Anne Sampson

Chris Berquist is a tree-hugger, in every sense of the word.

As the owner of Trident Tree Care, he is a professional tree climber, an occupation that can find him literally embracing a tree during an ascent. And as a professional tree climber, he admires and respects trees.

"I was fairly appalled" he says of the pruning techniques he saw when he came to this area. "Everybody with a chain saw and a lucky streak was doing tree work."

Topping and stub cutting are common methods of tree management when trees loom over the house or engulf power lines. These methods create "an unhealthy limb structure, tip rot, weakening, as well as being unsightly", Chris writes on the

company website. "There are many factors that go into keeping that living thing in your yard healthy and beautiful..."

A Chesapeake, Virginia native, Chris began climbing trees at an early age.

"We spent summers at my grandmother's house in Princeton, New Jersey," he says, "and my uncle would take us to work with him" at his tree service. Years spent outdoors rock climbing, hiking, paddling and guiding were interspersed with tree work for large companies focused on production. He developed useful skills – agility, confidence, "comfort in a vertical world"—but it was the tree work with family back in Princeton during 2011-2012 which "matured his view."

"These were historic, landmark trees that you had to get a permit to work on," he says. "I was working with people who had been pruning the same trees for 30 years, and had seen the results of their work. It set a very high standard, and this was a clientele who could afford it. It definitely changed my style."

He learned good soil practices and water science and fertilizing protocols. He learned to think of a tree as a difficult-to-replace resource.

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Now, as Trident completes its first year in business, Chris is purchasing Woody's Tree Service, which serves Smith Mountain Lake. He'll keep the Woody's name and phone number, enlarging his service area and adding experience to his crew.

Recruiting the right people is important, and Chris tends to look for other rock climbers, paddlers and hikers like himself. He finds them eager to learn and already experienced in risk management and decision-making. They are comfortable in the vertical world.

Working in sometimes isolated areas, often with unstable, storm-damaged trees, makes safety a huge issue.

"We have to have a good strong foundation in safety," says Chris. "Someone dies every three days doing this work. I just took the guys to an aerial rescue clinic, and we've done training in CPR, AED (those defibrillators you see in public places) and felling practices." Clinics are often sponsored by equipment manufacturers, such as Vermeer Tree Care.

This year, Chris will represent Trident Tree Care at the Mid-Atlantic Chapter, International Society of Arboriculture Tree Climbing Championship, hosted by the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. Scoring in the top 5 in the Men's Division will send him to the Master's Challenge. A win there would put him in the national competition.

"In the past, employers have encouraged me to compete," he says with a touch of humility. "It'll be a good way to network and get some publicity. I'm looking forward to it."

Chris has some pretty

In Brief

Name:	Christopher Berquist
Age:	28
Company:	Trident Tree Care
In Business:	1 year, 12 years experience
Family:	Mom, Dad, brother
Outtake:	"We have to have a good strong foundation."

simple goals for Trident Tree Care.

"I'm really looking to stay small," he says. "I want to establish a good clientele, and to educate the customer about the process" of tree care. "It's not an overnight thing.

Our goal is not to be one of the biggest, just one of the best." 📍



Christopher Berquist

Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Julie Nicely and **Valinda Hayes** have joined Member One Federal Credit Union as mortgage loan originators serving the Roanoke, Christiansburg, Fairlawn, Franklin County and Lynchburg areas.

HomeTown Bank announced the following new hires:

Lisa Sowers, loan operations specialist, and **Pamela Stalnaker**, deposit operations reconciliation specialist.

HomeTown Bank has announced the following promotions: **Barnett Carr**, assistant vice president and credit analyst, and **Katrina Huerth**, bank officer and credit analyst.

Jill Smith has been promoted to senior vice president at SunTrust Bank.

LEGAL FRONT

Autumn Rose Visser has joined Woods Rogers as an Associate.

Robert Dean has joined Gentry

Locke Rakes & as an attorney.

WELLNESS FRONT



Potters



Rawlins

Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) promoted **Rachel Potters**, CPA to the position of assistant vice president of finance; and **Cindy Shepard Rawlins** to assistant vice president for communications, marketing, website and publications.

Dr. Tejal Raju joined Virginia Interventional Pain and Spine Center in Christiansburg

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Mendy Sink, HHHunt Corporation/Foxridge, was awarded Young Women Business Leader of the Year for her personal and professional successes over the past 15 years, and **Mary Miller**, CEO of Interactive Design & Development (IDD, Inc.), was honored as Women Business Leader of the Year for her many accomplishments and role in transforming the face of women in engineering at the Leading Women Leadership Conference on March 13 in Blacksburg.



Naff

Braxton Naff was appointed to the board of directors of the Economic Development Authority for the City of Roanoke, Virginia.



Unanue

Michael Unanue was appointed the new vice president of sales for the Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Strickland

Wayne Strickland was awarded The Virginia Planning District Commission's first ever President's Award during the VAPDC's 2014 Winter Conference in Richmond.



Farley

The Blacksburg Partnership announced that **Sarah Farley** has joined as events coordinator and **Sarah Crowder** has joined as marketing and

Read the FRONT online **vbFRONT.com**

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



Crowder

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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.



Shelton

outreach coordinator.

SFCS has promoted **Mark Shelton**, AIA



Daniels

to senior associate; **Shelley Daniels**, CID, ASID to associate;



Sowers

and **Justine Sowers**, CID, ASID to associate.

Jes Gearing has joined Draper Aden Associates' Blacksburg office as a marketing coordinator. Draper Aden is a Blacksburg based full service consulting engineering firm. They also have offices in Richmond, Charlottesville, Hampton Roads and North Carolina.

ALL NEWS...

ALL MORNING

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Career FRONT

RETAIL FRONT



Dorcas

Dana Dorcas was named U.S. Cellular director of sales for the Southeast Region Business Channel in NC, TN, WV, and VA.

Don Daniel has been named senior account manager for Professional Network Services account manager.



Elliott

Neal Elliott has joined Waldvogel Commercial Properties, Inc. as a

commercial sales and leasing agent.



Travis



Greear

Two Long & Foster real estate agents from the Blacksburg office were recognized with awards from the New River Valley Association of Realtors: **Donna Travis**, Ethics in Action award, and **Darin Greear**, Realtor of the Year.

Jim Fischer has been named executive chef at Shula's 347 Grill and director of food and beverage at the



Fischer

adjoining Sheraton Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center.

EDUCATION FRONT



Braaten

Jennifer L. Braaten, president of Ferrum College, has been elected to the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) board of directors.

Dale Pike has been named executive director of Virginia

Tech's Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies department, a unit of Information Technology.

Nathaniel Bishop, president of Jefferson College of Health Sciences, and **Nancy Gray**, president of Hollins University, were recently elected to the board of trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.



Stone

Audrey Edmonds Stone has been appointed vice president for institutional advancement at Hollins University.

Emily Hutchins has been named director of development for



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Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources and Environment.

OTHER FRONTS

The Warm Hearth Foundation named **Edward Lawhorn** to the board of trustees and Christine Smith, CDFA, has been named a member of the Warm Hearth, Inc. board of directors.

William Withuhn has been appointed to the board of directors for the Virginia Museum of



Withuhn

Transportation.

The First Virginia Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals announced its 2014 slate of officers: **C.W. Markham**, president; **Tammy Shank**, president-elect, first vice president

of membership; **Catherine Zdziarski**, second vice president of programs; **Jan Smyth**, secretary/treasurer; **Travis Wirt**, communications chairman; **Erin Hildreth**, immediate past president; **John Harlow**, member at large; and **Jay Whitmore**, member at large.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Southwest Virginia announced 2014 officers: **Jim Barker**, president; **Scott Jenkins**, treasurer; **Wayman Clark**, secretary; and **Walt**

Derey, immediate past president.

The Blacksburg Partnership announced the following new hires: **Sarah Farley**, events coordinator, and **Sarah Crowder**, marketing and outreach coordinator.

Pamela Irvine, president and CEO of Feeding America Southwest Virginia has been named recipient of the 2014 Dick Goebel Public Service Award.

Compiled by Tom Field and Cathy Cooper.



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FRONT Notes



Cox grant

Charitable grants

Cox Communications has awarded \$31,000 in grant funds to six non-profit organizations in Roanoke through Cox Charities grants programs. The Roanoke area charity recipients included Smart Beginnings Greater Roanoke (\$10,000); Community Youth Program at St. Johns (\$5,000); Child Health Investment Partnership of Roanoke Valley (\$10,000); Blue Ridge Independent Living Center (\$2,000); National PKU Alliance (\$2,000); Blue Ridge Autism and Achievement Center (\$2,000). The grants are part of the nearly \$8 million Cox contributes annually through cash and in-kind support to the communities where they do business.

Thompson's goes to church

Thompson's Men's Clothing Store on East Main Street

in Salem has been sold to a local church, Positive Impact Ministries. Frank Thompson, 79, said his decision to close the store has been a result of both his age and the decline in demand for men's formalwear.

Uniform growth

After 15 years of designing uniforms and engraving hundreds of names on trophies, Rocky Mount-based CBM Sports is under new ownership and is expanding. Brent Mitchell, the nephew of the previous owners, took over the small business in July with plans to open a second, smaller location in Roanoke in a 600-square-foot space in Brammer Village on Peters Creek Road. Mitchell said he wants the store to be a place for retail sales and catalogue shopping, while most production will still be done at the Rocky Mount location. CBM Sports

specializes in making uniforms, for everyone from little league baseball players to volunteer firefighters.

View changes

Valley View Mall is preparing for the arrival of H&M, a clothing retailer, and the relocation of several other shops. The mall management said Valley View is also making room for three new stores: Flip Flop Shops, Francesca's and Feah Brow Beauty.

Atomic growth

A Lynchburg-based branch of Babcock & Wilcox Company has signed a new \$1.3 billion contract to create nuclear reactors for U.S. Navy submarines and aircraft carriers. The work will be spread out over three years and three other company sites so the Lynchburg B&W

operation, currently employing about 2,300 people in the Lynchburg area, will not hire additional employees.

Set in concrete

Elk Knob Inc. has leased office space at 325 E. Main St. in Wytheville. Elk Knob is a concrete and road construction company that also has an office in Pennington Gap.

Commercial move

Commercial real estate services firm Cushman & Wakefield / Thalheimer moved its Roanoke office to the Wells Fargo Tower in downtown Roanoke, at 10 S. Jefferson Street, Suite 1750.

Record income

National Bankshares announced a record net income of \$17.79 million

for the twelve months ended December 31, 2013, an increase over the nearly \$17.75 million earned in 2012. The 2013 return on average assets and return on average equity were 1.63% and 11.90%, respectively. Basic earnings per share in 2013 remained consistent with the prior year at \$2.56. The company ended 2013 with total assets of over \$1.11 billion. National Bankshares, Inc. is a community bank holding company with headquarters in Blacksburg with affiliated banks throughout Southwestern Virginia.

Volunteer to remember

A program to maintain forgotten cemeteries along the Blue Ridge Parkway has been launched by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway and the National Park

Service-Blue Ridge Parkway. The project will request volunteer assistance with maintaining approximately 40 of the 70 Blue Ridge Parkway cemeteries and request funds to purchase lawn care equipment. Certificates will be provided to all groups or individuals that Adopt-A-Cemetery. The project will occur in two stages, the first will address cemetery boundaries and removal of brush and weeds. The second will focus on identification of grave sites for inclusion in the Blue Ridge Parkway Cemetery Data Base.

Merit scholarship

North Cross School in Roanoke County has announced a new merit-based scholarship program, available to current students and new applicants in grades 8–11. Merit-based financial

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assistance is for students who demonstrate exceptional academic ability, leadership, and diverse extra-curricular interests.

Unusual artistic inspiration

The Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine is offering a program series entitled "Anatomy for Artists and Other Curious Sorts" that gives community members a backstage pass to the medical school's training facilities, including its anatomy laboratories. Participants with an artistic flair will have an opportunity to recreate

what they learn through the artistic medium of their choice.

Get on the cloud

Cox Business has announced the national availability of its suite of cloud-based business applications for small businesses. The suite provides real estate agencies, restaurants, professional services and personal services businesses with functions like email marketing, secure file sharing and proposal creation. The cloud-based solution also integrates with online and mobile



Caudill Family Cemetery

FRONT Notes



LOVEwork

payment processing – eliminating the need to work with a credit card payment processor.

Love train

The Virginia Museum of Transportation and the Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau worked with the Virginia Tourism Corporation to have Virginia's newest "LOVEwork" installed in Downtown Roanoke. The LOVE artwork campaign can be found in displays at over 20 tourist destinations throughout the state. This newest 9-foot by 5-foot installation features a train-themed inspiration, designed by popular Roanoke artist Eric Fitzpatrick.

NRV move

Brown, Edwards & Company has announced

the relocation of its New River Valley Office to the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, 1715 Pratt Drive, Ste. 2700, in Blacksburg. Brown, Edwards is an accounting firm offering traditional assurance and tax services, professional business advisory and consulting services.

Amazing recognition

Lynchburg's Amazement Square, Central Virginia's first multidisciplinary, hands-on children's museum, has been named a National Medal for Museum and Library Service finalist by The Institute of Museum and Library Services. The National Medal, the nation's highest honor conferred on museums and libraries for service to the community, is celebrating its 20th year of recognizing institutions that make a difference for individuals, families, and

communities. Medal finalists are selected from nationwide nominations of institutions that demonstrate innovative approaches to public service, exceeding the expected levels of community outreach.

Healthy collaboration

Jefferson College of Health Sciences has signed articulation agreements with both New River Community College and Virginia Western Community College for seamless entrance to bachelor level degrees and beyond. The JCHS educational programs include Respiratory Therapy, Health and Exercise Science and Health Psychology.

¿Habla español?

Recognizing the increasing opportunity

for Spanish language service due to the rapid growth in Roanoke's Hispanic population, Dr. Elda Stanco Downey, former Spanish professor of Roanoke College and Hollins University, and Keisha Graziadei-Shup, a contributor to Valley Business FRONT and Hollins alumna (and a former student of Stanco Downey) have launched Roanoke Spanish, a service that equips families and businesses with Spanish language services for cultural and professional development.

Something to cluck about

The Black Hen & Bar Blue restaurant has opened on Jackson Street in downtown Blacksburg. The chef/owners are Cunnighame and Linda West, who were the opening chefs at The Bank Food & Drink in Pearisburg. The new

Blacksburg restaurant will feature American fare, using fresh and seasonal ingredients, often from local farms and the Blacksburg Farmers' Market. Gluten-free and dairy-free items are also available, such as soy vanilla ice cream, gluten-free pasta and always a gluten-free bread choice.

Tacos in, yogurt out

Go Taco, a new southwestern grill is set to open at 118 Campbell Avenue in the City Market area of Roanoke. The restaurant, next door to Nawab Indian Cuisine, takes the place of Frogurt, a frozen yogurt shop. The restaurant, seating 30-35 diners will offer fresh cantina-style Mexican fare. Robert Mendoza, an experienced Mexican chef from Charlotte, N.C. will be in charge of the kitchen. Both Go Taco and Nawab Indian Cuisine are owned by Aparappur Singh Pannu.

Jewelry upgrade

Roanoke-based jewelry store Fink's Jewelers is remodeling a few of its stores, including its popular location at Valley View Mall. Fink's spokeswoman Lindsey Kirby said the store is undergoing a complete facelift to reflect the "more modern design" of the flagship store on Virginia 419 at Colonial Avenue. The changes

will include a Pandora Shop-in-Shop boutique and an expanded selection of watches.

"Mor chikin" to eat

Chick-fil-A is planning to open a location on U.S. 460 in Roanoke County. The new fast food restaurant location will be built at 3814 Challenger Ave. (U.S. 460) in the northwest corner where it meets West Ruritan Road. A gas station had been at the site before being demolished. The new restaurant will be almost 5,000 square feet with an outdoor patio for dining and a drive-through with two lanes for ordering.

Engineering upward

U.S. News & World Report has ranked Virginia Tech's College of Engineering 21st among the nation's best engineering schools for graduate studies in its America's Best Graduate Schools 2015 survey. The ranking is higher than the 24th position where the college stood for three consecutive years.

What? No hot fudge cake?

Last July, following the derecho, the Shoney's restaurant on Wildwood Road in Salem closed rather suddenly apparently the victim of roof damage. A Shoney's

spokesperson says the chain is "on a spirited mission" to revive and reinvent the restaurants. The decision to reopen the Wildwood location is still under consideration, although there have been some unconfirmed reports it will not reopen. The building has sat empty and without repairs since the closing. Shoney's has another location in Troutville.

McClearbrook

McDonalds plans to open one of its restaurants at 5347 Franklin Road (U.S. 220) in the Clearbrook area, subject to permit approval. The location is currently a one-acre vacant plot owned by developer Joel Shepherd. He says McDonald's has signed a contract to purchase the spot contingent on the approval of the rezoning and permitting they need to operate.

Market dinner bell

Greenbrier Nurseries in Roanoke has started "Farm to Table", a year round program for purchasing and selling locally grown food at markets and online (www.farm2tableva.com). The market at 5881 Starkey Road is open Thursdays 2pm to 7pm and Saturdays 10am to 3pm. The objective is to deliver local, fresh foods to a larger population, while also partnering

with hospitals, offices, schools and other organizations.

PT in Southwest Virginia

Emory & Henry College has acquired the old Smyth County Community Hospital as part of the college's planned expansion with its new school of health sciences. The school has announced a new Dean, Lou Fincher, the goal for accreditation for the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program by the fall semester, and a projected fulfillment of 300 students and 30 faculty once the school is fully functional.

Reservations for Connie

The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center has been awarded the Connie Award by DoubleTree / Hilton brand as part of the 2013 Brand Awards program. The Connie Award is named after Hilton Worldwide's founder Conrad Hilton, and given to the top performing hotel of the year based on quality assurance audits measuring cleanliness, condition and brand standards; customer satisfaction scores rating staff service and the quality of the hotel's physical accommodations.

Compiled by Tom Field and Cathy Cooper

Additional FRONT Notes posted online at moreFRONT.blogspot.com.

Read extended versions of items listed above, plus photos and many more current listings each day on the moreFRONT blog, also available by link at vbFRONT.com.

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Gene Marrano is 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 ("Studio Virginia," WVTF Public Radio). [gmarrano@cox.net]

Michael Miller has worked with intellectual properties and technology innovation. His consulting company is Kire Technology. With more than 25 years as an inventor and technology consultant, working with Fortune 500 companies and

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Anne Sampson is a photographer and writer who has been active in local arts and events for 15 years. Her work highlights the sights and people of the Roanoke Valley. She specializes

in fresh looks at familiar subjects. [sampsom7@gmail.com]

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Nicholas Vaassen is a graphic designer with 13 years experience, specializing in publications. His design projects include FRONT, lifestyle, real estate, municipal, classified sales and cultural organization magazines in Roanoke and southwestern Virginia markets. [nvaassen@berryfield.com]

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 Packet Group. He is now a freelance writer as well as a performing musician and guitar teacher. [rwalker25@cox.net]

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If you can get enough DNA...
it is possible to reproduce
a copy of that organism.

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