

Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Linkous Auctioneers
and Farmer Auctions

Roanoke Valley
Association of REALTORS

Roanoke Rail Yard Dawgs

Axcel Archery

Micah Fraim of Fraim,
Cawley & Company

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Going Once... Twice...



Bob Miller
Farmer Auctions



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WELCOME TO THE FRONT

The leaves are turning, and football season is here – must be Fall. For the first time in more than 600 days there will be pro hockey again in Roanoke, and Hall of Fame sportswriter Doug Doughty has a story on the return of the Roanoke RailYard Dawgs in this issue. Also – the world of auctions – how do those things work anyway? – is also in the spotlight. Not to mention the 100th anniversary for the Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors, celebrating that milestone during what has been a very good year for Real Estate.

There are various ribbon cuttings and other openings of note – the pace has picked up on that front. Happy reading.



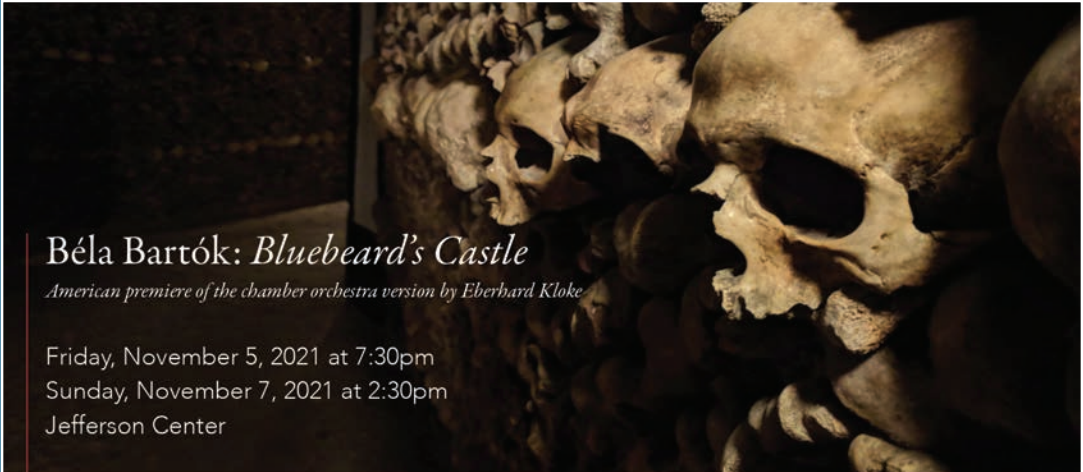
Tom Field
Publisher



Gene Marrano
Editor

““”

Knowing when you're vulnerable...
can make a big difference for
your financial security. – Page 17



Béla Bartók: *Bluebeard's Castle*

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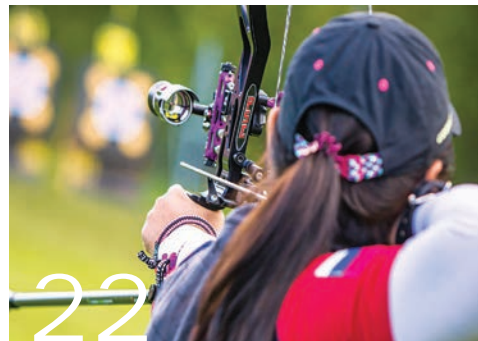
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“Do I hear...?”

By Jennifer Poff Cooper



“ ”
He is a mechanical genius.
— Page 26

Cover photo of Bob Miller submitted.

Small Business Snapshot: Minority-Owned Main Street

A survey of more than 700 American minority business owners uncovers the top challenges they are facing in the post-pandemic market and how they are making their comeback.

Fueling Passion and Independence

Of surveyed business owners, **86%** are founders. **36%** of respondents chose to start their own businesses to follow their passions, and **21%** were inspired by a desire for financial independence.



Investing in the Future

81% of business owners put their stimulus money directly back into their business.

The majority of 18-44 year old business owners are keen on implementing new products and services, like eCommerce, this year, as well as new technologies into their business processes. Business owners that are 45 years and older aren't quite as convinced with **less than half** saying yes to new technology.



Minority-Owned Business Marketing



Nearly half of the respondents actively promote that their business is minority-owned, and **43%** believe that being minority-owned generated more sales in the last year.

COVID-19 Business Side Effects

Over **75%** of respondents claimed the pandemic heightened their business challenges, specifically in the areas of payroll, paying their rent/lease/mortgage and covering utilities.



45% paying their rent/lease/mortgage



41% covering utilities



39% areas of payroll

About the 2021 Cox Business Comeback Survey

Cox commissioned a survey solely focused on the challenges of minority-owned businesses. We aimed to catch a glimpse of the issues they face – and more importantly, how they rise above. Respondents to the online survey included a total of 742 business owners. The margin of error for this survey is plus or minus 3 percent.



The commercial division of Cox Communications, Cox Business provides voice, data and video services for more than 355,000 small and regional businesses nationwide, including health care providers; K-12 and higher education; financial institutions; and federal, state and local government organizations. The organization also serves most of the top-tier wireless and wireline telecommunications carriers in the U.S. through its wholesale division.

FRONT

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Zack Jackson



Michael Shelton

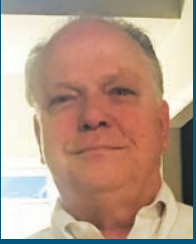


Dan Smith

Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Advisory Board comprised of a selective group of diverse business professionals who support our mission and have an interest in how our business journal best serves our local communities and region. As a sounding board throughout their term, board members have been given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. 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. Although the members are encouraged to keep FRONT updated on their own industries and the key players, they aren't limited to their area of specialty, as all commercial enterprises ultimately collaborate to impact our quality of life here in this part of Virginia. An additional contribution by the Advisory Board involves direct input on the various FRONTLists we present throughout the year. 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 contacting us with your ideas. You know more than we know about your business—or you certainly should—and that inside knowledge shared with our readers will make us all better at what we do.

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I didn't intend to be an accountant... it just clicked. — Page 59

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Care about how that post speaks for your brand.
— Page 25

“ ”
The local market has experienced record sales for the past two years.
— Page 15

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 56.

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Submitted

Bob Miller

“Do I hear...?”

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

Auctions may be less common these days, but Larry Linkous and Bob Miller still find them fun—and enjoy auction days.



Submitted

Larry Linkous

"I love the interaction with the crowd," Larry Linkous of Linkous Auctioneers said. "It's a people business." Most auctions now are estate auctions, the result of death, divorce, or a variety of other reasons, with the auction house clearing out a home and displaying all the items piece by piece. Linkous prefers to "do it all" – auction real estate and personal property together. Meanwhile, according to appraiser Bob Miller of Farmer Auctions, it is rare these days to auction off single pieces.

In a live auction, helpers hold up consigned items while the auctioneer solicits bids. Linkous said there are two types of auctions. In absolute auctions, the sale goes through regardless of the price. In a reserve auction, the seller has the right to accept the last bid or not.

Several types of people attend live auctions, which can be social events for those who are in the habit of attending. Linkous groups them: 1) neighbors, 2) family and friends, 3) collectors, and 4) people who come to every sale.

Miller adds in dealers, who resell, and hoarders, folks who probably do not need another box of glasses but are hooked. He expounded on the family group, saying that not infrequently family members wrangle over who gets what, coming to near fistfights at times; consigning everything to auction makes for a more equitable playing field, he said.

“ ”

Consigning everything to auction makes for a more equitable playing field.



Auctioneers know how to raise prices for sellers.

Other advantages of auctions for buyers include getting items for cents on the dollar, said Miller. Also, if someone loves certain types of goods, they may not be able to buy at a store, often they can be found at auctions.

Auctioneers represent the seller, said Linkous. Competition inherent in auctions helps sellers get the best price. Another advantage of auctions to sellers of real estate is that there are no sellers' commissions; instead, buyers pay a 10% premium to the auction house. In addition, a 10% non-refundable deposit weeds out those who can't afford the items. Sales are as-is, without contingencies that are often seen in real estate contracts. And, Linkous said, the 30-day closing ensures sellers receive their money quickly.

Auctioneers know how to raise prices for sellers. Linkous said he can often look someone in the eye and tell if they are "itching to bid;" this may allow him to draw another bid or two.

With personal property, the sellers' commissions vary depending on the items; the more valuable they are, the less commission that is charged.

But the times are changing with many auctions migrating to online. Online auctions work well for specialized auctions, said Linkous, including things of interest to people all over the country. Guns and coins are two prime examples.

"If they are willing to pay shipping, we'll ship it anywhere," he said.

Miller said that Farmer Auctions catalogues, or posts photos and descriptions of items, online for ten days to two weeks, then bidding begins at a certain day and time. Both Linkous and Miller extol the benefit of online auctions over eBay, which allows bidders to jump in at the last second and snag a highly desired item. In their online auctions, there is a timed closing. If someone bids in the last two (Linkous) or five (Farmer) minutes, then the auction extends for that amount of time until no one has bid at the end, making it fairer than eBay.

Farmer Auctions doesn't exclude anything, Miller said, because in our small area auction houses need to be generalists. Some items auctioned include vehicles, precious metals, clocks, and toys, especially pressed tin toys and model trains. Linkous said real estate and farm equipment are popular now because of low inventory. Distance is a factor, said Miller, with 50-75 miles being the farthest most people will travel for something large like furniture.

A TALE OF TWO TREASURE HUNTERS

Linkous and Miller entered the auction business in different ways, though both got into it by accident.

Larry Linkous loved listening to auctioneers in his younger days and decided to give the business a try by obtaining his license when he needed some income in college. His Virginia auctioneer license number is three, meaning he has been in the business a long time – 50 years to be exact. He said it is harder to get into the business now with the schooling and licensing requirements, and that young auctioneers need mentors because most folks will hire an experienced auctioneer.

Meanwhile Bob Miller had the “misfortune,” he laughed, to be born to a collecting couple. When Miller retired as an administrator in Montgomery County Public Schools, Ken Farmer, owner of Farmer Auctions, called him because of Miller’s product knowledge as a personal collector. Soon Miller began cataloguing and appraising. He was supposed to work three hours the first day but worked eight – and continued for 20 years. He has finally slowed down to a couple of days a week, but still loves learning something new every day he works.

—Jennifer Poff Cooper

Miller said that values have changed considerably. eBay has shown that “what we thought was rare really isn’t.” (Rarity is a criterion for value.) Things that used to be hot and are not: gold- or silver-rimmed china that cannot be put in the dishwasher, and “brown furniture” such as mahogany unless it is hand-crafted.

Linkous laughed that the most interesting thing he ever auctioned was a funeral home, including embalming equipment and caskets.

Some people “just luck out,” said Miller. He cited two elderly women living on Social Security who owned art by artists of some renown and were able to get several hundred thousand dollars each for their works, which ended up in museums in Europe.

Mostly, though, keeping expectations realistic is a challenge in terms of what will sell well and what won’t, said Miller. Another challenge is finding quality goods in our area. Family goods are not likely to be sold, and most of the rest is factory-made.

“People are more fortunate in a city setting,” he said.



Man in red polo shirt speaking into a microphone.

Man in maroon polo shirt and baseball cap leaning over the counter.

Linkous Auctioneers
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Auction Excellence



Submitted



FRONT

Farmer Auctions

"They have a much larger palette of colors to paint from."

Both Miller and Linkous emphasized the importance of integrity in the auction business, advocating giving as much information as possible about the conditions of items.

"It's people's responsibility [to inspect] but honesty is better in the long run," Linkous said.

Marketing is a key to success, said Linkous. His auction house uses direct mail, email, their website, and auctionzip.com (a national website that attracts travelers) to publicize their auctions. With online auctions, they often send email blasts to targeted narrow groups. The Internet has decreased marketing costs, he said, comparing the lower price of a Facebook ad to the high cost of a newspaper ad.

Linkous notes that the typical picture of an auction – the auctioneer talking fast – is just the most visible part of an auction. There is a lot of work behind the scenes setting up tents and chairs, displaying items, and, again, marketing.

Both men say that auctions will continue in both forms. Miller pointed out that significant collectors are now at the age of downsizing or have died and their children are selling.

He said, "Auctions are as old as time."

“ ”

There is a lot of work behind the scenes.



Submitted

Roanoke Valley Association of REALTORS recognized at a Roanoke County Board of Supervisors meeting.

RVAR: 100 years of Roanoke real estate

By Aila Boyd

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Roanoke Valley Association of REALTORS (RVAR).

Throughout its long history, many aspects of the association have changed. When it was started, the RVAR was comprised of 25 firms in the City of Roanoke. Today, it represents over 140 firms, 1,480 REALTOR® members and more than 285 affiliate company members throughout seven jurisdictions.

Laura Benjamin, chief executive officer, has witnessed many changes throughout her 30 years with the association. One of the most notable developments, she said, has been the way technology has changed the nature of the industry. Back in the 1980s when the Roanoke MLS (multiple listing service) was started, large books with descriptions and small

exterior pictures of properties were printed every two weeks. Agents and prospective homebuyers would patiently wait for new books to be printed, before heading out to properties of interest.

"Today, buyers expect beautiful photos and videos. They look at all of that before contacting a realtor. Realtors don't spend four weeks with someone in their backseat anymore," she explained.

As a result of the increase in technology, the process for buying and selling homes has become more immediate.

"It was such a longer process back in the day," she said, adding that it isn't unusual

anymore to have houses go under contract the same day they are listed.

Walter Grewe, president of the RVAR Board of Directors and a Wainwright & Company, REALTORS® agent, has also seen his fair share of changes since becoming an agent 15 years ago. Shortly after entering the industry in 2006, the Great Recession hit. "It was the age of subprime mortgages," he remembered. "The real estate industry as a whole went sideways."

In 2009, he got involved in the foreclosure business due to just how prevalent it was at the time. By the time 2014 came around, the foreclosure wave had largely run its course, so Grewe transitioned back to the owner occupancy side of the business.

The industry was once again shaken up last year when the COVID-19 pandemic started. Benjamin said parents considered the need for more space because their children were largely learning from home and professionals realized they could relocate to places like the Roanoke Valley because of the increase in remote work. Once people started rethinking their living situations, the market started to heat up.

As a result of the increased demand, Benjamin said the local market has experienced record sales for the past two years. While she sees the market continuing to stay steady in the foreseeable future due to low interest rates, she stressed that it doesn't take much to turn the market on its head. Grewe added, "We do not foresee a huge change in this market,


but you never know what could happen."

The one thing Grewe has learned about the industry throughout his career that he feels will be true for the next 15, and even 100, years is that agents have to be able to pivot in order to succeed. "The real estate business is a business of pivoting and adapting," he said. "The market does not stay the same."

One thing that will stay the same is the location of the association. In 2010, it purchased its current Starkey Road location. "We always felt that we should own real estate," Benjamin said. As part of the association's 100th anniversary, it paid off its mortgage this year.

With that being said, they believe social interactions for agents will be one of the association's most in-demand services. "The socialization of its members is something the association really helps with," Jim Sweetwood, the association's director of communications and events, said.

Figuring out how to provide safe networking opportunities like family nights at the ballpark or after-hours get-togethers for Realtors while the pandemic is still ongoing is one of the major challenges Grewe said the association's staff has to overcome.

When considering what the next one hundred years will have in store for the association, Benjamin and Grewe see it continuing to maintain the MLS, providing educational resources for real estate professionals, fostering a code of ethics for agents and advocating on behalf of all those involved in the industry. 



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BUSINESS OPERATIONS

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:

In business and in life, everything we do has an opportunity cost. Rarely do I see this discussed in business, and I'm not sure if most people even know what it means. But it's very important.

Send your questions or comments to Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com

Opportunity costs


A simple definition of opportunity cost is the potential benefits an individual, investor, or business misses out on when choosing one alternative over another (Investopedia). We all have limited time and money resources, and every day we make decisions on how to spend them. But we often fail to consider the opportunity cost of those decisions.

For example, many businesses that can benefit from my company's services choose not to hire us because their staff can do it themselves and they think it saves them money. But what these prospective clients sometimes fail to consider is the value of their staff's time that could be reapplied to something more profitable. In other words, by choosing not to hire us, a company loses the opportunity to apply their time savings on other goals.

Similarly, when deciding how to invest more money into your business, you probably consider if you will be getting a return on that investment. But you should also be considering what your return would be if you invested that same money into something else. For example, you might consider investing \$100k per year into technology which will provide \$200k in savings. But what if that same \$100k were invested in a new salesperson that generated \$300k in extra revenue? Choosing one option costs you the opportunity to invest in the other option and should be considered.

Keep in mind, too, that opportunity costs are not always measured in dollars and cents. Ask yourself these questions: What is the single most profitable activity you do in your business? What would be the benefit of spending an extra hour each day doing that activity? Now compare that benefit with the benefits of your other tasks and activities. By continuing to spend time on less profitable activities, it costs you the opportunity to spend more time on the more profitable tasks.

When I started my business nine years ago, it cost me a six-figure corporate salary. But had I stayed in my corporate job, it would have cost me the opportunity to establish a successful business, make more money, hire valuable employees, improve my quality of life, and pursue a career I love.

Every decision has opportunity costs. Consider those costs to help you make better decisions. 

“You should also be considering what your return would be if you invested that same money into something else.”

Risk mitigation is an important part of wealth building strategies

Typically, when you get together with a financial planner or fiduciary, the conversation focus is on investing, budgeting, or smart money moves. What rarely gets considered is how to best hedge your bets against risk of the unknown.

While some still cringe when they hear the term insurance salesman, risk mitigation has come a long way from the days when it meant someone was likely to corner you at a networking event with an aggressive sales pitch. Today, there are lots of options that make sense for your exposure concerns.


Homeowners' and collision insurance are non-negotiable when banks still hold the note. Health insurance is critical if you can afford it. But what about the other stuff? The answer to this one is, "It depends." Life, disability, dental, umbrella policies, etc. can be a necessary evil. Or, they can be completely unnecessary. Your personal circumstances will dictate what makes sense.

Insurance is changing

You want to make sure you're not over-insured. Still, it's important to be covered so you're not financially crippled when surprises happen. Most don't understand contractual language. It's important to know what you're buying. Price shopping makes little sense when cheaper means your claim is denied when crisis hits.

For example, disability insurance has two ways of offering contracts. The ideal is own-occupation coverage. This means you'll get paid if you can't do your existing job. It costs more than any-occupation coverage. The latter means if you're a doctor who can still bag groceries, you'll get nothing from the policy that you've paid on for years.

Life insurance is another great example. You can now get coverage that includes disability, life, and long-term care. This kind of contract kills three birds with one stone. Accelerated benefit riders let you use the death benefit to handle health needs you have while you're alive. Paying out when you die is a secondary benefit if you don't use money for chronic, critical, or long-term care needs. That makes even single people with no children good life insurance candidates.

Accumulating wealth can be as much about ensuring (or insuring) you're not over-exposed when crisis occurs as it is about smart investing. Knowing where you're vulnerable and what you need to do to reduce risk can make a big difference for your financial security. It's not the policy that's important, it's the contract. Make sure it's written to your needs. If you don't know what that should say, it makes good financial sense to find someone who does to act as your advocate. 



FINANCIAL FIGURES

By Michael Shelton

Executive Summary:

It's not the policy that's important, it's the contract.

Michael Shelton is a financial retirement counselor. Reach him at michael@discover360 Financial.com



DAWGS BACK ON ICE AFTER LONG COVID HIATUS

By Doug Doughty

While the Roanoke Valley hockey scene may have faded into the darkness for a while, all indications are that it will be back to normal in time for the Roanoke Railyard Dawgs' season opener October 15 at the Berglund Center.



Submitted

Austyn Roudebush-goalie

"Last summer, the pandemic had just hit, and nobody knew anything about anything," team president Mickey Gray said in mid-September. "[In 2020] we spent the whole summer planning for 20 percent capacity, 30 percent capacity. We had 17 different contingency plans."

"As of right now, we believe it will be business as usual ... full bore. If something happens and we have to

react, we're already ready to do that. There's no information we've gotten over the past five or six months that tells us it's going to be anything but that."

Roanoke is a member of the Southern Professional Hockey League, a 10-team organization in which five teams did not end the 2019-2020 season due to the COVID-19 threat. All of the teams are back this year and have been joined



Submitted

Owner Bob McGinn

by the Vermillion (Ill.) Bobcats. Roanoke did not field a team at all this past season due to Virginia capacity regulations regarding COVID-19 which would have made it financially infeasible.

coming back this year, which is pretty exciting," sixth year Roanoke president Bob McGinn said, "and then the bonus is that we get an extra team coming in for a weekend in November.

"There was no doubt that all teams were

"I did read some posts 18 months ago that



Submitted

Head coach Dan Bremner

'the season's over, that's it, hockey's gone in Roanoke, the McGinns aren't going to bring it back. People just don't know the McGinns. I'm sorry. We absolutely love it. We ain't going anywhere.'" (All three of Bob McGinn's sons have or are still playing in the National Hockey League.)

The decision not to play in 2020-21 was not made lightly.

"I don't know how many conversations me and Bob had back and forth," Gray said. "I think I speak for the McGinn family, as well, in that we're not here for the next year; we're here for 10, 15, 25 years."

Returnees include head coach Dan Bremner, who is in his fourth year, counting a season that was under way when he took over.

"To be able to have a captain come back and then to have a bunch of guys who have worn the sweater for the coach we're having come back, it's a nice start anyway," Gray said.

"Last summer, we spent the whole year planning for 20-percent capacity, 30-percent

capacity. We had seventeen different contingency plans.

"As of right now, we believe that it will be business as usual. If something happens and we have to react, we're already ready to do that."

Season-ticket packages will run as low at \$90. "The really cool thing about it is, with those packages, you get your own account executive—a ticket concierge we kind of call them—and they take care of everything for you," Gray said. "No box office, no box-office lines, no Internet fees, none of that stuff."

And, for the present time, little or no COVID.

"Every day, we move closer and closer to having another game in Roanoke," Gray said in a September 16 interview. "I believe we have 20 guys signed to tryout agreements to come to our training camp.

"We've got a good mix of veteran guys who have been here before and some new blood with some young guys who, hopefully, might make a big splash in their pro debuts."



Diesel



Travis Armstrong

The full roster should be released around October 1.

Because they haven't officially made our team yet, I don't believe that will be updated until the final roster," Gray said.

Travis Armstrong, the team captain last

season, was the first pick when the Railyard Dawgs were formed six years ago and was the team's captain last year.

Also back is Jeff Jones, most recently the alternate captain. Jones is a shifty winger and Armstrong is a big-bodied defenseman.




Mickey Gray

Submitted

"We're just excited to get back and going," Gray said. "It's been too long since we've had a game."

While Gray's title is president, Bremner, who lives in Roanoke year-around, handles player personnel and is more of a general manager. "I oversee hockey and I oversee Dan," Gray

said, "but I'm not involved in the ins and out of player personnel. To come off 18 months of no hockey, you kind of feel like an expansion team starting all over again." The regular season starts after a short training camp in mid-October at the Berglund Center – 601 days from the last time a puck was dropped at center ice. 



A LITTLE INSIGHT

By Bruce C. Bryan

Executive Summary:
*A budget is a plan.
 That's all it should be.*

Bruce C. Bryan is the president of 5Points Creative, an award-winning advertising and marketing agency in Roanoke. Contact him at bruce@5PointsCreative.com

Budgeting⁴2022

Let's be honest: at the start of 2020 people were not calculating how to incorporate the adjustment that would come from a worldwide pandemic. No matter what type of industry in which you operate, there were far-reaching ramifications, and everyone had to adjust. The budget situates you for success, growth, and should allow you to figure the best way to operate. It isn't carved into rock, though and thinking otherwise is an immature perspective.

Obviously, many companies have to report to shareholders. That means you must rely on a budget to show profit, exercise planning skills, and demonstrate you have a plan of addressing the next year (or quarter, or month).


Before I started this company, I was in media sales management for nearly 20 years and prospects would use their budget as a defensive weapon. "Sorry Bruce, that isn't in the budget this year." Inside my various television stations, it was an offensive weapon. "Bruce, we need to see you generate a 9% increase so we can spend an extra \$200,000 on the latest piece of TV technology."

Regardless of how it was used, I would routinely hear from prospects (and then clients) things like, "well we don't have an actual budget." Companies which employ a budget are a step ahead and it's a wise call – it allows you to delegate control to department heads, know where you are going, and demonstrate an ability to set a goal. Those are important benefits.

Apply this Concept² Help Your Business

Here's the thing about a budget – you'd better be prepared to adjust and adapt.

The best ideas don't always come to you in October for the following year. Have a plan but be ready to adjust if a great idea comes in March and you think it will help you. If there is one thing I've learned as an entrepreneur over the last dozen years, it's that you have to be ready when the right idea, person, or client comes along. Don't make the mistake of using your budget as a shield – or as a crutch. Instead, be prepared.

The budget you set this month for next year is a tool. Use it wisely, but don't use it exclusively. 

“Be prepared to adjust and adapt.”

I'M OUTRAGED!!!!

(Wait ... am I?)

Down one path, social media can be a wonderful way to connect with friends, family, and clientele. A place to stay in touch, share life moments, and as a business be able to interact on a personal level with current and future customers.

The other path? Yikes. Remember in "Beauty and the Beast" when the Dad looked down one path in the forest and the weather was beautiful, the birds were singing, and the colors were glorious? Then the other path looked like darkness, death, and destruction? Yeah ... that's what we're dealing with here.

Side note: WHY DID HE CHOSE THE SCARY PATH??? The other path was lovely! Wanna know why? If we make the jump and compare this to social media, it's because he was trained to take the dark path.

Researchers at Yale recently measured expressions of "moral outrage" on social media (specifically Twitter) and found out something very interesting ... the algorithms and engagement metrics encouraged people to continue their outrage. You see this all the time on Facebook as well where someone expresses their outrage, and then basks in the glory of all the likes and comments that they get from their friends and followers. So guess what? That trains their brains to crave that attention and do it even more!

Feel free to also throw in a recent NYU study that showed that misinformation on Facebook gets SIX TIMES as much attention as actual facts. Six times! So basically now we have a situation where people are being spoon fed misinformation, and then their brains eat it right up with a dash of "moral outrage" to further complicate everything.

So what, as a business owner, do you do about it? Nothing.

That's right. NOTHING! Remember that sunshine-filled path from "Beauty and the Beast?" Go down that one instead!

What I mean specifically when it comes to operating a business on social media, is to stay true to the identity and voice of your brand. Resist the temptation to get pulled into things that stray away from it. Instead, focus on creating the best possible experience you can for your customers.

I tell my clients all the time ... stop caring about how many likes and comments ANY post gets, and instead care about how that post speaks for your brand and how it appeals to your customer. You don't make money off Instagram likes, you make money by selling your product or services to your target audience. Don't get tricked into pointing your arrow away from that target! 📌



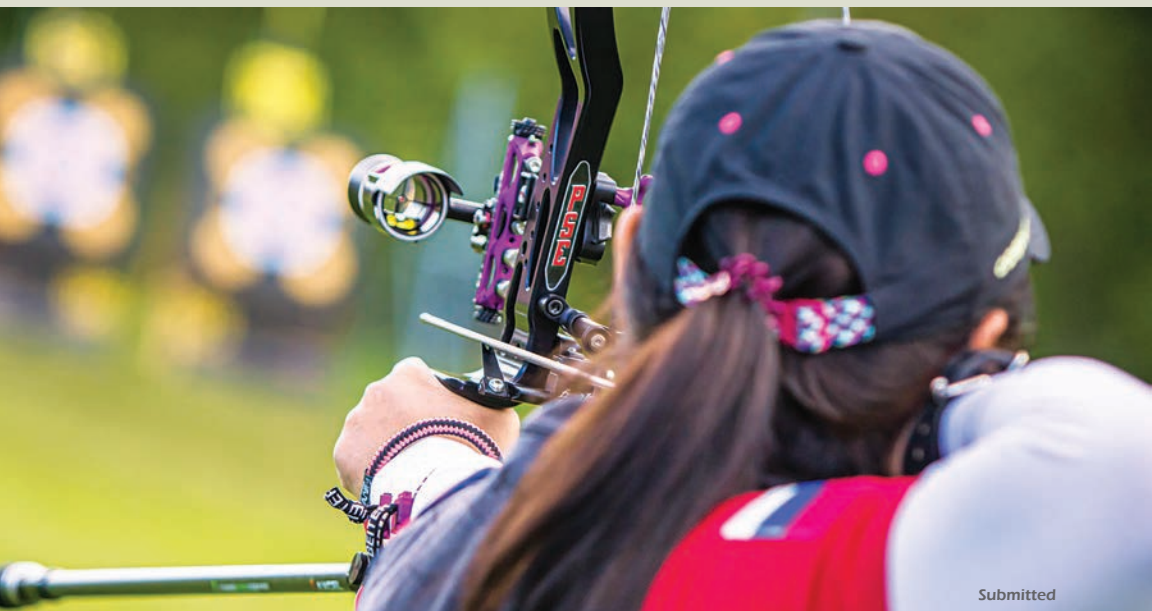
TECH WHISPERER

By Zack Jackson

Executive Summary:

*"As a business owner,
I love navigating the
minefield of social
media outrage!" ...
said no one ever.*

*Zack Jackson is
co-founder of The JPG
Agency small business
creative firm. Reach him at
zack@thejpgagency.com.*



AN OLYMPIC EFFORT

By Dan Smith

An archery manufacturing company in Madison Heights figuratively stood on a lot of medal stands at the recent Olympic games in Tokyo.

The phone has been ringing a lot at TruBall/AXCEL Archery near Lynchburg since the Summer Olympic Games finished in early August. That is because the 36-year-old, 110-employee company in Madison Heights was at center stage in the archery competitions.

This is not new for AXCEL. The individual overall male gold medal winner in the last three Olympics has used its sites and stabilizer bars. "We make everything here in our factory," says Benjamin Summers, the 45-year-old who runs the company his father, Greg, founded with his brother, Dan, as Summers and Sons. It began as a machine shop. Today, Greg and his wife, Margaret, each owns 50 percent of the business which is housed in three buildings containing 40,000 square feet.

Dan broke away some years to form his own company, Quality Archery Designs. Greg, "who is past retirement age, comes to work every day and designs new products," says Ben "He is a mechanical genius and is the biggest fan of archery in the world." The machine shop portion of the business

remains brisk, and its clients include some of the biggest manufacturers in Central Virginia, says Ben Summers. But it is the move to archery equipment that has given S&S its new name and its international reputation. "It is about 90 percent of what we do," says Ben Summers. He adds that TruBall/AXCEL is one of just two companies in the world doing what it does and the other is in Japan. He travels the world drumming up business.

This past Olympics speaks of the company's success worldwide, since people standing on the medal podiums represented Korea, Italy, Germany, Russia, Mexico, Turkey and the Netherlands. In total, says Ben Summers, "46 of 64 Olympic men used something we make on their bows and 33 of 64 women across all teams used our products." TruBall/AXCEL's many clients have also included a flock of American men and women champions.

Their products are all made in the U.S. and use natural materials (carbon and flax), more than 95 percent of which is recycled, Ben Summers says. The bar and sites are "known



Submitted

for being extremely precise," says Ben Summers and he emphasizes that "we make everything here."


The company truly represents the Summers family, since sister Kelly Reyes and brother Brian Summers also work in the plant. Kelly manages the office and scheduling, and Brian manages finances. Both Ben and Brian have MBA degrees from Lynchburg University. Ben is a former chairman of the archery trade association that includes 400 manufacturers and 1,200 retailers.

The Summers family is a faithful environmental protector and, says Ben, "We do everything we can to be environmentally friendly. Our

customers are hunters, and we want to make sure wildlife has a good place to live."

Ben is a talented archer and coaches the Liberty University archery team.

Ben estimates that Truball/AXCEL has invested more than \$3 million in sponsorships of athletes and teams in archery and that the investment has been hugely responsible for its international reputation for quality.

The company, he says, "just bought a \$650,000 machine and we need two or three more. We're trying to hire people; we need a lot of people." But he doesn't want to grow too fast. Regardless of what the market is telling him. 



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YOU'RE FIRED!


I walked away with my head down, I felt ashamed, not good enough. Even though I was good enough, my fear had taken over. "Wait" I told myself. "I am positive and great things will happen for me" and they did. One door closes on the house you sell and the other one opens on the one you buy. I was fired because we did not get along well, I am a likeable guy, but everyone now and then we just do not jive with the people we are around, and I was 23 years old!

But what about your realtor? It is important you get along with them. Would you fire your realtor? Or Better yet, would your realtor fire you? The answer is yes to both.

As your realtor it's almost like having a bodyguard for you and your home. Your realtor is working in your best interest. Replying in a timely manner, making sure your offer whether selling or buying is working in your favor. Listing your home is a big deal, and some realtors fall short taking the right actions with marketing, asking the right questions, and communication skills. If your realtor does not communicate well or meet your needs, you can fire him or her at any time. It's that simple.

Your realtor can fire you as well! Why would they fire you? Maybe you are not realistic when it comes to the finances of the house. You may think it's worth more than it is, you may not agree to do repairs that really need to be done, you may not communicate well, or be so emotionally involved you are rude or controlling.

I am an open-minded person. It is unrealistic for me to think everyone will like me. Even though I want them too. That is why I suggest you sit down with your realtor and see if you are a good fit for each other. See if your personalities mesh. I am very outgoing on social media, goofy, like to have fun, but very serious and take helping you sell and find your home personally. Check out your realtor's social media skills (do your own little background check). Most importantly, meet with them face to face, to see their true emotion, and validate your relationship to make sure you are a good fit for each other. Ask for a few referrals they've worked with.

The last thing you want to do or hear is "You're Fired." 

REAL ESTATE MATTERS

By Frazier Hughes

Executive Summary:
Check out your realtor's social media skills – but meet them face to face.

Frazier Hughes is with Keller Williams Realty. Reach him at frazierhughes@gmail.com

“It is unrealistic for me to think everyone will like me. Even though I want them to.”

My favorite place to go

Narrated and shared as a young lady’s perspective, there’s a video at centerinthesquare.org you ought to check out. “Abby” walks us through why she likes downtown Roanoke’s Center in the Square. She’s pretty convincing. If you’ve walked through a lot of small town and mid-size town downtowns throughout the U.S., no doubt you’ve experienced a few visitor centers and city-sponsored museums and touristy draws. Roanoke’s is at a surprising and unexpected level. It’s worth the time! Kids “of all ages” as they say, will find something worthwhile here.


Today’s Center in the Square includes five buildings and 12 organizations. We can’t cover it all in this short space, so here’s an abbreviated bullet list:

The original five orgs >

- The Arts Council
- The Art Museum
- Mill Mountain Theatre
- The History Museum
- The Science Museum

More >

- Aquariums
- Butterfly Garden
- Rooftop Venue
- Koi Pond
- African American Culture
- Kids Square
- Pinball Museum
- Starcade

And this list doesn’t even include the events. For example, this month (October) features Blue Ridge Nightmares haunted attraction—Roanoke’s newest, ultimate terrifying experience with over 40,000 square feet of fear! Abby says Center in the Square is her “favorite place to go.” Go ahead... you can check out her endorsement. It’s right smack downtown: the center—in the square. 

GOOD WORK

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
Roanoke’s Center in the Square is an attractive composite of science, art, education, and entertainment—a gem for visitors and locals alike.



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Gene Marrano

Retail arm of longtime furniture maker opens retail showroom >

An 87-year-old commercial furniture manufacturer based in Southeast Roanoke branched out last year by launching a retail division, **TXTUR**. Today they cut the ribbon on a showroom on 9th Street Southeast in the Industrial Park that was once home to American Viscose. The parent company **Chervan**, also based in Southeast Roanoke, manufactures and sells furniture to banks, hotels and other public spaces, and takes back used pieces to “upcycle” them. It employs close to 200 people. Over the past year TXTUR had been selling its retail line at Black Dog Salvage. **Greg Terrill** is the president: “building a brand from scratch takes some time. I think our message is interesting and timely. When COVID hit we said it was time to move this plan up.” A PPE loan helped that process along: “we wanted to keep our staff busy. That’s when we made the plunge. Lately we feel like we’re really picking up momentum.”

The showroom will have weekend hours according to Terrill. The 9th street industrial park is slowly being transformed; it now features a Carilion sports fitness and rehab clinic, a gourmet coffee shop, Southwest Virginia Ballet, artist studios, plans for apartments and now TXTUR. “I remember when this was nothing except the warehouses,” Roanoke City Councilman **Joe Cobb** said at the ribbon cutting, “this is part of the renaissance of Southeast.”



Some of the line is from the Chervan commercial catalog, modified for the residential market. Much of TXTUR’s furniture is hand crafted, often featuring foam and recycled materials that others consider to be waste. TXTUR will also take back old pieces and turn them into new ones.

Alexander Monroe is the director of product development – just graduated from the Industrial Design program at Virginia Tech. He spent time as an intern designing products for TXTUR. In a switch, the Southern California native who came east for college decided to stay here after graduating. (One of his classes was with **Elham Morshedzadeh**, an Assistant Professor of Industrial Design featured here last month.) “I manage everything from initial concept to production runs. It’s a really cool job,” says Monroe.



FRONT on Front Porch >

Like so many festivals had to do, **Front Porch Fest 12** returned this summer after a COVID-hiatus last year. The four-day early September event in the back hills of Patrick County on Spirithaven Farm in Stuart, featured an impressive musical lineup of 32 bands/performers that ranged from folk and international to bluegrass, rock, reggae, and jazz-infusion-prog.

FPF director/organizer **Sarah Wray** (pictured right) said she and the staff were so happy for the return of the highly anticipated festival. **Chris Prutting** writes "we have dreamed of this weekend with you" in the program. "This year has caused us to flex our creativity, to face new directions about safety, to think in innovative ways; but even with all the challenges as our team works to keep everyone safer, we are so grateful to be here with you, to share our old memories and make new. Sit back and take it all in!"

Melissa, from Pennsylvania, called Front Porch Fest 12 a "beautiful slice of heaven on earth," while Jim from Staunton said "this was our first year; only took a few minutes to fall in love. We will be back."

Front Porch Fest included food and merchandise vendors, arts and wellness activities, and was sponsored by Patrick County, Virginia. It's a One Family Productions.





ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:

Many economists predict explosive growth in wind and solar energy; that includes jobs, right?

Windy, sunny forecast?

In my favorite Aesop fable, the North Wind and the Sun are debating who is more powerful. They spy a man walking below, so the Sun pipes up, “Let us agree, that he is the stronger who can strip that traveler of his cloak.”

Stupid wind. He agrees to the challenge. We all know how this one ends, the harder the wind blows, the tighter the man grips his coat. The sun merely has to shine a little more, and the man sheds his coat.

Apparently, both the wind and sun are strong—or at least promising—when it comes to our future job market. According to a lot of the sources that track that sort of thing.

Online content curator, Digg, shares the top “fastest growing occupation” as... wind turbine service technician. Jump over number two (nurse practitioner), and the third occupation revealed is... solar photovoltaic installer.

Okay, I’m going to scratch my head a bit now. And not because the wind blew it or the sun heated it up. I’m fine with these positions growing at sonic speed (68.2% and 52.1% respectively on this chart). Wind and solar are certainly more eco-friendly than fossil fuels. But the specificity here could be a bit misleading if some eighth-grader out there is attempting to predict the best career-track.

Ten years from now, maybe there will be thousands of jobs in the wind and solar energy sector. But it’s more likely any major shift in employment opportunities will be in the broader field of energy; and that may include wind and solar. How pervasive will wind and solar farms be? On land, offshore? More importantly, how many people will work those farms? Design, production, and installation require some minds and hands. Distribution and transmission need support. Maintenance also requires some labor. Our energy grids are going to require skilled labor and will likely involve growth; but if I were betting on the best skill, competency, and experience to build upon, I’d keep my focus on the science and technology, engineering and chemistry behind these projected advancements. Not so much the *modus operandi*.

We just watched an amazing (or disgusting, depending on your perspective) installation of a 42-inch pipe laid 300 miles over mountains and valleys, roads and streams, in our part of the state, that started in 2018 and may or may not be finished by the end of 2022. Question: Do you know anybody who worked on the MVP project?

For more than six years now, we keep looking at North Mountain in Botetourt County for the fourteen 612-foot high wind turbines that will provide 75 megawatts and be Virginia’s fist onshore wind farm. Question: Do you know anybody building or servicing the wind mills? How about the largest solar panel installations we’ve reported on?

Right now, the wind and solar business is small and relatively inconsequential in our neck of the woods. That may change and may present exciting opportunities. But also right now, there are energy challenges that need attention. And there are industry sectors that are in dire straits that need solutions now. And tomorrow.

Our traveler is likely to be wearing a new high tech fabric that cools and warms and protects in the sun, wind, rain, fog, ice, and snow.

The wind and sun can just keep arguing. 


Family matters

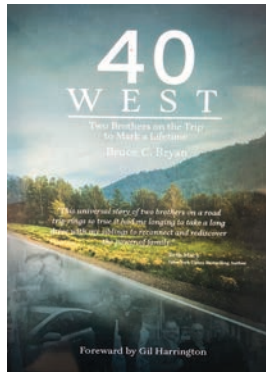
The founder of 5 Points Creative after several decades in TV ad sales, Bruce C. Bryan, who also writes the *A Little Insight* column for Valley Business FRONT, has released a memoir based on a trip he and his brother took by car from the East Coast to Arizona in 2019. That was for a memorial service held for their father Hugh, for his friends who couldn't make it back east for the service in Delaware. "He drove back and forth across the country until he was 89 years old – by himself," recalls Bryan, "and he would visit friends and family and meander along the way."

Bruce and his brother (also Hugh, but nicknamed "Ban," a nod to him being conceived in Japan) decided to take that same journey in their Dad's Toyota Prius (250,000 miles on the odometer) to Arizona. "I used that trip as a springboard for a bunch of other stories, through my dad's life and our relationship [and] a whole bunch of other interesting issues."

40 West (available online) is the type of memoir one might read and say, "I can do that," but Bruce C. Bryan actually *did it*. The Foreword is by Gil Harrington, a family friend and the founder of Help Save the Next Girl after her daughter Morgan was murdered. There's a glowing review from best selling author Beth Macy right on the front cover. It's a good, familiar read.

Another one gone: I wrote previously about how my daughter Ava left Roanoke several years after graduating from JMU and headed to Tampa with her health admin. degree and a job landed via Zoom. Now, her brother is following. Zack went through five years of college, two at Virginia Western and three at Virginia Tech to earn his Aerospace Engineering degree. He too is headed to Tampa for a good-paying job in that industry. I'm so proud of all the hard work he put in after returning to school in his mid-20's.

Now they are all gone from the area. Lots of parents in the region have lost kids to the siren song of the big city. On my visits there Tampa has struck me as young and diverse. Despite all the Florida jokes on the late-night TV talk shows, I get it. Some of them come back eventually, to be closer to family or because they are burned out by all the traffic, noise and the higher cost of living. The business community here needs to lure those young people, who have had enough of Northern Virginia, Silicon Valley or New York. Good-paying career tracks and enough amenities to attract them are a big part of the mix. But is it enough to slow the brain drain? 



THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary:
A family memoir - and saying goodbye to yet another talented young person.

FRONTReviews >

Readers and patrons of the business journal are invited to submit reviews (along with an optional photo) to news@vbFRONT.com. We've expanded our reviews to include books, music, art, performances, culinary—with a preference for local productions. Reviews must be original, include the author's name and location, and should be brief, under 350 words.

Colorful cast

Since we like to review the more current books for our readers, I originally picked up *The Substitution Order* at Roanoke's Book No Further bookstore. But both bookshop proprietor Doloris Vest and I confessed to each other that sometimes, we do, in fact, judge a book by its cover. Therefore, I put the newer one down and grabbed Martin Clark's *The Many Aspects of Mobile Home Living* (Vintage Books; 2000). How could I not check this one out (of his five legal fiction novels)? Well, there is another one entitled *Plain Heathen Mischief*. But this one—his first published novel—had that trashy redneck appeal I had to investigate further. For a long time now, I had wanted to read one of these heralded books from our own circuit court judge in Patrick County (Stuart, VA).

I definitely want to check out one of Martin's more recent works. This first novel introduces some good, solid character development. I'm attuned to writing that fails to distinguish between characters, either from overemphasizing traits to force a model (on one extreme) to the even worse sin of sharing the voice (the other extreme, where everyone talks the same). That's how *Mobile Home* drew me in—the characters, well drawn. The relationships, provocative. The plot line was sufficient, but the experiences got a little clunky in the last third. Following the money was strong enough on its own, but by the time we're wrapping it up, we've been introduced to

““
Sometimes,
we do, in fact,
judge a book
by its cover.

jewels, drugs, historical letters, cars, lotteries, and a supernatural talisman. Yes, when I list them out like that it seems colorful and attractive, right? Appropriate for a serial (television!); but here it was a bit interfering.

It's a fun read. I'm running down now to pick up another one. I won't let the cover or title persuade me.

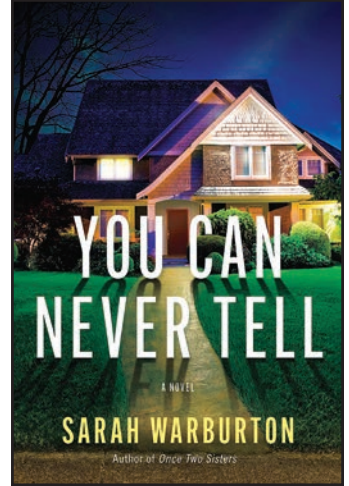
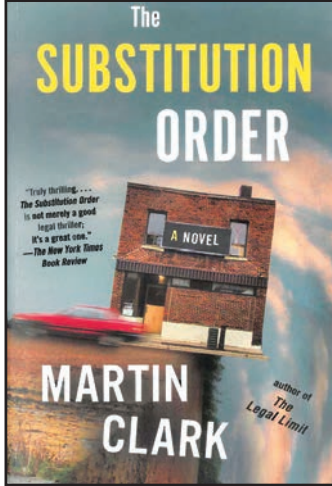
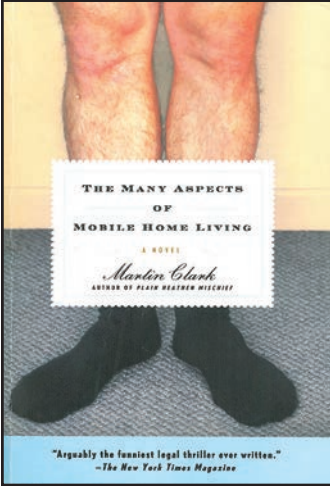
—Tom Field

Keep your nose clean

This is a first. We're reviewing two books by the same author on one review section; his first release (in 2000) and this most recent one. By pure serendipity, I happened upon *The Substitution Order* (Vintage Books; 2019) when Martin Clark poured me a beer at the VIP tent at Patrick County's Front Porch Fest—right after I had just finished reading the other book. Clark was a volunteer, and he had a box of his newest creation.

How fortunate.

This novel has stickiness. First, is the ever present moral: being good 99.9 percent is not good enough. Particularly with regard to fidelity. One night of coke and strippers... well, it can cost you. A lot. (I'm not spoiling and saying that's what happened in this story; just take it under advisement.) Second, if you're a local, there is a plethora of names and places



you're going to enjoy like a hippie at a music festival, a high-roller at the Greenbrier, a partier at The Coffee Pot, or just a dog-loving farm-bound individualist who appreciates a nice pond and rolling hills in Southwest Virginia. Every other page has references to make you shoot your hand up, waving, and shouting, "hey, I know that place, that person... been there, done that!" (Maybe not the strippers and coke for all of us.)

Like his first novel, the legal complexities require some attention; but you grasp the setup and you are adequately warned how ugly things can turn on you when you slip up. Has a bit of "Shawshank Redemption" movie feel to it.

—Tom Field

Spine tingling tale

"Did I really know anyone?"

Protagonist Kacy Tremaine asks herself this question, having already been framed for embezzlement by her best friend, and now failing to recognize her neighbors as serial killers and even questioning her husband's trustworthiness. *You Can Never Tell*, Sarah Warburton's new psychological thriller, entertains while delving deep into these issues of family, friendship, and trust.

Unlike most thrillers, the reader knows the identity of the killers from the beginning;

it is a testament to Warburton's skill that she can continue to pull the reader along with a taut, tense narrative. She employs another unusual vehicle, interspersing among the chapters the text of a "true crime" podcast about the murders. This never takes the reader out of the story, but rather serves to give the reader a break from the suspense as well as provide plot particulars in a witty, concise format.

The idea that "you can never tell" who people really are was sparked in the author by the Moors murders in Manchester, England. In both real life and this novel, neighbors walk in on neighbors in the midst of committing murder. Warburton draws on her personal experience of living in a Houston suburb to give the novel an appealing southern flair. Her writing has a literary quality to it, with evocative word choices and descriptive details.

This sophomore novel proves that Warburton, of Blacksburg, has staying power in the genre.

(Reviewer's note: The book was launched at Book No Further in Roanoke in August, and Warburton has an author event at the new Blacksburg Books on October 7.)

—Jennifer Poff Cooper

The reviewers: **Tom Field** is publisher of FRONT; **Jennifer Poff Cooper** is senior correspondent for FRONT.

““ I used a knife and fork because I'm a gringa.

““ Then she remembered Phage Therapy.

A taste of Honduras

El Rincon Catracho Restaurant is what I consider to be a hidden gem in Roanoke. They offer authentic dishes from Honduras, a country in Central America. The cost of a meal ranges between \$8 and \$16 – a steal for the quality of food and authenticity they offer.

For an appetizer I enjoyed a dish called “Platano Relleno.” This dish includes plantains served with refried beans, cheese, and a Honduran cream. Highly recommend!

One of my favorite entrees are their “Pupusas,” a traditional Honduran dish (pictured). Pupusas are typically served with a tomato sauce and “curtido,” a pickled cabbage relish and tend to be eaten by hand, but I used a knife and fork because I’m a gringa.

Their tacos de carne asada (steak tacos, pictured) and sopa de res (beef soup) are made with fresh ingredients and very tasty! These dishes keep me coming back for more!

El Catracho has been open for a couple of years now and are similar to a mom-and-pop shop. They are working on obtaining their ABC license so they can serve alcohol. Until then, you can expect reasonably priced authentic Honduran food – a great find, if you ask me. I’ll

definitely be back to pair their delicious entrees with a margarita!

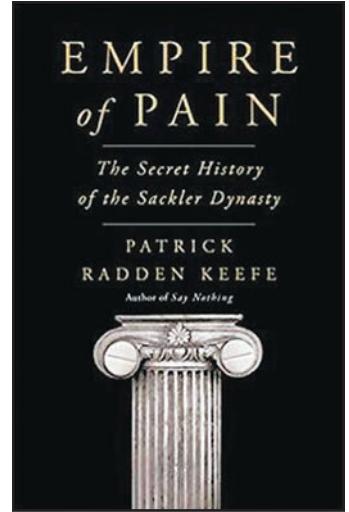
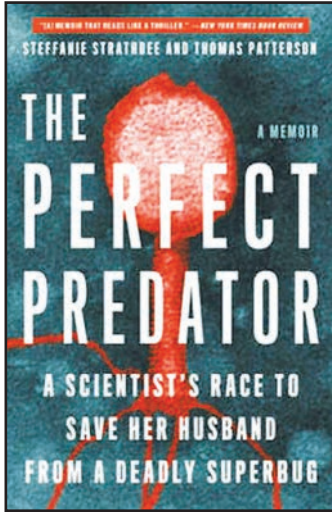
El Catracho is located south of Preston Park on Williamson Road. You can place a to-go order or request delivery by visiting www.rinconcatrachorestaurant.com or by calling 540-339-9605

—Shannon Dominguez

Love and determination

Recommended to me by Salem-based Congressman Morgan Griffith, *The Perfect Predator: A Scientist's Race To Save Her Husband From A Deadly Superbug* (Hachette Books, 2019 with a 2020 paperback epilogue after COVID struck) is a compelling page-turner work of nonfiction wherein epidemiologist Steffanie Strathdee (also an associate Dean at UC-San Diego) takes the lead in finding a cure for her husband Thomas Patterson (an evolutionary biologist and experimental psychologist) after he is stricken during a trip to Egypt with what turns out to be what attending physicians call “the worst bacteria” on the planet – *Acinetobacter Baumannii*, which starts shutting down his organs.

Nothing seems to be working, including antibiotics that Strathdee also warns are being overprescribed worldwide – and which bacteria have learned to get around. Then she remembers Phage Therapy –



using specific viruses to attack bacteria. Phage isn't new, almost a century old but had been pushed to the back burner. With the help of academic and US Military labs, they scour the planet looking for viruses that can attack her husband's condition – including in fecal matter at sewage plant. Finally, the stars align, and the phage therapy cures Patterson – whose writing contributions to this book revolve around the vivid hallucinations he encountered while very, very sick and indeed dying. It's a great read and Strathdee ends by writing that she hopes to see phage therapy research put on the front burner again, with some bacteria-resistant antibiotics no longer the "Wonder Drug" they once were.

—Gene Marrano

Blood on their hands

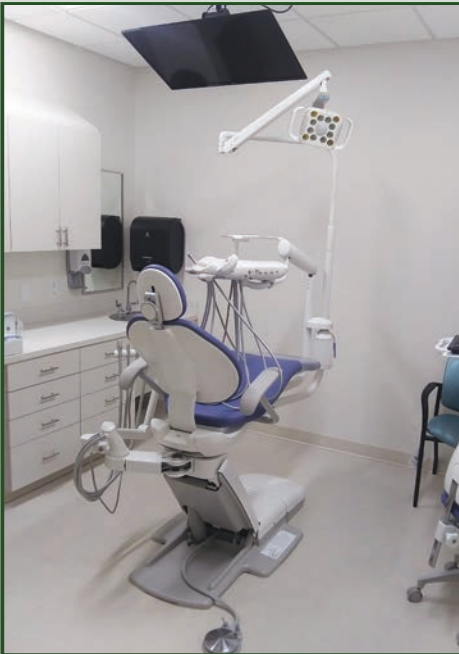
With a possible four-billion-dollar settlement that some say still lets the Sackler Family off too lightly and without an admission of guilt – a family specialty – now pending, *Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty* (Doubleday, 2021) is a timely and riveting read from Patrick Radden Keefe. Three generations of the Sackler family originating with three brothers finally decided on how the company they acquired – Purdue Pharma – was going to make the family and all its scions super-rich. It was opioids, OxyContin specifically, which starting in the mid-go's

the company marketed as The End To Pain.

But high-pressure sales tactics by its outside sales staff and perks that lured doctors to overprescribe OxyContin led many patients to get hooked (leading also to pill mills). After years of denial a reformulation that made it harder to cut up an Oxy pill and snort or inject it for a better high led to heroin addiction. It was on the street and cheaper in many cases. Purdue Pharma wasn't the only opioid manufacturer pushing the drug – only the most visible. The Sacklers polished their image by donating millions to museums and universities, which put their name on buildings all over the country and overseas (those have now come down). After two decades of avoiding culpability the Sackler family has now agreed to give up control of Purdue Pharma – too late for the hundreds of thousands that have succumbed to opioid overdoses – and to pay billions that will be used for substance abuse treatment programs. Too little, too late some critics of the proposed settlement say, while many Attorneys General around the country say it may be the best deal they can get. *Empire of Pain* will make some readers mad; others will be frustrated. Hopefully, it's a cautionary tale.

—Gene Marrano

The reviewers: **Shannon Dominguez** is Director of Operations for Building Beloved Communities and a Valley Business FRONT columnist; Gene Marrano is editor of FRONT.



Carilion Children's opens at Tanglewood >

Carilion Children's Tanglewood Center - in the former JC Penney location – is a consolidation of Carilion's pediatric outpatient services. The 30 million-dollar, 150,000 square foot (two-story) makeover is now complete. **Dr. Donald Kees** is the interim chair of the Carilion Pediatrics Department: "a lot of patients who come there may have multiple specialists they need to see. One of our general pediatric offices [including pediatric dentistry] will be located there [as well]. A lot of services under one roof. It's been a long time coming." The decor is stylish and sort of playful in places, in part to make it more comfortable for the children who will come there for treatment. "For a long time, we've had an identity crisis, people would say 'what's Carilion Children's?'" adds Kees, "well now it's very visible."



LewisGale celebrates 50 years in Montgomery County >

LewisGale Hospital Montgomery marked its 50th anniversary last month with an event at the hospital for staff and community leaders. "This hospital would be nothing without our community," said **Alan Fabian**, chief executive officer, "and the best is yet to come." Town of Blacksburg Chief of Police **Anthony Wilson** said that LewisGale Montgomery, "would always be our Level 1 Trauma Center. You are truly heroes."

During the event, Town of Blacksburg Mayor Leslie Hager-Smith issued a formal proclamation in honor of the 50 years of service LewisGale Hospital Montgomery has provided to the community. **Mayor Hager-Smith** thanked LewisGale Hospital Montgomery for its work to meet the increased demand for healthcare by expanding its services and continuing to support those services and programs that have proven to work for the betterment of the community. The celebration event also included regional first responders presenting gift baskets to hospital staff, the planting of a 50th anniversary time capsule, a ribbon cutting in partnership with the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, and the unveiling of an anniversary tribute wall inside the hospital.

Rocky Mount sports new image as “Something Else” >

The **Town of Rocky Mount** has unveiled a new branding campaign created to highlight its authentic sense of community, and to share the message that while some may think they know Rocky Mount, the town is “Something Else.” The campaign, created by Roanoke-based agency Access and spearheaded by the Rocky Mount

Economic Development Authority, was developed following months of in-depth community research. The results of that research unveiled a strong shared appreciation for the Town’s hometown feel, the talents of the community and creative entrepreneurship.

“Rocky Mount is truly the heart of Franklin County,” added **Robert Wood**, town manager. “It’s the heart of this region of Virginia, and we’re excited to unveil this campaign to show others that while they may think they know us, we’re something else.” A secondary message that Rocky Mount is also “A Great Place to Grow” is incorporated within the campaign creative as well.



Caroline Moore

New wellness shop >

A gift shop and wellness store in the Grandin Area - **The Healing Stone Wellness Boutique** (formally BHWD - Spiritually Wellness Store) – has opened at 1902 Memorial Ave. The Healing Stone Wellness Boutique offers services and products that for beauty as well as spiritual and physical health. **Katrina Robinson**, owner of The Healing Stone Wellness Boutique, was a 2021 participant of the Gauntlet Business Program and Competition. “The Gauntlet definitely helped me get focused on the business side of things,” said Robinson at the ribbon cutting. “It got me focused on marketing and keeping back of inventory and how my money is spent – how to grow and scale my business.” Marc Nelson, the director of economic development for Roanoke city, is eager to have more small businesses start to open again after a year-plus of pandemic slowdowns. “We’re starting to see that emerge, these small businesses are starting to come out and put their plans out there for the world to see. It’s a great thing.”





Northam on board with vax mandates >

Count Virginia Democratic Governor **Ralph Northam** as being in step with President Biden's new mandate to require the COVID-19 vaccine for federal workers and businesses with 100 or more employees: "I'm very supportive of [those] policies to mandate vaccines for businesses that have over 100 employees. In Virginia we have over 100,000 state employees and we mandated that they receive the vaccination."

Northam made that remark last month as he visited a **LEAP Mobile Food market** site in Southeast Roanoke City, during "Hunger Action Month." Southeast Roanoke City is a "food desert" according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Northam commended the LEAP Mobile Market that brings affordable fresh local fruit and vegetables to those who may not otherwise have access. "To see everybody out here being part of the solution – everybody needs to have access to good nutrition. I encourage everybody to take advantage." LEAP customers can use their SNAP benefits - formerly food stamps - to purchase produce from the Mobile Market, which makes stops through Roanoke City during the growing season.

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Two Wasena businesses join forces for a third retail shop >

The owners of two Wasena neighborhood businesses in Roanoke are entering into a new venture together at location less than a stone's throw from either of their current eateries. Bloom owner **Nathan Sloan** believes Crème Fresh will be the first place in Roanoke to offer exclusively dairy-free ice cream, which appeals to the lactose-intolerant. "The space lends itself well for a concept like that, kind of grab and go, neighborhood friendly, a community-oriented product like ice cream," says Bloom. "Crème Fresh" is opening in the former "Blacksnake Meadery" location across the street from Bloom and next door to RND Coffee - convenient for Sloan's co-owner **Quincy Randolph**, who owns RND: "most ice cream does have dairy; having a consistent reliable place to get plant-based 'scoops' we're going to fill a hole we thought was needed."



Live music rolls on outdoors >

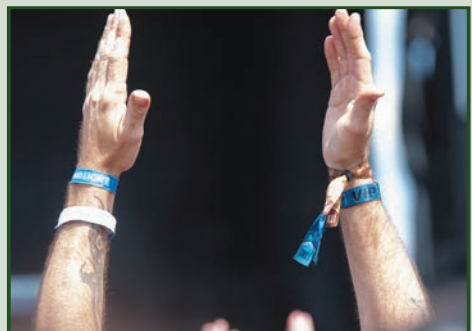
Collective Soul was just one of the live, outdoor music events that have returned to **Elmwood Park** this year. The veteran rockers hit the stage in mid-September. Billy Idol of "White Wedding" fame was there a few weeks later.



Roanoke County business news >

Luttrell Staffing Group recently opened at 6342 Peters Creek Road, Suite A in the Hollins area of Roanoke County. Luttrell Staffing Group is an industrial, labor, and administrative staffing agency that helps businesses with emergency hires, payroll, assessments and training, and more workforce assistance. **KlariVis**, a Roanoke County business that develops banking technology, was a finalist at the RAMP (Regional Accelerator and Mentorship Program) 2021 TechNite. The **Roanoke Valley Association of REALTORS** was recently recognized by the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors for their 100th anniversary. What began with 25 firms is now comprised of more than 140 firms representing more than 1,480 REALTORS® members and more than 285 Affiliate company members. The **Bank of Botetourt** also cut the ribbon at its new branch in Vinton on South Pollard Street.

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Blue Ridge Rock Festival is a sellout in Danville >

The four-day long **Blue Ridge Rock Festival** in mid-September wasn't for the faint of heart, with bands like Megadeth, Rod Zombie, Five Finger Death Punch, Papa Roach and ... well you get the idea. But it was a complete sellout and veteran Roanoke photographer **Greg Vaughn** was there to take it all in. "The Blue Ridge Rock Festival was as much about healing as partying," says Vaughn, "a tapestry of musical styles, a rainbow of colors and cultures, and all divisions set aside, if only for those three days. It was what ALL of us needed." Vaughn adds that "Danville rocked the shaky reality and made us whole again. Baby steps, baby, baby steps."



Brew Do back >

Blacksburg Brew Do was held at Historic Smithfield on the Virginia Tech campus on a perfect Saturday afternoon, September 18. Last year's event was canceled due to COVID; and this year switched the venue from the wide open technology park to a charming, wooded site, creating a different vibe among the vendors and attendees. Buses transported people from large parking lots through a back trail to Smithfield, passing the massive collection of "Hokie stone" used in construction. Valley Business FRONT has been a charter media sponsor, and this year's 12th annual festival featured about 50 craft breweries, local food trucks, live music, and of course, the traditional home brewing competition.



Sidewalks of Rocky Mount >

Saturday, Sept. 25 was the perfect first weekend of Fall; and among the many great places to be out 'n about in our region, was the **Downtown Rocky Mount Sidewalk Sale**. Locally owned businesses offered everything from seasonal produce to locally sourced meats, baked and canned goods, jams and jellies, and handmade crafts.



McAuliffe tours FBRI >

The Democratic candidate for Governor - **Terry McAuliffe** - was in Roanoke last month, touring the **Fralin Biomedical Research Institute's** year-old addition with Virginia Tech President **Tim Sands**, FBRI executive director **Dr. Michael Friedlander** and other Tech officials: "its good to come back after you put the shovel in the ground ... and come back to see what they're actually doing. I've always said Virginia is the brain state. We're doing more work on brain research than any other state in the country. A lot of that is being done here at Virginia Tech." During his first term as Governor the Commonwealth chipped in about half of the 90 million dollars for the Research Institute expansion. McAuliffe also commended the FBRI for becoming a regional center for COVID test analysis during the height of the pandemic last year.



News veterans on PBS program >

Tom Field (left) and **Dan Smith** (center) joined host and Valley Business FRONT editor **Gene Marrano** for a taping of his show, *Business Matters with Gene Marrano*, which airs on Blue Ridge PBS. It should air some time this month and can also be viewed on the Blue Ridge PBS streaming YouTube channel. Field and Smith opined on covering business in the Roanoke and New River Valleys over the past 30-plus years for the Blue Ridge Business Journal and then Valley Business FRONT.



Courtesy

Honey Hole in Blue Ridge >

Tina Reed and her husband **Leonard Trout** (yes, his real name) have opened a new bait and tackle store in Blue Ridge. They held a ribbon cutting last month. The **Honey Hole Bait & Tackle Shop** is located on Blue Ridge Blvd in Botetourt County. "We are your go to catfish, striper, and crappie bait and tackle store. We specialize in live bait including minnows, worms, and night crawlers and frozen bait, [and] offer equipment and pro-staff advice." The Honey Hole will also advise patrons on the best place to fish or can arrange guided tours, adds Reed.

New digs for Freedom First >

Freedom First has purchased the Elmwood Building located at 207 Bullitt Ave SE in Roanoke's downtown historic district to serve as its future corporate headquarters. (Poe & Cronk lists the price at \$9.5 million). "Our continued growth has made it possible to purchase this terrific property where we will one day consolidate many of our business units into one location," said President and CEO **Paul Phillips** about the purchase. "One of our focus areas is providing loan capital to commercial developers who transform old buildings into community assets. So, it seems only fitting that our headquarters would be located in just such a building, with its timber framing, exposed brick, original floors and a blend of modern amenities."

Built in 1919, the Elmwood Building has been used by a hardware store, furniture warehouse, Meridium, Inc., and most recently GE Digital. Consisting of four floors and approximately 46,500 square feet, the building will continue to house GE Digital on three floors with Freedom First's administrative offices occupying the fourth floor. As more space becomes available Freedom First will move employees into those areas. Freedom First is excited to invest even more capital and economic activity into Downtown Roanoke with the relocation of the headquarters to an Enterprise Zone.



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

FINANCIAL FRONT



Van Buskirk

Freedom First Credit Union has announced the addition of **Eric Van Buskirk** as Vice President of Private Banking and Treasury Services. Van Buskirk has spent more than half a decade in banking. Before joining Freedom First, Van Buskirk specialized in relationship management and financial planning.



Warrell

ValleyStar Credit Union has announced **Mike Warrell** as its new chief executive officer

(CEO). He previously served as president and CEO of Solano First Federal Credit Union in Fairfield, California. In 2015, Warrell was awarded CEO of North America by the National Association Federal Credit Unions (NAFCU).

LEGAL FRONT



Hulle

Gentry Locke announces the addition of associate **Jessiah Hulle** to its Criminal & Government Investigations Group in Roanoke. Hulle will collaborate with clients on white-collar criminal defense matters in federal courts. Prior to joining the firm, he served as a law clerk to the Honorable Mary Grace O'Brien of the

Court of Appeals of Virginia.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Wade

5 Points Creative in Roanoke has announced the addition of **Megan Wade** as Account Lead to its team of marketing and advertising professionals. Wade brings an almost 20-year career in the communications and marketing field with experience in nonprofits, housing and real estate, financial, and healthcare industries. Her role with 5Points Creative will include key client relationships, supporting clients' business goals, develop marketing strategies, and support

their marketing efforts.

WELLNESS FRONT



Tegegnetwork

Warm Hearth Village announces that **Anik Tegegnetwork**, LPN has been chosen as the new Director of Nursing for Showalter Center, the assisted living residence at the Village. She will fill the position vacated by Amanda Cruise who was promoted within the organization. Tegegnetwork has been a member of the Showalter team since November 2006. She started as a CNA on night shift and continued for two years while attending New River Community College in the LPN program. She graduated in 2008.

Friendship, a senior

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Bishop

living and rehabilitation company, announces the appointment of **Nathaniel L. (NL) Bishop** to its Board of Directors. "We are extremely pleased to welcome NL to our Board," said President and CEO Joe Hoff. "His knowledge and experience in healthcare, coupled with the genuine respect and concern he has for the Roanoke Valley, makes him a very valuable addition to our organization." Bishop is the chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer for Carilion Clinic. He also serves as senior associate dean for diversity, inclusion and student vitality at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

Friendship has also announced the

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Eanes

appointment of **Chris Eanes** as director of dining services at Friendship Assisted Living, located on Hershberger Road. He studied restaurant management and nutrition at Virginia Western Community College and developed a passion for cooking from his grandfather and grandmother. Eanes also served as

the executive chef for the Roanoke Civic Center/Berglund Center.



Klute

Armida Klute is the new Vice President for Strategic Payment Relationships for Carilion Clinic. In this role, Klute will provide innovative, creative and influential strategic leadership in the development of system payer contracting

relationships and pricing strategies across all Carilion's markets and services. Most recently, Klute served as Executive Director-VP of Managed Care and Financial Clearance at the University of Texas's Dell Medical School.

EDUCATIONAL FRONT

Lauren Lawson, manager of bursar operations and systems, has been named university bursar. Lawson served as interim bursar since June 2020 and succeeds





Lawson

Melinda West, who recently became associate vice president and university controller. Lawson has been with Virginia Tech since 2005.



Mitchell

support its mission of human and economic growth.

NON-PROFIT FRONT



Van Buskirk

Kaitlyn Van Buskirk has been appointed as development officer at the Roanoke Higher Education Center. She will oversee fundraising initiatives.

Carl Mitchell, a triple Hokie and long-standing Virginia Tech employee, has been named Virginia Tech Transportation Institute's (VTTI) first associate director of advancement. Mitchell is charged with fostering industry and private partnerships with the institute that



Churchill

Richmond Vincent, Jr., President & CEO for Goodwill Industries® of the Valleys, has announced new board leadership. **Matthew Churchill** with Wells Fargo has assumed the Chairman of the Board position. Churchill has served on Goodwill's board since 2016, also serving on the Board of Directors for the YMCA of Virginia's Blue Ridge. He is also former President of the Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce. Churchill replaces Roanoke City

Councilman Robert Jeffrey Jr., who faces felony embezzlement charges at an upcoming court hearing.

MUNICIPAL FRONT



O'Donnell

Roanoke County Administrator **Dan O'Donnell** has announced that he will be retiring after more than 21 years of service in Roanoke County effective February 1, 2022. Said O'Donnell: "I am honored to have had the support of the Board of Supervisors and privileged to serve the citizens as their administrator. I'm now looking forward to the next phase of my life." O'Donnell has worked in public management for 35 years, serving over 21 in Roanoke County. He began as an Assistant County Administrator in 2000 and then was appointed County Administrator in January 2019

(succeeding Tom Gates.) Prior to coming to Roanoke County, he served as the administrator for counties in New York and West Virginia



Waldron

The City of Roanoke has named **Lauren H. Waldron** as its new Community Engagement Manager. In this role, she manages the functions of the Office of Community Engagement. Waldron was selected from a pool of more than 30 applicants for the position. She is a graduate of George Mason University (B.S. in Communications and Government) and earned a Certificate in Digital Media and Marketing from Duke University. Waldron comes to the City from the Society for Marketing Professional Services in Washington D.C., where she served as the Director of Marketing since 2019.

Compiled by
Gene Marrano



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Supply chain assistance

Governor Ralph Northam announced the launch of the nation's first official state-led Supply Chain Optimization Program early last month. As outlined in the International Trade Strategic Plan for Virginia, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership's new program is designed to help businesses streamline their supply chain management and boost global competitiveness. Companies accepted into the program will receive counseling, strategy development, and training resources from international trade experts to improve performance and reduce costs. "Virginia has worked hard to make businesses in the Commonwealth stronger, more resilient, and more competitive in the global marketplace," said Northam in a news release. "We're excited to implement the country's first official Supply Chain Optimization Program, which will support

thousands of businesses and boost international trade. I look forward to seeing this program's success."

RAMP welcomes sixth cohort

RAMP - the Regional Accelerator and Mentoring Program - has selected four startups based in Blacksburg and Roanoke for its sixth "Cohort." After focusing on Life Sciences for its fifth group this spring, this Fall's 13-week program features machine intelligence, drone docking stations, thermal sensing and healthcare credentialing companies hoping to "scale up." The previous cohort was virtual due to COVID and included several startups based elsewhere. These four are all closer to home - ArchiveCore, Cowden Technologies, ThermaSense and Corvus Labs, which run the gamut from healthcare credentialing software to machine intelligence, smart docking for drones

and non-invasive temperature measurement.

Dr Mary Miller is director of RAMP, located in downtown Roanoke: "these companies are regionally based. We want to keep the here and have them grow in the region. They all have touchpoints and/or brought to the region working with Carilion. We have some big anchors in our region we're just so happy to be able to work with." A 2020 federal grant has allowed RAMP to go from one cohort a year to two. With members of this RAMP cohort more advanced than most past participants ("three of them already have customers"), Miller will ask them to "check their egos at the door. We all want to be more efficient and effective. There are things of all of us can continue to learn from people that are further down the trail then we are. Doesn't that make sense?" The 13-week intensive program - hopefully in person says Miller - ends with

a Demo Day for potential investors in December.

More food options on way to Tanglewood

Chili's Grill and Bar and Popeyes, the fried chicken fast food restaurant chain, are headed to the Tanglewood Mall property in southwest Roanoke County currently being reimaged. "We are excited to welcome Chili's and Popeyes to Tanglewood. This continues the growth momentum underway and is another great story in the ongoing redevelopment of Tanglewood," said Jill Loope, Director of Economic Development for Roanoke County. "Bringing Chili's to the Roanoke market fulfills a long-desired community interest in attracting this restaurant to the Tanglewood footprint." Announced earlier with their new buildings already under roof: Aspen Dental, Chipotle, Blaze Pizza, Panda Express, Jersey Mike's, and



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Chicken Salad Chick.

More Broadband proposed for Franklin County

The Franklin County Broadband Authority will move forward with two comprehensive proposals to bring broadband to the remaining unserved areas of Franklin County. The Authority approved moving forward with a proposal by Shentel and a second by River Street Networks (more than 2000 addresses) to provide high speed broadband services to over 5000 homes and businesses in some of the hardest

to reach areas of Franklin County. The County will be submitting grant funding requests to the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) Program for \$30 million. That program is intended to extend broadband service to currently unserved areas. Franklin County plans to invest up to \$7.7 million of County funds received from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) into these projects over 24-36 months. Additional investment of over \$11 million will come from the private partners and other grant funding. "These applications represent a significant investment by the

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A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

County and our private partners in eliminating the digital divide in Franklin County" said Ronnie Thompson, Chairman of the Franklin County Board of Supervisors.

Kudos for Roanoke College programs

Roanoke College is

one of the nation's best institutions for undergraduate education, according to The Princeton Review, which features Roanoke in "The Best 387 Colleges" (Penguin Random House), the 2022 edition of its annual college guidebook. In the new 2022 edition, Roanoke College is



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Bank of Botetourt

CONTRIBUTORS

Shon Aguero is the executive vice president and chief banking officer for Freedom First Credit Union. A graduate of Oklahoma State University, Walden University, SW Graduate School of Banking, Cox School of Business - SMU, and New York Institute of Finance, he moved here from Southwest and Midwest US, and lives in Roanoke with his wife and two children.

Aila Boyd serves as the editor of "The Fincastle Herald" and "The Vinton Messenger" and coordinates social media for the Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce. She holds an MFA in writing from Lindenwood University.

Bruce C. Bryan is proprietor of the award-winning advertising and marketing agency, 5Points Creative, located in downtown Roanoke. [bruce@5PointsCreative.com]

Lisa Clause is senior director of marketing and philanthropy at Richfield Living. She is a recent MBA graduate with distinction of Liberty University and has a bachelor's degree in marketing and minor in professional and technical writing at Virginia Tech. She began her career at the Roanoke Times, moved to WSET television rising to national sales manager. She co-owns Fine Line Interiors with her husband, and enjoys gardening, bike riding, and church activities.

Mike Dame is the vice president of marketing and communications at Carilion Clinic. A graduate of the University of Florida, he spent nearly a decade as a sportswriter for the Orlando Sentinel before transitioning to a career in digital communications that landed him at Virginia Tech in 2005; he joined Carilion in 2008. Mike lives in Roanoke with his wife Valeria and enjoys golf, guitar, spending time with friends and cheering on his beloved Florida Gators.

Doug Doughty is retired after spending 45 years at the Roanoke Times. After

graduation from UVA in 1974, he was hired as a hockey beat reporter by the Roanoke Times. Many of his early assignments involved covering the Salem Pirates Class A baseball team when he witnessed — and later wrote about — the death of Alfredo Edmead in a collision with one of his Pirates teammates. Doughty later became the UVA beat reporter, covering football, golf, lacrosse and a host of other sports, including the Cavaliers baseball team when it won the NCAA championship with one of his sons on the team. Doug Doughty is also a member of the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame. [doughtysports@aol.com]

Dan Dowdy is the business development director for Valley Business FRONT and owner of The Proofing Prof proofreading services (proofingprof.com). His background includes service in the U.S. Air Force and an extensive career in education, including teaching college-level writing competency and business courses, and working for a Fortune 100 company. [ddowdy@vbFRONT.com]

Tom Field is a creative director, marketing executive and owner of Berryfield, Inc. in Salem, and owner of Valley Business FRONT magazine. He has written and produced programs and materials for local and international organizations for 40 years. [tfield@berryfield.com]

Micah Fraim is a top-referred Certified Public Accountant and business finance strategist who is well-connected in the regional business community and nationally recognized. Publisher of The Little Big Small Business Book, he also publishes a blog at www.fraimcpa.com/blog and is frequently interviewed as a business financial expert in national media channels. [micahfraim@fraimcpa.com]

Frazier Hughes was recruited by the CEO of Keller Williams Realty after being named 2017 salesman of the year at Berglund Luxury of

Roanoke. He also hosts The Roanoke Real Estate Podcast, is Dale Carnegie Trained, a former radio personality, and is a Social Media Influencer. [frazierhughescom@gmail.com]

Zack Jackson is the host of the K92 Mornin' Thang radio show on WXLK and co-founder of The JPG Agency, a freelance marketing and creative consulting department for small businesses. He can be reached at [zack@thejpgagency.com]

Mike Leigh is president of OpX Solutions, LLC, a performance improvement company that helps organizations pursue operational excellence. A retired naval commander and former GE manufacturing manager, he has extensive experience in leadership development and process improvement. [Mike@OpXSolutionsLLC.com]

Gene Marrano is FRONT editor and an award-winning anchor and reporter for WFIR Newstalk radio. He recently won best feature award from the Virginia Association of Broadcasters for his Dopesick interview with Beth Macy. He also now hosts and co-produces "Business Matters" on Blue Ridge PBS. [gmarrano@cox.net]

Mary Ann L. Miller is vice president of business banking and community relations at Bank of Botetourt. A graduate of Bridgewater College, she has been in the banking industry for more than fifteen years and currently serves on the board and executive committee as past-president with the Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce, a board member with the Daleville Institute, and is vice chair of the board of with the Botetourt Family YMCA. A native of Botetourt County, she resides in Daleville with her husband, Matthew and their son Ira.

Anne Sampson is a photographer and writer who has been active in local arts and events for 20 years. Her work highlights the sights of

people of the Roanoke Valley. She specializes in fresh looks at familiar subjects. [sampsona7@gmail.com]

Michael Shelton is a Registered Financial Consultant, tax specialist, and owner of 360 Wealth Consultants. His firm specializes in providing retirement planning and wealth preservation strategies for business owners and astute individuals. What really has the locals excited, though, is his groundbreaking, proprietary software, designed to streamline accounting and wealth planning for business owners of medical practices, real estate properties, and construction industry businesses. [michael@discover360Financial.com]

Dan Smith is the former and inaugural editor of FRONT magazine and an award-winning veteran journalist, now freelancing. [pampadansmith@gmail.com]

Nicholas Vaassen is a graphic designer with 19 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]

Michael Waldvogel is the president and chief executive officer of Waldvogel Commercial Properties, founding it in 2004. With three decades of commercial real estate experience, he was also the founding principal of Waldvogel, Poe & Cronk, a business development director for the Better Business Bureau, and executive director of the Downtown Business League. He is active in a number of business, professional, trade, and service organizations, and is an outdoor enthusiast and runner.

once again included in the guidebook's lists of Great Schools for Business/Finance Majors, Great Schools for Computer Science/Computer Engineering Majors and Great Schools for Psychology Majors. Roanoke first appeared on The Princeton Review's Business/Finance and Computer Science/Computer Engineering lists in 2014 and on the Psychology list in 2015. Roanoke also is among the 143 Best Colleges in the Southeast, colleges that The Princeton Review considers "academically outstanding and well worth consideration" in students' college search.

Blacksburg will get design help for retail incubator

The American Institute of Architects and Mayors Innovation Project has selected three municipalities

around the country for its Mayors Innovative Design Cohort, including Blacksburg, where the town will receive design help at 414 N. Main Street. There an eco-friendly retail business incubator located inside an empty storefront is the goal. Says Mayor Leslie Hager-Smith: "It will form a nexus for the arts, commerce, and tourism while the physical space gives a boost to small businesses, as well as nonprofits. And we're especially excited that we'll be working with an experienced group of architecture professionals."

NS steps up to fight hunger

Norfolk Southern Corporation announced \$400,000 in grants last month to 31 food banks located in states served by the company. The funds will directly support local efforts to combat

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food insecurity, as well as other assistance initiatives supporting children, families, and senior citizens. Salem-based Feeding Southwest Virginia will receive some of that NS grant funding.

Waldvogel heads South

Waldvogel Commercial Properties in Roanoke, VA has announced its expansion into the western Piedmont region of North Carolina, to service its BH Media Group,

Inc., and Lee BHM account. Michael M. Waldvogel is Broker in Charge of the North Carolina operation. Current activities include the sale of three office warehouse properties in Statesville, Hickory, and Reidsville, North Carolina, as well as the relocation to leased office space for the related newspaper operations. (BH Media owns the Roanoke Times building.)

Compiled by
Gene Marrano

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Micah Frain

NO VACUUM, NO DRAG

By Anne Sampson

Valley Business FRONT introduces Micah Fraim, an advisory board member representing the finance / accounting sector.

Micah Fraim, CPA, sits at a rather massive, rustic desk in an elegant vintage house-turned-office in Old Southwest Roanoke City. The house retains fine details like dark, richly grained wood paneling, carved ornaments and glazed tile fireplace surrounds.

"I was lucky to find one that hadn't been gutted," he says. "I wanted that tile."

His office includes a treadmill desk and a bed for Prim, a gentle, six-year-old spotted Harrier mix who serves as office greeter. A microphone on a boom sits intriguingly off to one side.

A 2010 graduate of Roanoke College, Micah's secondary education was a mix of Northside High School, home schooling and Virginia Western Community College.

"I finished high school a few credits short of an Associate's (degree)," he says.

"I knew I liked business and money, and understood it," he says. "I didn't intend to be an accountant, but the first accounting class I took, it just clicked."

After college, a less-than-amicable parting from a Fortune 500 company taught him that being a small cog in a corporate machine wasn't for him. That realization pushed him toward opening his own office in 2013 and

eventually adding a partner, David Cawley, in 2018.

"I realized that, to get the caliber of person I was looking for, I would have to offer some equity share to make it worthwhile," he says. "It was a fantastic decision." Among Dave's specialties are Business Valuation and Forensic Accounting.

Micah feels that CPAs often miss the boat when serving their clients.

"CPAs can get in a comfort zone and hyper focus on taxes," he says. "We become bean counters. Something might be the best tax maneuver, but is it the best thing for the business in the long term? Nothing happens in a vacuum."

"IN BRIEF"

NAME: Micah Fraim

FROM: Roanoke Valley

POSITION: Partner, Fraim, Cawley & Company, CPAs

FAMILY: Wife, Ester; daughter, Fennec, 1 ½ yo; Prim, 6 yo rescue Harrier mix

EDUCATION: BS, Business/Accounting, Roanoke College, 2010

PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT: Nothing exists in a vacuum. You have to take every aspect of the situation into consideration. Stay curious.

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Micah likes to take a figurative step back, enabling a broader vision of where his clients are and where they want to be. His entrepreneurial spirit makes him a good fit for other entrepreneurs; intellectual curiosity and tech literacy have paired him with many internet-based business people who felt misunderstood by more traditional accounting advisors.

“We don’t want to only see our clients at tax time,” he says. “We’ve made a quarterly meeting part of the package we offer. We’ll head off a lot of problems if we talk throughout the year.” Ensuring that clients don’t leave “money on the table,” and positioning them throughout the year to make the most of legitimate deductions is just part of the advocacy Micah endorses.

There’s also a concept he likes to call “drag.”


“When business people are worried about the bookkeeping, they’re behind, tax time is looming, this creates mental burden,” he says. He likens it to racing a sailboat covered with algae and seaweed—friction with the water slows the boat down. Finding the places of friction in a business, and relieving entrepreneurs of this burden reduces mental “drag,” freeing their attention for other important aspects of business. Their bottom line often improves dramatically.

Micah embraced technology early in his practice, first writing a blog which evolved into two self-published books; volumes I and II of *The Little Big Small Business Book*. With an endorsement from business mentor Tai Lopez, Volume I has sold nearly 30,000 copies on Amazon.

Micah also produces a podcast, interviewing internet entrepreneurs about their businesses. The blog and podcast have served both to brand and market his business as specializing in small and online business finances.

“The (podcast) schtick is ‘The Few, The Proud, The Profitable,’” says Micah. Many online businesses overstate their earnings, he says, so he connects with genuinely successful internet business people to discuss their recipes for success. The podcast provides valuable content for listeners, and serves as a networking tool for the business.

Through his work in the in the digital space, Micah has clients in approximately 30 US states, many with international reach, as well as US citizens living in other countries; all from an office in a medium-sized city in Southwest Virginia.

“Yes, we’re CPAs,” Micah says, “but we want to make sure that we’re actually acting as advisors and partners, helping our clients make decisions that are good for the business overall. Nothing exists in a vacuum.” 



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We had 17 different
contingency plans. — Page 19



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