

Millenials in Business

Is the next
generation
a revolution?

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

\$3 • Vol I: ISSUE 9 • JUNE 09



Credit Unions

Mediation

Heart Center

Roanoke's Beer

ECO-FURNITURE

Auctioneers

AND...

a Farmer Girl,

a Bat Man,

and

a Game Boy

YOUTH MOVEMENT

**Out with the Old Way,
In with the New**

Daniel Burdi, 22
Campus Carriers

NEW FACE AT VALLEY BANK, OLD HAND AT VALLEY BANKING

Steve Reeves

After graduating from Virginia Tech, Steve returned to the Roanoke Valley and spent the last 33 years in real estate and the mortgage banking business.

As the new Valley Bank Mortgage, Senior Vice President, here are Steve's thoughts regarding his Valley, his bank and his passion.

"I have said many times... 'the longer I live, the more I love Roanoke'. Truly appreciating The Valley for its friendly people, beautiful countryside and rich culture.

I grew up here, was educated here (Va. Tech) and have had a wonderful career path... all in the Roanoke area.

Mortgage lending is one of the corner stones of retail banking. I bring to Valley Bank a deep seated passion for customer service and a goal to make Valley Bank Mortgage the #1 choice for the people of this valley.

My excitement and attraction to Valley Bank is simple. They have

the same passion for the Roanoke area as I do. Valley Bank was created to do one thing... to serve the banking needs of the community I live in and love.

We are an outstanding fit."

Valley Bank Mortgage

Stephen R. Reeves
*Senior Vice President
Mortgage Banking Manager*

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WELCOME to the FRONT

We're going to cover business, now.

Look for our new and improved business section.

If you're interested in business—we are too.

Have you heard the news? More and more local media outlets are getting into the business game. Leisure and entertainment publications want to add a new section for business. Television is willing to commit a whole 60-second segment on business. Radio offers programs on air for business to succeed. And the newspaper...still has its almost one full business page. (Ok, so there's *one* media outlet not so interested.)

But for everyone else, why the increased interest?

It's not as if people care about the economy and what's happening on the business front.

Yeah, right.

Of course, we've known this "niche" is more than a side-topic. Two decades of business news and a combined seventy years in the profession (just us two principals, not counting our extended FRONT associates) has produced one very clear picture for us: business is life. We're simply a compilation of life stories. People you know and people you'd like to know more about.

Everything we do, from working to playing to just plain living... it's all tied to business. The irony is, right at the time when everyone else is clawing to find ways to add "business" to their programs, we've actually wondered if we need the word "business" in our name. Whatever you call it, we're glad there's a few of you still interested in what's happening on the front in your community.



Tom Field



Dan Smith

5 miles or 50 miles.

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Valley Business FRONT

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youth movement
Out With the Old Way, In With the New

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*I'll see you
out of court*



**A Heart Center
... in Moneta?**

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**ECO-SUSTAINABLE
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Cover photograph of Daniel Burdi by
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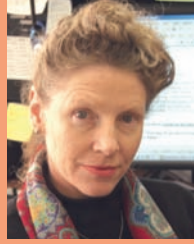
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JUNE



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Editorial Advisory Board

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

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

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Tim Thornton

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 75.

2008 / 09 Members

- Nancy Agee** Carilion
- Laura Bradford** ClaireV
- Warner Dalhouse** retired banker, community activist
- Cory Donovan** NewVa Corridor Technology Council
- Nanci Hardwick** Schultz-Creehan
- Ed Hall** Hall Associates
- George Kegley** retired journalist, community activist
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- Court Rosen** Walnut Creek Development, Roanoke City Council
- Jay Turner** J.M. Turner Construction
- Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners
- John Williamson** RGC Resources



Nicholas Vaassen



Greg Vaughn

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

“They drank.
They talked.
We listened.”

— Page 33



Campus Carriers' Daniel Burdi: "Kind of just in the business of business"

Greg Vaughn Photography

YOUTH MOVEMENT

Out With the Old Way, In With the New

Millennials:
The revolution
is here >

Executive Summary:

It's almost impossible to tell you exactly who they are, what they are about or how they're going to ultimately impact the system. But you'll know all that when you see it.

By Tim Thornton

Millennials are scary.

They're scary because they're from the future. Heck, they are the future. And they're hitting an employment pipeline clogged with overbearing Baby Boomers and "whatever" Gen-Xers the way angioplasty hits a clogged artery.

Millennials have different attitudes about work and life outside work; about rewards and purpose and company loyalty and—well, just about everything.

The Millennial Generation was born between 1977 and 1998. Or 1980 and 2000. Or about 1980 and the mid 1990s. Accounts differ. Wikipedia says their births fall between 1982 and 2001, so let's go with that because Wikipedia seems so very Millennial. (It's a group effort that produces a consensus written in hummus—easily recast as a new community view evolves.)

They're not as prone to marching in the streets as the now stuffed-shirt Boomers were in their youth. They're not as self-absorbed as the stereotypical Gen-X slacker. Some say they're downright civic-minded.

Neil Howe and William Strauss, who may have written more than anyone else about Millennials, say these people are "more numerous, more affluent, better educated and more ethnically diverse" than any youthful group in recent memory,



The Millennials tend to be much more focused on outcomes rather than on process. This means that rewards systems will have to change to allow for several different paths to lead to the same outcome.

—Virginia Tech's Mary Connerley

exhibiting “a wide array of positive social habits ... including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty and good conduct.”

But Howe and Strauss also make Millennials sound a little like the cowed populace of George Orwell's 1984. Their generational defining moment came on Sept. 11, 2001.

“Through the fall of 2001,” Howe and Strauss wrote, “as U.S. federal authorities exercised aggressive authority in garrisoning airports, patrolling harbors, installing videocams on city streets, and rounding up ‘suspects,’ Millennials had no problem adapting. Indeed, Millennial teens often gave timely reminders to their Boomer parents about how to behave.”

The Millennials, you see, had grown accustomed to similar conditions in their schools in the wake of Columbine.

On a more positive note, Howe and Strauss assure us, “Unlike Boomers, Millennials won't need three days at a retreat to figure out how to rewrite a mission statement.”

That's all well and good, but it still leaves the rest of us wondering: What's to be done with these people? Perhaps that's the wrong question. What must be done for them?

“The Millennials tend to be much more focused on outcomes rather than on process,” says Mary Connerley, director of the Business Diversity Center at Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business. “This means that rewards systems will have to



Virginia Tech's Mary Connerley (with her book *Leadership in a Diverse and Multicultural Environment*)

change to allow for several different paths to lead to the same outcome.”

Coleman Gutshall agrees. He calls Millennials “a generation that needs reinforcement.”

A manager and a student of Millennials, at 27, Gutshall is a Millennial himself. As the chief financial officer of Roanoke Web design company Exemplum, Gutshall has learned to tie praise and raises to performance. He's disdainful of the idea of giving out end-of-the-year bonuses just because another year has ended. The dot-com style campus with play rooms and catered lunches is just another version of that failed strategy, in his opinion. Perquisites are like drugs: indiscriminate use requires continuously rising doses to produce the same effect.

“Obviously, I think money still talks, is still a primary driver for a lot of people,” Gutshall says. “It certainly is for me.”

continued to Page 11



Exemplum's Coleman Gutshall: "It all revolves around community"

FRONTList15: Youth Movement

By Dan Smith

Want to know just how small our corner of the world is? Try this:

Our first FRONTList15: Youth Movement group of 15 professionals younger than 30 contains the following:

- Two sets of siblings;
- One engaged couple;
- Two best friends;

- Two business partners;
- Several members whose parents are prominent business people in this region;
- Several members of the Junior League, among other community activities;
- Fifteen outstanding young people who are as involved in their communities as in their businesses.

Following is a look at who they are.

Sisters

Construction magnate Jay Turner (J.M. Turner Construction) landed both his daughters on the list. **Catherine Turner**, 25, works for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's Blue Ridge Chapter as a development manager and has moved

DATE		DAY	SHIFT	IN	OUT	HOURS WORKED	ACCUMULATED HOURS	OVERTIME
Catherine Turner (left) and Margaret-Hunter Wade								
Dan Smith								

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Price (left) and Coleman Gutshall with fiancée Tiffany Price								
Dan Smith								

COVER STORY

But Millennials want other things, too. They want to feel like they're more than a cog in a machine. They want to make an impact and to take their laptops outside and work once in a while. Gutshall says that's fine "if it's not going to reduce their productivity" or impact quality.

Sandy Smith of Sandy Smith Seminars recently gave a presentation to Carilion executives on Millennials. He says, "Many Millennials in today's workforce feel as though they are only allowed to perform up to about half of their potential. That's like buying a sports car and putting a speed

control governor on it that will only permit it to run at about 50 miles per hour."

Millennials measure themselves more by their pursuits and social circle than by their jobs, Gutshall says. "It all revolves around community."

And that community is more than the people Millennials see face-to-face. They value On-line connections in a way older workers may not.

And while Boomers might equate "multi-tasking" with "distracted," Connerley says,

continued to Page 13

quickly up the management ladder since 2006. She's in all the requisite outside activities for young professionals here: Junior League, NewVa Connects, Valley Forward, Contemporaries, Young Affiliates of the Mint Museum, Taubman Museum of Art volunteer, Fancy Dress Ball.


Margaret-Hunter Turner Wade, 29, recently left the executive director's chair at the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge and landed at Cox Communications as a PR specialist. Like her sis, she's a Washington & Lee University grad and prowls some of the same community service organizations: Junior League, Valley Forward, W&L Alumni Chapter (president), as well as the United Way, Ronald McDonald House, Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau, Boys and Girls Clubs, Nonprofit Resource Center. On top

of all this, she was once an outstanding soccer player.

Brothers

Coleman (27) and **Price Gutshall** (23) are sons of Valley Bank President Ellis Gutshall, North Cross School (Coleman; Price went to Patrick Henry High) and preppy college (Price: Hampden-Sydney; Coleman: W&L) grads who studied abroad (Price at Oxford; Coleman at Denmark's International Studies Program) and who have good jobs with promising futures (Price with the Regional Partnership, Coleman as CFO of Exemplum).

Coleman is preparing to go to grad school for an MBA (Darden at UVA) and said he hoped that

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Dan Smith						

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Consultant Sandy Smith: Millennials “feel as though they are only allowed to perform up to about half of their potential”

didn't disqualify him for the list. They are involved variously in the Taubman Museum of Art, Valley Forward, the Ad Fed and the Society of 1791 Leadership Program.

Friends and Lovers

Tiffany Price (25) married Coleman Gutshall May 23 (they won a honeymoon to Fiji from Bride's magazine) and her best friend—and a bride's maid—is **Susan Stanley** (27). Physically, they could pass for sisters. They met at Junior League. Susan's the manager of recruiting and development at McLeod & Company (CPA) in Roanoke. Tiffany's a financial service representative at Valley Bank (working for Coleman's dad).

Tiffany has a Master of Arts Liberal Studies degree

from Hollins (her thesis was “How to Attract and Retain Young Professionals in the Roanoke Region” and she is literally the poster professional for the MALS program, appearing in print ads) and Susan had a 3.85 GPA at the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech.

Tiffany is heavily involved in Junior League and Mill Mountain Theatre and Susan's all over the place with Junior League, Leadership Roanoke Valley, Leadership Forward, Breast Cancer Awareness, Regional Chamber, United Way, Tech Career Services and Young Audiences of Virginia.

More Big-shot Dads

Will Farmer (28) is the son of “Antiques Road Show” regular and the Radford-based Ken

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Dan Smith

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NAME Carolyn Bucher Kiser 1

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Dan Smith

COVER STORY

"Millenials may not give a second thought to checking their e-mail during a conversation with their boss and actually may state that this will allow them to focus more on the conversation."

Boomers and Gen-Xers may not get that.

Nevertheless, Connerley says, business leaders seem to be buying into the idea that leadership style should adjust to the experience and needs of the employee being led.

"The idea of a cookie cutter management style no longer holds in most organizations,"

she says. "So, I think that this phenomenon is as much about Boomers and Gen-Xers as it is about Millenials."

There's nothing cookie cutter about the typical Millennial's self image. Everyone from Mr. Rogers to Barney the Dinosaur has told them they're special.

But Millennials are worth all the trouble because of the "combination of technological savvy, book smarts, and a service mentality" they bring to the workplace, Connerley says. And she expects them to make business culture more accepting of differences and

continued to Page 15

Farmer Auctions & Appraisals owner and namesake. Will lives and works in Roanoke (for Cox Communications as an account exec and for Woltz & Associates as an auctioneer, Realtor and auction manager) as well as for his dad's company as an auctioneer. **Carolyn Bucher Kiser** (29) is the daughter of Thomas Rutherford head man Roy Bucher and is an accounts supervisor with tba (The Becher Agency) in Roanoke.

Will's involved heavily in the community (Regional Chamber, Leadership RV, NewVA Connects, Leadership Forward, Cox Conserves), but seems most proud that he's the guitar player and lead singer in a funk group called Monkey Fuzz. Carolyn's non-work time is spent with Roanoke AdFed, Junior League of Roanoke Valley, Bargain Bazaar, The Contemporaries

and United Way Community Catalysts.

Partners

A couple of Virginia Tech guys, one still a student, are co-founders of the promising Campus Carriers, which provides moving services for students, and both have been involved in GameDay Solutions, leasing lockers to sports fans. They are **Daniel Burdi** (22) and **Ryan Carter** (23) of Blacksburg and though they're very close to school, they're off and running. Dan gives this version of the founding of their company: "Campus Carriers started when Ryan had his lease expire after he graduated and didn't have a place to store his stuff until his next lease started. That isn't actually to say he had no place to store it at all because all of his stuff ended up at my apartment for the





entire summer ... couches, desks, tables, chairs, you name it ... it was at this point that Ryan and I realized there was a problem with campus move out."

Ryan's college time has been spent studying management, entrepreneurship and global business; Daniel's been involved in apparel, housing and resource management. Because college and the new business have been consuming, the guys haven't been as directly involved in the community as they plan to be with Campus Carriers Cares and they have recently developed a keen interest in Habitat for Humanity, as well.

The Rest of the Best

Roanoker **Taryn Anderson** (27) has moved

between the Roanoke Regional Chamber's Small Business Development Center and Carilion Clinic (where she is now) as a marketing and graphic specialist. She's a Radford University communications graduate who's involved in the Advertising Federation, Smart Beginnings, Small Business Marketing Advisory Board, Public Relations Student Society and is a former lacrosse player of note.

Matthew Crisp (26) is a rising star at Radford-based Third Security where he is managing director. Another Radford U. grad (something founder R.J. Kirk, who shares that distinction, finds satisfying in the competitive world of investing) who won his job over some Ivy competitors because he is smart, talented, motivated and creative. He is or has been on

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Dan Smith							

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NAME		Lauren Ellerman					
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Dan Smith							

COVER STORY


more accommodating of other workers' needs. their whole lives hearing they are special.

"If a co-worker wants more life-family balance, that will be viewed as OK as long as it does not get in the way of other workers reaching their goals," Connerley says.

"We're just naïve enough to think we can do it better than the next guy," says Burdi, who was scheduled to graduate from Virginia Tech in May.

Daniel Burdi is the 22-year-old Millennial co-founder of Campus Carriers, a Blacksburg company that takes most of the hassle out of the college ritual of moving in and out of dorms and storing stuff in between. He's been too busy to print business cards. Burdi puts a different spin on the stereotype of Millennials who've spent


Burdi says he and partner Ryan Carter are "kind of just in the business of business." They're looking for problems to solve and profits to make.

Carter wasn't available to agree with Burdi's assessment. He was in China, working on a sourcing deal for someone else's company. 

boards of Synchrony, Cyntellect, ECDS, Levelvision, Intrexon and Radford University (where he is heavily involved). Also works with Radford Main Street.

College (business) and University of Phoenix (MBA) graduate and a soccer coach of some note in the Roanoke Valley. He's also involved in NewVA Connects, Medication Assistance, Radford Free Clinic and Upward Basketball as a coach. Was once a water meter reader.

Lauren Ellerman (29) is a William & Mary (English, government majors) and T.C. Williams Law School grad who works at the Frith Law Firm in Roanoke as a litigation attorney (medical malpractice, nursing home abuse, personal injury, employment law). She's the driving force behind an initiative for a Roanoke dog park and is involved in NewVaConnects, Roanoke Area Ministries, Eve Network (Rescue Mission), MS Society and the W&M alumni board.

Jonathan Freedom (26) of Tech Squared in Roanoke is a Roanoke College grad (poly-sci, international relations) and a New Hampshire native who landed here and stayed. He's in sales for Tech Squared (which hosts the FRONT's Web site and which increased sales in 2008 by 133 percent) and went to Boy's State and Boy's Nation in high school and was involved with Boy Scouts. Now works with Family Services, Scouts, Intersarsity Club, Campus Ministries, Mock Trial Club and Temple Town Band. 

Darren Eversole (28) is a senior financial analyst at Carilion Clinic in Christiansburg, a Roanoke

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NAME Darren Eversole

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Dan Smith

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NAME Jonathan Freedom

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David Hungate, Dominion Images



Proper handling of the business card >

Asian culture has greatly influenced how we give and receive business cards properly. Business cards are a reflection and representation of who we are. Following the simple tips below will assist you in exchanging your cards properly wherever you are.

Presentation: The card should be in pristine condition. Have new cards printed rather than scratching out information on the surface of your card. Your card should be presented face up in your right hand or with both hands. You should face the receiver. It is not appropriate to pass out cards like a Vegas dealer. Presenting the card in both hands shows the highest form of respect. (Never present your card in your left hand. That is an insult in some cultures.)


Receiving: Always receive a card in the same manner that you presented your card; in the right hand or with both hands. You should consider receiving the card as if you are receiving a gift. Take time to study the card. This is your opportunity to help remember the person long after the meeting.

Ask the person a question or make a nice comment about the card. It is natural that you may want to make notes on a card, especially if the person asks for you to send company information. Be sensitive to the person presenting the card and do not write on the face of the card in the individual's presence. Write any notes on a separate notepad. Do not immediately put the card away. Gentleman, please refrain from taking out your back pocket wallet, placing the card in the wallet, returning it to your back pocket and then sitting on the card.

Keeping Cards: Always keep cards in a separate card carrying case. Keep the case in a purse or pocket that is located on the upper part of your body. Never ask someone for another card because you have lost it. File cards or enter them into your computer.

International: With international business, have your business cards translated correctly with the language of the country you are visiting on one side and the English version on the other side. When presenting your card, present it with translated version of the card up, facing the receiver.

Additional Tips: Do not force your business card on someone who has not asked for it. Wait for the opportunity to come up naturally when engaging in conversation with someone.

Always use a professional printing company to produce your cards on the finest quality paper stock. Make certain that the font size on the business card is large enough to be legible. (Hint: Printing a card in a small font that necessitates a magnifying glass to read doesn't reflect well on you or your company.) 

Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

Executive Summary:
Ditch everything you think you know about presenting your business card and read this. It will enlighten you.


The person in charge of you is you >

Dear Getting a Grip: *Our company has begun a "fitness initiative." We're all supposed to record our 10,000 steps with pedometers, log progress towards our "fitness goals"—a.k.a. weight loss—using a "confidential" online tracking system, and play on the company's softball team to "boost morale" and "foster teamwork." I understand a company needs to cut health insurance costs by having a more fit work force. But I didn't appreciate "the talk" about not being a team player. I simply have no interest in exercise. At work, I want to work. What am I supposed to do?*

Dear No Interest: The personal/professional divide is problematic. Companies initiating programs asking for personal choices at work—from fitness programs, to direct deposit of charitable contributions, to team reading of the latest business book—risk crossing the line. To a great extent at work, we're already "told what to do." Being told at work what to do in our personal lives provokes resentment.

That said, the revenues/expenditures divide is a tricky one. Your company's ability to generate revenues and cut costs—including health care expenses—is why you have a job.

In spite of invocations by evangelists of its redemptive power, exercise has only one purpose and one outcome—quality of life.

Getting a Grip: Regardless of what company employs you, you're always CEO of No Interest Inc. Schedule "the talk" with yourself and take a look at your resistance to exercise. It's an opportunity to examine your business model. Then execute quality of life initiatives that work for you, whether they occur at work or not. That takes care of your personal enterprise—and the one that employs you. 



Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:

Need to start "Getting a Grip" on a personal problem at work?

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- Business Liability and Worker's Compensation
- Claim Resolution
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Re-defining 'proper workplace attire' >

When the financial bubble burst last fall on Wall Street, all the rules changed. Even the unwritten rules about acceptable office attire shifted. Suddenly it became risky to dress in less than business professional attire in the workplace.

Last month a meeting of the 100 Women in Hedge Funds, which convened on Madison Avenue in New York City, was abuzz with talk of proper workplace attire. According to the Wall Street Journal, with so many executives in the industry searching for jobs, many are examining their former choice of attire more critically.

Until recently, hedge-fund managers enjoyed great success and with it the freedom to dress in a hip and casual manner. Male managers had the most freedom to dress down, with one female manager summing up the hedge-fund "power casual" dress code for men as an attitude of "we can dress like this because we make a lot of money." However, women managers felt less freedom to dress in "power casual," relying instead on standard business casual attire.


In retrospect, they worry that their slightly casual wardrobe contributed to their "downsizing."

Many female hedge-fund managers "in transition" between jobs regret not wearing jackets more often. They worry that their wardrobe did not convey professionalism and authority, which might have made a difference during downsizing decisions.

What does this mean to the rest of us? Certainly, our region is not New York City. However, we also have many new jobseekers. We are working to attract businesses to our region to provide job opportunities and increase our young professional population.

Our Baby Boomers are postponing retirement to rebuild depleted nest eggs. Locally, the economy has created a more intense business atmosphere.

What we can learn from the hedge-fund reality is that the smallest detail of appearance can be interpreted as weak— or powerful—depending on who we are. Some are held to a higher standard than others. Unfair as that is, we all should re-examine our goals and our appearance to see if they are in alignment.

It is no surprise that double standards exist everywhere, even today. It is simply smart to eliminate any reason to deny you a job opportunity or a promotion. As Christina Binkley of the Wall Street Journal says, "Our clothes at work needn't express our true inner selves. Instead, they can express our ability to contribute or take charge." Hear that buzz? Change is coming. 



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

With the economy shrouded in uncertainty, your business attire shouldn't be. Dress properly and act confident in the way you look (even when you're not).

Genworth >

have strong financial security characteristics. The outlook on both companies is stable.”
[source: finance.yahoo.com]

Compiled by Deborah Nason

Overview:

Genworth Financial Inc., founded in 2003, is a financial security company, headquartered in Richmond, with a primary main location in Lynchburg. The company operates in three segments:

- *The Retirement and Protection segment offers various protection products ... and retirement income and wealth management products ... and institutional products comprising funding agreements, funding agreements backing notes and guaranteed investment contracts.*
- *The International segment provides mortgage insurance products in [various] countries ... [and] provides various services, analytical tools and technology that enables lenders to manage risk.*
- *The U.S. Mortgage Insurance segment offers mortgage insurance products insuring prime-based, individually-underwritten residential mortgage loans.*

[Source: finance.yahoo.com]

Market Commentary

- “Genworth Financial Inc. ... fell the most of any company in the Standard & Poor’s 500 Index after failing to qualify for a capital injection from the U.S. Treasury. ... Genworth abandoned its request for capital from the Troubled Asset Relief Program on April 9, a day after Treasury said some life insurers were eligible for U.S. funds. [Genworth] has canceled the dividend and cut 1,000 jobs, or about 14 percent of the workforce, after declining investments and a spike in claims tied to mortgage defaults drained capital. ... Genworth’s request for TARP aid failed after the Office of Thrift Supervision didn’t approve the insurer’s planned acquisition of a Maple Grove, Minnesota, lender and bid to become a savings and loan holding company.
[source: Bloomberg.com]

- “Standard and Poor’s Ratings Services (“S&P”) has rated Genworth Financial’s main Lifestyle Protection Insurance entities “A-” following the completion of a financial strength rating assessment. The ratings given to the two UK-registered entities, Financial Insurance Company Limited and Financial Assurance Company Limited, indicates that both

- Genworth appeared among the top scoring financial services companies in the non-profit Carbon Disclosure Project’s 2008 report.
[www.cdproject.net]

Total Executive Compensation

Name	Title	Amount
Michael D. Fraizer	Chairman, CEO	\$3,742,848
Patrick B. Kelleher	Senior Vice President, CFO	\$1,288,636
Thomas H. Mann	Executive Vice President	\$1,405,613
Pamela S. Schutz	Executive Vice President	\$1,257,777
Leon E. Roday	SVP, General Counsel and Secretary	\$1,385,740
Victor C. Moses	Former SVP, Actuarial and Risk	\$1,379,119

Board of Directors

Name	Primary Company	Age
Frank J. Borelli	Retired, Stone Point Capital	73
Nancy J. Karch	Retired, McKinsey & Company	61
J. Robert “Bob” Kerrey	New School University, former US senator	65
Risa J. Lavizzo-Mourey	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	54
James A. Parke	Retired, GE Capital Services	63
James S. Riepe	Retired, T. Rowe Price Group, Inc.	65
Barrett A. Toan	Retired, Express Scripts, Inc.	61
Thomas B. Wheeler	Retired, MassMutual	72

Institutional Stock Ownership

“There is significant interest in GNW by institutional investors. The 81.06 percent of the shares outstanding that it controls represents a greater percentage of ownership than at almost any other company in the Life/Health Insurance industry.”
[Source: businessweek.com]

Major Non-institutional Stockholders

Name	Shares held
Michael D. Fraizer (executive)	405,685
James A. Parke (director)	250,000
Thomas H. Mann (executive)	104,499
Leon E. Roday (executive)	58,858
Pamela S. Schutz (executive)	53,008

Sources

[genworth.com] / [finance.yahoo.com]
[investing.businessweek.com] / [morningstar.com]
[finance.aol.com] / [hoovers.com]

Note

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

““”

Our phone is ringing off the hook right now. We've got our lending people working until 10 to 11 at night.

—Paul Phillips,
Freedom First



Freedom First's Paul Phillips

Dan Smith

Executive Summary:

Credit unions have but a small share of the nation's financial business, but they are poised to take advantage of a situation where they are in a solid position.

By Rob Johnson

Credit unions to economy: 'Bring it on!' >

No bailouts needed, thank you very much anyway.

That's the word from the region's credit unions at a time when some large banks around the nation need federal funding. They've watched their stock prices tank as loan delinquency rates approach six percent.

"We actually had one of our best years in 2008," says Woody Windley, president and chief executive officer of

Roanoke Valley Credit Union. His institution's loan delinquency rate has fallen during the economic decline to about 1.25 percent—roughly one-third the level of three years ago.

And while headlines blare about bank closings and layoffs, Freedom First Federal Credit Union in Roanoke has been hiring, adding a half-dozen or so employees last year to reach a current total of about 125.

Because of a loan portfolio that grew by 21 percent in 2008 and with deposits up 8.6 percent in the first four months of this year, "We're forging ahead,"

Dan Smith



Roanoke Valley Credit Union's Woody Windley: "We actually had one of our best years in 2008"



Member One exterior

Dan Smith

says Paul Phillips, Freedom First's president and chief executive officer.

Of course credit unions, the downscale cousins of banks, traditionally fare relatively well when the economy slows. That's when consumers—not to mention the business press—rediscover the low service fees that they might not have shopped for during boom times. Sure, credit unions don't offer ATMs on every corner and most of them shy away from high-risk loans, some even

when some bank balance sheets are suffering from financial open wounds. And the not-for-profit status of credit unions, who are essentially owned by their customers, called members, means they aren't looking over their shoulders at daily stock prices.

All that leaves the credit unions in a strong position to build their loan portfolios. "Our phone is ringing off the hook right now. We've got our lending people working until 10 to 11 at night," says Phillips.

avoid first mortgages.

But their conservative business practices—such as shunning subprime lending and being satisfied with comparatively slim profit margins—have left many of them standing strong at a time

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To be sure, credit unions nevertheless maintain a modest approach to growth and expansion. "The needle hasn't moved much on our share of the total banking market," which has stood for decades at about six percent nationally, says Rick Pillow, president of the Virginia Credit Union League. The Lynchburg-based trade group has about 200 member institutions.


Although the persona of credit unions is to be happy with a smaller plate than banks, Pillow is encouraging his members to increase their spending on marketing during the recession. "Credit unions have a tendency to draw back in recession and that's probably the time when they should spend in trying to expand market share," he says.

To that end, Freedom First and some other credit unions in the region have joined together for cooperative advertising about the appeal of their institutional segment.



Member One's Paul Economy:
\$50 million to lend and he did it

Dan Smith

Member One Credit Union in Roanoke posted billboards last year that advertised a loan officer named, of all things, Paul Economy, stating he had \$50 million to lend. He loaned it all, says Frank Carter, president and chief executive officer. "We just blew that out," he says of the \$50 million. And Economy got promoted. 

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There are significant risks faced by businesses, particularly small business and professional practices.

—Georgia Willis Fauber

Identity theft: Not if, but *when* >

Executive Summary:

Identity theft is a broad-based, but quiet crime that victimizes an increasing number of us and it can shut down families and businesses. Here's what to do.

By Georgia Willis

Former bank president Georgia Willis Fauber of Lynchburg has made herself an expert on identity theft and has taken a position preaching the Gospel of Protection. She works for identity theft experts Kroll Background America and can be reached at willisgeorgia@yahoo.com. She'll coach your business or you as an individual—and you can bet her enthusiasm and depth of knowledge will scare the carelessness out of you and your employees. (Georgia is also a regular contributor to the FRONT as a freelance writer.) Here are the questions she answered for us:

How can identity theft (ID) of an employee affect my bottom line?

At best, the employee may only be distracted or miss work for a short period of time. At worst, he may adversely affect the business because of his legal problems.

What costs may occur?

There are potential hidden costs which affect your bottom line as a business owner: lost time, reduced productivity, lower morale, deteriorating quality of work, distraction and reduced attention to detail. The latter can result in mistakes or increased risk of injuries.



Georgia Willis Fauber: "It is important to be proactive"

Dan Smith


According to the FTC (Federal Trade Commission), the average victim of identity theft spends 200-600 hours attempting to resolve his case and restore identity. For the business owner, that is production hours lost.

Can a business become a victim of ID?

Yes, there are significant risks faced by businesses, particularly small business and professional practices. Thieves or scam artists may obtain and use the business tax identification number, sensitive business financial information and even gain access to business accounts, checks or stationery. Using this information, the thieves may pose as the business to open new accounts, obtain goods or services and even to defraud the business' own customers. The thief may be external or could be an employee. Damage can occur in a shockingly short period.

What is the chance ID will happen to me?

Despite wide-scale coverage, law enforcement reports nearly 10 million new victims per year. Many people maintain that somehow identity theft only happens to "someone else." There is stress attached to victims and it is an intense situation over which you have no control. This crime can break an individual or a company. It is important to be proactive.

Get the ball rolling with successful risk management. There are specific plans to assist all sizes and types of businesses in mitigating this crime. There is little question whether this will happen to you. It's a matter of when and whether you're protected. 



Kevin Oddo, partner with LeClair Ryan in offices at Wachovia Tower

Jay Conley



More than 90 percent of civil suits at the state and federal levels never make it into a courtroom

—Kevin Oddo, LeClair Ryan

The advantage of agreement >

Executive Summary:

Settling a lawsuit may not satisfy all your requirements, but it diminishes the expense and hassle factor to the degree that more and more clients seek settlements these days.

By Jay Conley

Companies embroiled in lawsuits today are more likely to settle out of court than face

costly legal fees and leave the fate of their profits in the hands of a judge or jury. And the legal system is embracing the trend.

Since the mid 1990s, the popularity of settlement agreements has grown to become a standard practice.

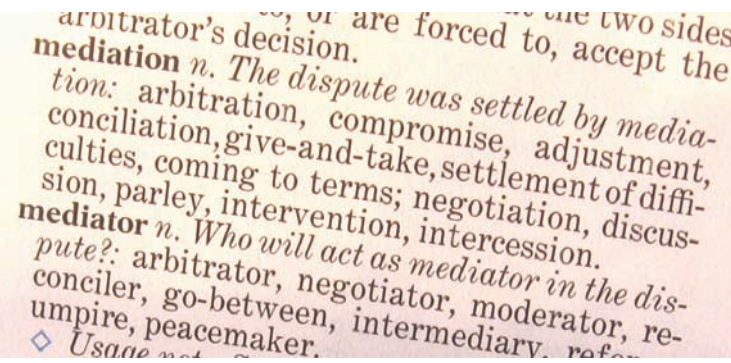
“The vast majority of civil cases settle before going to trial,” says Kevin Oddo, a partner with LeClair Ryan in Roanoke who handles commercial litigation cases. “There are a variety of reasons for that, but certainly one of the key reasons is the popularity of alternative dispute resolutions, which would include mediation.”

Under mediation, both parties agree to settle out of court using a paid neutral third party as a mediator. Such mediators are often veteran lawyers or retired judges like



Rational people, facing the cost, distraction, pressure, and anxiety of a lawsuit, will nearly always choose to settle a case ...

—Judge Michael Urbanski



Websters New World Thesaurus entry for mediation

Jay Conley

Diane Strickland, who served for years as a Roanoke Valley circuit court judge. The mediator's job, along with the lawyers representing both sides, is to help negotiate a settlement agreeable to both parties.

The Conflict Resolution Center, a nonprofit agency in Roanoke, also provides mediation services at a discounted rate to settle a variety of work place, landlord/tenant and family disputes.

"It's an acknowledged problem throughout the bar that newer lawyers have trouble getting actual



Dan Smith

Greg Haley: "The trend toward mediation is requiring lawyers to adapt and learn new skills ..."

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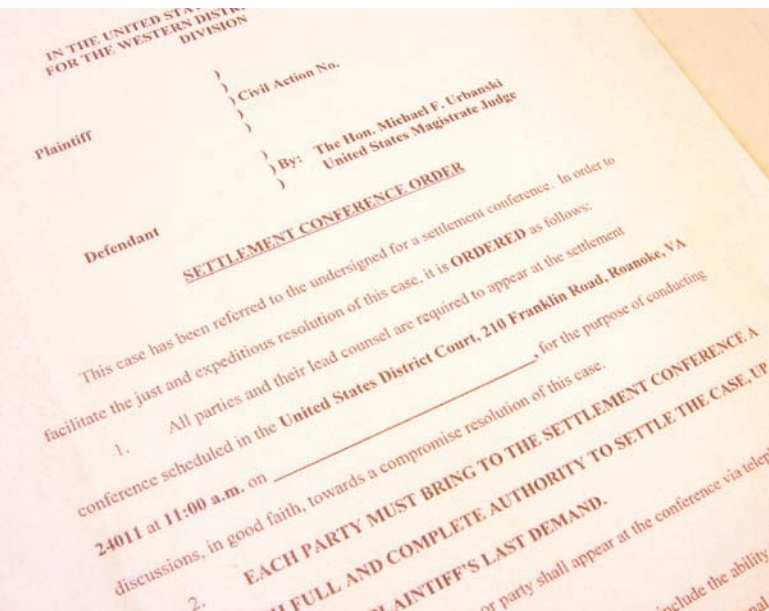


Photo of Urbanski's standard settlement form found on U.S. District Court Web Site

Jay Conley

verdict of a financial payout up to a jury or judge to decide. Haley, who co-authored an article about the growing popularity of mediation in the February issue of Virginia Lawyer magazine, says parties have more control and more flexibility in structuring a settlement during mediation.

That means lawyers must now possess a range of mediation and negotiation skills

trial experience," says Greg Haley, a partner with Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke. "It's a result of the mediation phenomenon. Because so many cases get mediated and resolved."

Both Oddo and Haley estimate that more than 90 percent of civil suits at the state and federal levels never make it into a courtroom.


From a business perspective, it boils down to dollars and cents and the simple fact is that it's often quicker to negotiate a settlement than go through a trial.

"People don't want to pay lawyers to litigate if they can get a settlement," Oddo says.

There is also the uncertainty of leaving the

to serve their clients. "The trend toward mediation is requiring lawyers to adapt and learn new skills, or a different way of applying the same skills," Haley says.

Judge Michael Urbanski, a federal magistrate in Roanoke who has mediated over 100 cases, has a standard settlement order posted on the Web site for the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia so people can better understand the process.

He wrote in a recent article published by the Virginia State Bar Association that it is rare that a case can't be settled through mediation: "Rational people, facing the cost, distraction, pressure, and anxiety of a lawsuit, will nearly always choose to settle a case if each side is willing to listen to the other and explore realistic settlement opportunities." 



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Heart of the system at the lake >

Executive Summary:

Centra Health of Lynchburg has joined the rush to Smith Mountain Lake where health care is a vital and much in demand service.

By **Linda Nardin**

Few Smith Mountain Lake old-timers (anyone living in the community for more than a decade) would have predicted that this area would become a highly-prized plum sought out by the region's major medical providers.

As a matter of fact, until recently, many older residents—and that's a significant part of the population—believed they would have to vacate the lake area permanently as they entered their later years, for lack of local specialized care only available in Roanoke, Lynchburg or far beyond.

Oh, how times have changed.

Smith Mountain Lake is now a sophisticated satellite for resolving what ails you. A dentistry chain, an aesthetics practice and even Carilion with its current internal medicine team and soon-to-be-completed emergency care facility treat patients locally.



Dr. Chad Hoyt is one of four cardiologists practicing at The Cardiovascular Group-Centra Stroobants Heart Center's newly-bult facility in Moneta on Route 122

Centra of Lynchburg is the newest addition to the medical services available. Recently opening a state-of-the art facility at the base of the Mayberry Hills residential development near Downtown Moneta, doctors see patients at The Cardiovascular



The new heart center sits at the base of the Mayberry Hills residential complex, overlooking Downtown Moneta (background)



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Linda Nardin

Group of Centra Stroobants Heart Center.

Board certified cardiologists and their staff offer heart-related testing and analysis—any non-invasive procedure not requiring a hospital setting. Some of the care provided includes cardiac ultrasound, stress-tests and pacemaker monitoring.

Four doctors work in rotation, each spending the morning with patients at Bedford Hospital and the afternoon at the new Moneta-based clinic. Nurses and technologists conduct tests and doctors provide patient consults. The cardiologist quartet reconvenes and works in Lynchburg each Thursday.

"We're excited about our new clinic," says Dr. Chad Hoyt. "Smith Mountain Lake is a growing area and we want to be an integral part of this community." Formerly private Village Family Physicians, for more than 15 years the focus of general medical care at the lake, recently became a part of Centra.


Centra Chief Medical Officer Dr. Chalmers Nunn says Centra is looking to expand and will soon open a specialty clinic in Danville, offering occupational medicine, orthopedics and neurosurgery. Cardiology and urology practices are on the drawing board.

Says Nunn, the Stroobants center is "among the top 100 cardiac care hospitals in the United States year after year." Centra Stroobants is proud of its carotid stenting program and its use of heart CT scans and MRIs.



Centra Stroobant's newest facility in Moneta incorporates non-invasive ultrasound technology to gently peer into the hearts of patients

He says, "Our D2B (door-to-balloon) rates are among the best." Nunn is speaking medical parlance for the crucial minutes it takes from when a heart attack patient reaches the operating room and a "balloon" is inserted into the patient's artery, successfully resolving a clot.

Certainly, when it comes to the heart, sooner means a better outcome. 

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Steve Davidson toasts brewmeister John Bryce: "They drank. They talked. We listened"

'Captain Real Estate' finds the right brew >

Executive Summary:

Steve Davidson had the notion that he could return Roanoke to its beer-making past and it looks like he was right.

By Michael L. Ramsey

Roanoke's new brewery is a case of a local economy coming full circle.

The Star City had several breweries in its early days because of the railroad. It was a time when beer was mostly consumed where it was brewed. The presence of a major railway system helped with transport to a slightly larger market, but in those days, beer was a commodity that perished quickly.

Tapping into local history, Roanoke native Steve Davidson, backed by a small group of

private investors, opened Roanoke Railhouse at the beginning of this year, producing lager that is sold on tap at several local eating establishments. So how did a prominent Realtor and grandson of a pioneering Roanoke retailer become the president of microbrewery?

A few years ago, Davidson was asked by his friend, Mark Hall, to help find a tenant for unused space in the newly-acquired home for his business, Wimmer Tire. Steve toured the building, noted the well, the high ceilings, the solid concrete construction, all the plumbing and the industrial electrical and gas service and the abundance of floor drains.

Davidson was transported back to an earlier venture for which he and another friend failed to find investors. He told Hall that it would be an ideal space for a microbrewery.

Davidson (called "Captain Real Estate" by an old friend) began his search for an existing micro-brewery that would be interested in expanding or moving its operation to Roanoke but there were no interested parties. Instead, Davidson found *brewmeister* John Bryce.

Davidson talked to Bryce, but Bryce said he



Pouring the golden harvest



Bryce inspects the brewing equipment

was not the man for job. Besides, Bryce was about to travel to Germany to study at the *Versuchs- und Lehranstalt für Brauerei (VLB)* in Berlin.

Bryce had founded Blacksburg Brewing Company, and then went on to work with Capital City Brewing Company, Old Dominion Brewing Company and Starr Hill Brewing Company. He wanted to complement his experience by becoming a certified *brewmeister* at VLB.

Davidson and Bryce made a deal. Davidson bought Bryce's brewing equipment and began building the brewery while Bryce was in Berlin. When Bryce returned, he began work on the process of getting the product ready for market adhering to the standards of the *Reinheitsgebot* (German Purity Law) of 1516.


Davidson, meanwhile, was working with

Martin Research to determine what the Roanoke palate wanted to taste using focus groups of Roanokers.

As Davidson says, "They drank. They talked. We listened."

They listened well. In the first quarter of production, Roanoke Railhouse is near capacity and starting to expand.

The dark, smooth lager, Track 1, is available at Annie Moore's, Brambleton Deli, Jimmy V's, Martin's, Montano's, Rockfish and The Village Grill.

If Davidson tapped into Roanoke's history, he may have also found a significant part of the community's future. A Wall Street Journal article in mid-March profiled the burgeoning microbrewery industry—an apparent panacea for laid off executives yearning to scratch the entrepreneurial itch. 



Chris Clemmer and the “Think Chair”: A product “can be taken out of the earth, used for its life cycle, and put back into the earth.”

David Perry

At Barrows, an effortless green >

Executive Summary:

The business furniture sold at this local company is naturally friendly to the environment because it is nearly indestructible.

By David Perry

Recycling is part and parcel of being successful in increasingly green-conscious business these days. Chris Clemmer of Roanoke-based Barrows Business Environments has other ideas. Barrows, a Steelcase office furniture dealer, sells furniture that may never need to be recycled.

“I was in an office recently that had Steelcase file cabinets from 1949, and they’re still using them,” he says. “The City of Danville had desks in its purchasing

department from 1979.”

Clemmer, marketing and sales manager and part owner of the northwest Roanoke furniture dealer, says, “If it lasts forever and it’s good design, then it doesn’t need to be replaced. That’s as green as it gets.”

Steelcase doesn’t just make tank-tough desks and file cabinets; it manufactured the first product in the world ever to be “Cradle to Cradle” certified. That includes the “Think” office chair, on display in Barrows’ offices. Cradle to Cradle certification is the brainchild of William McDonough, a Charlottesville environmental guru who gives his seal of approval to products that are manufactured with eco-sustainability in mind. *Cradle to Cradle* is the title of his popular book, the one that started the movement.

A Cradle to Cradle-certified product “can be taken out of the earth, used for its life cycle, and put back into the earth,” says Clemmer. He speaks highly of Steelcase’s environmental commitment.

The company “bought a wind farm that produces 17 percent of its global power. It

built the first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)-certified manufacturing plant," he says. "It's a wood manufacturing plant, and treating wood is anything but green."


But Clemmer says being green is no big deal to Steelcase.

"It's green and people don't even know they're buying it," says Clemmer of the typical Steelcase item. Unlike most environmentally-friendly goods, "it doesn't cost more; it's just built into the product." Local customers include Breakell Inc. and Lanford Brothers Co.

Barrows Business Environments cleans and

repairs office furniture to keep it in top shape. But, says Clemmer, "That gets to be cost prohibitive. When you can buy a new one for \$200 and it costs you \$150 to paint it, you may as well buy a new one and recycle the old one."

Like the products he sells, Clemmer's path to the green office furniture business is unusual. He took classes for a while at Virginia Western Community College before moving into retail.

Clemmer, ever the optimist, moved from a sunglasses sales job in a mall to a job in Barrows' sales department in 2004 and in April of last year, became an owner in the business taking over marketing and sales in January. 

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People are more receptive to receiving offers through email.

—Patrick and Lisa Plummer



Patrick and Lisa Plummer

Old marketing made new >

Executive Summary:

This franchise helps small business with marketing using e-mail updates and alerts.

By Leigh Ann Roman

Patrick and Lisa Plummer's franchise business is based loosely on the almost lost marketing tool of the anticipated arrival of the mailman, circa 2009.

The Plummers own the Roanoke Valley dealership for SuddenValues.com, a

marketing service that offers merchants a way to use the Internet to communicate with customers.

A subsidiary of US Online.com in Washington, SuddenValues.com started four years ago and has spread to 200 markets in the United States.

With customer permission, SuddenValues, a year old here, builds an e-mail list of a business's customers and e-mails customers about specials and coupons. People can receive weekly updates.

Patrick Plummer calls it "a cost-effective way for our merchants to reach their customers, and people enjoy getting the offers in their e-mail box" in much the same way kids sent in box tops years ago, then sprinted to the

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mail box daily. "Because of the economy, people are more receptive to receiving offers through e-mail."

So far, the Roanoke-area dealership has 23 clients including restaurants, tanning salons, clothing stores and gift shops, Plummer says. Participating businesses pay a flat, annual fee and agree to do two special offers a month.

Patrick Plummer has a background in direct marketing, and Lisa Plummer is an artist. Patrick handles sales and Lisa is in charge of graphics and data entry. They married in July, 2008. "Our goal was to have a business we could run together," he says.

Chip Moore, owner of Annie Moore's Irish Pub, likes the service. "This was something

we wanted to do ourselves, but it was so labor-intensive we never got around to doing it, building an e-mail list," Moore says. "It's cheap for the number of hits you get."

Plummer agrees. "If someone was to do a billboard for one month, that would probably be our rate for the year. And you can't redeem a billboard."

Brandi Khounlo, owner of Beauty Bar Nails & Hair, says, "I can offer the clients specials, and I don't have to do anything. I just tell [SuddenValues] what I want to do and they take care of it," she says.

Plummer says SuddenValues "allows the businesses to invite their loyal customers to come back more often to spend more money." 📧

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Auctioneer Jim Woltz (center), who often works with Ken Farmer, recognizes a bid for the Agnew property on Roanoke City Market

Dan Smith

Going once, twice ... SOLD! >

Executive Summary:

Two long-standing auction firms in the area have teamed up to provide better auction services, and both are thriving in tough economic times.

By Tim W. Jackson

You might recall scenes of fast-talking country auctioneers. The pace at many auction houses is a bit slower, but that kind of friendliness and old-fashioned service is still something that local auction firms still aspire to.

Woltz & Associates in Roanoke and Ken Farmer Auctions & Appraisals in Radford have been in the auction game for a long time. Farmer says he met Jim Woltz about 30 years ago. "We played bluegrass music together," Farmer says, "and we've been friends and colleagues ever since."


Farmer and Woltz & Associates teamed about 10 years ago, primarily for real estate auctions. One such partnership happened recently with the sale of the Agnew Seed Company building and contents in Roanoke to retailers Kirk and Dina Miller.

Woltz & Associates specializes in the sale of a variety of properties by auction and the traditional brokered method. Woltz and Farmer work together on a handful of real estate auctions each year, many similar to that of the Agnew Seed Company.

Jim Woltz began his career in 1972 and founded Woltz & Associates in 1991. The firm is staffed with five full-time employees and nine real estate agents and auctioneers.

Farmer began business in Radford in 1979 and opened his auction house about 15 years later. His son, Will Farmer, is a part-time auctioneer with the company. Ken Farmer has been regular for 10 years on the PBS program "Antiques Roadshow." His specialties include the appraisal and selling of American furniture and folk art, in addition to sales of fine art and decorative art. Typically, his auctions are held at his offices in Radford a couple Saturdays a month.

Farmer says the troubled economy is having



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Ken Farmer with Agnew auction winners Kirk and Dina Miller

Dan Smith

an effect on auctions and auction companies: “The high-end, high-quality stuff is still selling, but the biggest problems are coming in the middle market. It is soft right now.”

Lifestyle changes are having an impact too: “People want things that are more practical,” Farmer says. “They don’t have as much interest in Victorian furniture, cut glass, fine china, and silverware.”


Farmer says the auction business revolves around four Ds: death, divorce, debt, and downsizing and there’s a distinct increase in those “selling because they need to,” Farmer says.

Often the allure is “the illusion of a bargain,” Farmer says. A primary principle of the auction business is that if you have five or 10 people who want something, you’re in a great position to sell. If not, those bargains

that everyone is hunting are not typical.

“Most of the time the people who come to the auctions are pretty knowledgeable and keep each other honest,” Farmer says. “They know the value of items, so not too many things slip through.”

Radford resident Kevin Tapp, a collector of postcards and paper ephemera, has experiences that tend to agree with Farmer’s assessment. He says, “A good auction draws knowledgeable clientele—including many dealers—so my chances of sneaking away with something that other buyers didn’t know the value of [goes] down the tubes instantly.”

Tapp says that it’s that thrill of the hunt—for a bargain—that keeps him coming back, just as Farmer says. 



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Meeting Rooms at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore have movable walls and doors to create different sized rooms



Work Spaces

A rethinking of how space is used >

Executive Summary:

A Roanoke law firm needed more space, but didn't want to move to another building. A solution emerged.

By Jill Elswick

A few years ago, Roanoke-based law firm Gentry, Locke, Rakes & Moore considered moving out of its offices on the seventh and

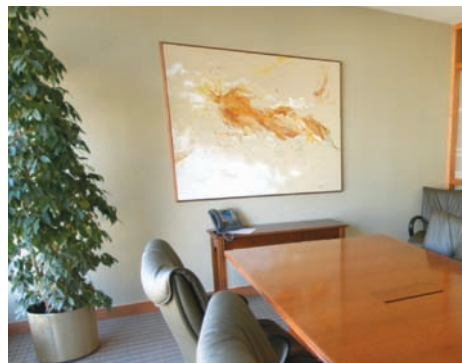
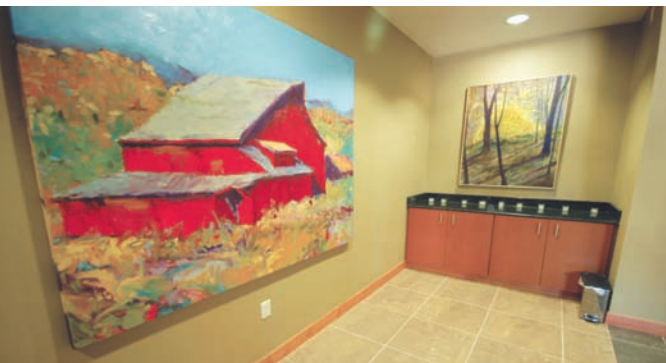
eighth floors of the SunTrust building. The firm was growing rapidly. It would soon need more space for employees and visiting clients.

Yet the firm's management didn't really want to move. Gentry Locke had been in the building since 1978. "This building is in the perfect space for us to do work," says Managing Partner Mike Pace.

When office space became available on the sixth floor of the SunTrust building, Gentry Locke opted to lease it rather than move.

The firm hired architect and designer Lora Katz to design the new workspace.

Says Pace, "Growth required more space, which caused us to rethink how we were using our existing space."



Local art is a major part of the look of the rooms



A kitchen gets considerable use at GLRC; Mike Pace with rolling book shelves in the library



all photos: Dan Smith

The new offices feature a number of conference rooms to meet a growing employee need for meeting space and training rooms. Each room is named for the view outside its window: Mill Mountain, Blue Ridge, Tinker Mountain, Bank.

Katz's goal was to fit up to 30 people in the large boardroom, so that all the attorneys could be seated at once. She selected tables that can be easily reconfigured. To seat all the lawyers, tables can be arranged into a single, long table. All tables are "wired" so workers can plug in laptops and other devices.

A catering kitchen with an open serving window adjoins the boardroom, with a tiled path to and from the elevator, so food can be transported easily.

To save energy, Katz opted for tinted windows. Solar shades let in light, but block out heat and cold. "They save huge amounts of dollars in energy," says Katz.


The natural light coming in through the windows creates a more comfortable environment, particularly for administrative workers. Their desks are positioned near the windows. "When you have people working, you want them to be able to see out," says Pace, citing studies that show natural light increases productivity.

The new workspace layout is open and easy to navigate. "The circulation and flow through the floor is easier," says Katz.

Katz selected a palette of earth tones for the new workspace. The walls are light sage green. The leather on the boardroom chairs is deep olive. "It's a subtle color scheme that enhances the art collection," says Katz. Gentry Locke's offices are decorated with colorful local artworks.

Basset-based Clark Construction completed the year-long project in November, despite a water leak that set construction back by a month. "I have found a huge respect for what

it takes to pull a project like this off from start to finish," says Pace. "We are extremely pleased with our construction and design team."

The sixth floor is turning out to be popular, even among Gentry Locke lawyers whose offices are on the seventh and eighth floors. They often visit to use the conference rooms or to host client meetings. 



The rooms have names based on what you see out the window



The Poff Building in downtown Roanoke

Dan Smith



These projects were selected because they promote energy efficiency, reduce operating costs, and create construction and renovation jobs relatively quickly.

—Sen. Mark Warner

The point of the federal stimulus package is to pump money into a moribund economy, to prime the pump, to get business rolling. So, when the General Services Administration (GSA) turned \$4.5 billion loose to turn federal buildings into something federal press releases called “high-performance green buildings,” that sounded like good news for the nation’s building industry.

When \$66.3 million of that was pointed toward greening federal buildings in Virginia, it sounded like good news for the building industry in Virginia. When nearly \$51 million of that money was aimed at Roanoke’s Poff Building, it turned out to be good news for the building industry—in Pennsylvania.

The architecture and engineering work for Roanoke’s Poff Building won’t be done by any of Roanoke’s architecture or engineering firms. Lora Katz, who works for one of those engineering firms, thinks that’s absurd. There are plenty of Virginia firms that could have handled the job, Katz says. The

The misdirection of federal stimulus funds >

Executive Summary:

There’s a lot of stimulus money set aside for updating and “greening” Roanoke’s Poff Federal Building, but none of it has yet landed in the Roanoke Valley. Instead, it’s resting in the hands of a Pennsylvania business.

By Tim Thornton

Growing since 1975



Brett Nichols, local organic farmer



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Roanoke Valley has a half dozen or so of them, Katz says, including her firm, Clark-Nexsen.

Kathryn Rexrode, spokeswoman for Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va. 6th), says a constituent has contacted the congressman's office asking how such a thing could be so. The congressman has contacted the GSA. Twice. Without getting an answer. Goodlatte is concerned, Rexrode says.

"Obviously, Congressman Goodlatte's concern is jobs in the Roanoke area," she says.

When Kevin Hall, a spokesman for Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, heard that so many Virginia firms had been passed over, he suggested that perhaps the senator's office should "hold their hand and show them how to participate in the federal procurement process."

But, according to Katz, this didn't go through any process the Roanoke firms could have participated in. Companies that are essentially on retainer got the call. It works faster that way. Hall says he couldn't confirm that.

He did say that only a small amount of the money that will be spent on the Poff Building has been spoken for so far. There's still about \$50.4 million left to spend on the Poff Building, Hall says, so there will be "ample opportunity" for Virginia firms—and Roanoke firms—to get in on the project.

Maybe, but Katz points out that money is coming so far down the road that it may not




Dan Smith

Lora Katz: "The money to help our region won't even be going to our state, much less our region"

get to the Roanoke Valley until the recession it's supposed to fight is over. For now, she says, "The money to help our region won't even be going to our state, much less our region."

That doesn't sound like the promise the greening of the Poff Building held back when the federal building projects in Virginia were announced.

"These projects were selected because they promote energy efficiency, reduce operating costs, and create construction and renovation jobs relatively quickly," Warner says in a press release announcing the green building stimulus. "More importantly, these projects support the expansion of Virginia's 'green building' industry, and that's important for our state's longer-term economic vitality."

Maybe it's only coincidence that press release was issued on April Fool's Day. 

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David Perry

Seedlings push through in their pots

In the end, it's about the farming >

Executive Summary:

Polly Hieser doesn't like the business aspect of her career, but the daily work in the fields—and providing healthy food for her customers—has its own rewards.

By David Perry

They say the people of Floyd County march to the beat of a different drummer.

In Polly Hieser's case, it's a West African drummer. The Check farmer loves to dance to the sounds of West Africa, and just last year married a Ghanaian musician whom she met while he was performing in Floyd.

For the past 19 years, Hieser has run the Seven Springs Farm Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, providing locals with fresh, organic vegetables seven or eight months of the year.

Hieser lives what many in the suburban comforts of southwest Roanoke County might consider a rustic lifestyle. Her home is a modest wood-sided dwelling with solar panels out front and a composting pit toilet out back. She rises early and works on the farm most every day, tending the wide variety of vegetables she includes in her customers' weekly produce delivery.



David Perry

““

I'm not a workaholic, even though I like to work hard and I don't like to get up early, even though I do.

—Polly Hieser

Polly Hieser: “I really don't like being a boss. I'm indecisive and it's hard for me to make decisions”

"I work seven days, but not 10 hours every day," Hieser says. "I'm not a workaholic, even though I like to work hard, and I don't like to get up early, even though I do."

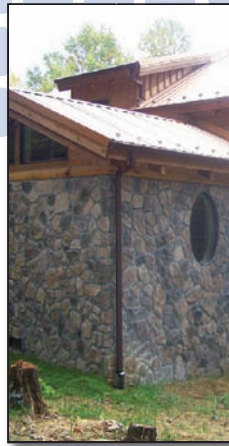
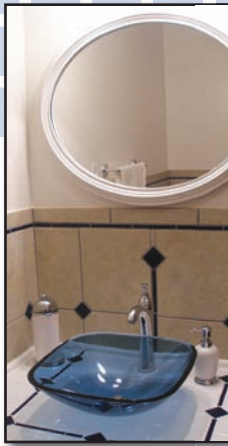
Hieser was a pioneer in the CSA world, considering that the very first CSA in America was started in 1985. "I wish I had a teacher," says Hieser. "I'm just inventing the wheel. I don't know anybody else doing it other than people in my generation who are in the same boat as me ... I didn't know what kind of tractor to buy. I just saw one the other week that's what I should have bought. How did I know?"

Being the Decider is tough for Hieser sometimes, too: "My biggest struggle is being a boss. I'm indecisive and ... it's hard for me to ... tell people what to do and correct them when they're doing it wrong."

Fortunately, the farming comes a little easier than being a CEO, although she's had a few failures along the way. She doesn't grow corn

In Brief

Name: Polly Hieser
Age: 55
Company: Seven Springs Farm CSA
Location: Check
Type of business: Community-Supported Agriculture
Title: Owner
History: The Newport News native moved to Floyd County by way of Philadelphia and tried something crazy—charging customers up front for a season's worth of vegetables grown the old-fashioned way, without chemicals. She's still going strong 19 years later, feeding more than 100 families in the New River and Roanoke Valleys every year from May to December. Today, Polly enjoys West African drumming and dance in addition to her true love—growing stuff.



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David Perry

On the farm, it's all pretty simple, including directions

any more—"People would either say it's awful or the best corn they ever had"—and she has given up on peas, too.

"At first, I would try until the very last thing would die," Hieser says. "Now, I'm giving up sooner. At some point you have to cut your losses and plow it in, and that feels really good once you've done it, because then I'm not agonizing over it all the time."

As any farmer knows, making a living off the land is a gamble. "It's hard to know what's a mistake and what's the luck of the draw," Hieser says. "We had a hailstorm one year that just flattened everything. That was the easiest thing to get over, because there was no way I could blame it on myself."

Ultimately, it comes down to this: "I just want to be a better farmer." 

Other area farms

Seven Springs Farm's CSA fills quickly each spring. The following local farms offer CSA programs to the region (there are others, as well):

Blue Ridge Growers Cooperative

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mikeburton7@hotmail.com

Waterbear Organic Farm

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waterbearorganicfarm@yahoo.com
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Repositioning urban wildlife >

Executive Summary:

It's a modern problem, caused by urban—and suburban—expansion at a dizzying clip. The displaced animals must be eliminated and Jason Reger is the guy who eliminates them—lethally.

By Leigh Ann Roman

Birds, bats, beavers, snakes and skunks. As owner and founder of Blue Ridge Wildlife Management, Jason Reger's average day could include any or all of these animals.

He founded the business in the Roanoke area 11 years ago, learning about the wildlife control business from a professor at the University of Tennessee who gave him a book on how to start such a company. "I'd never heard of it. I took it home and read it, and here we are," says Reger, a wildlife biologist.

During his first year of business, Reger worked on his own and had about 20 customers. Today, he is part of a staff of five and the company averages about 350 customers per year, roughly one a day on average, he says. The busy season is from April to September, when he can work 65 to 70 hours a week in the New River and Roanoke Valleys.



Jason Reger and one of his pals, a blacksnake

Reger is known for his bat work and covers most of Southwest Virginia for that specialty. He says he was the first wildlife control professional in Virginia certified by the National Wildlife Control Operators Association. And he will become treasurer of the national association in June.

Wildlife control is a growing business, because of urban development. "We are encroaching on [animals'] land," he says. "As we continue to grow in population and build subdivisions, the problems just get bigger," he says.



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For example, there are coyotes in Roanoke known to eat out of dog bowls. But the most common call he gets is groundhogs. About four years ago, a few children at a church near Brandon Avenue were bitten by a groundhog because the children got between the groundhog babies and their den, he says.

Reger's company can trap and dispose of any nuisance wildlife including birds, bats, beavers, coyotes, foxes, woodchucks, muskrats, opossums, raccoons, skunks, snakes, squirrels, moles, and voles. Once the animals are trapped, they are euthanized, frozen and taken to the landfill. The state gives Reger little choice but to kill the captured animals: According to Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, one cannot possess, transport, and relocate wildlife in the Commonwealth.

Reger says his services cost \$139 to set traps

and keep them baited—and \$30 per animal captured. But he is effective. He had just returned from Lynchburg where seven traps had been set for someone whose property was being destroyed by beavers. The next day, he had caught four beavers in a one-acre pond.

Dawn Hearp, who lives in Fairway Forest near the Hidden Valley Country Club, says that Reger has helped her with her Roanoke property and her home on Smith Mountain Lake. "Between a couple of homes and several members of the family, he has helped us with squirrels and skunks in the back yard. And he has helped us with possums and birds," Hearp says. "Not only does he take care of the problem, he tells you how to prevent it from happening again."

More information about Blue Ridge Wildlife Management can be found at <http://yourwildlifepro.com>. 

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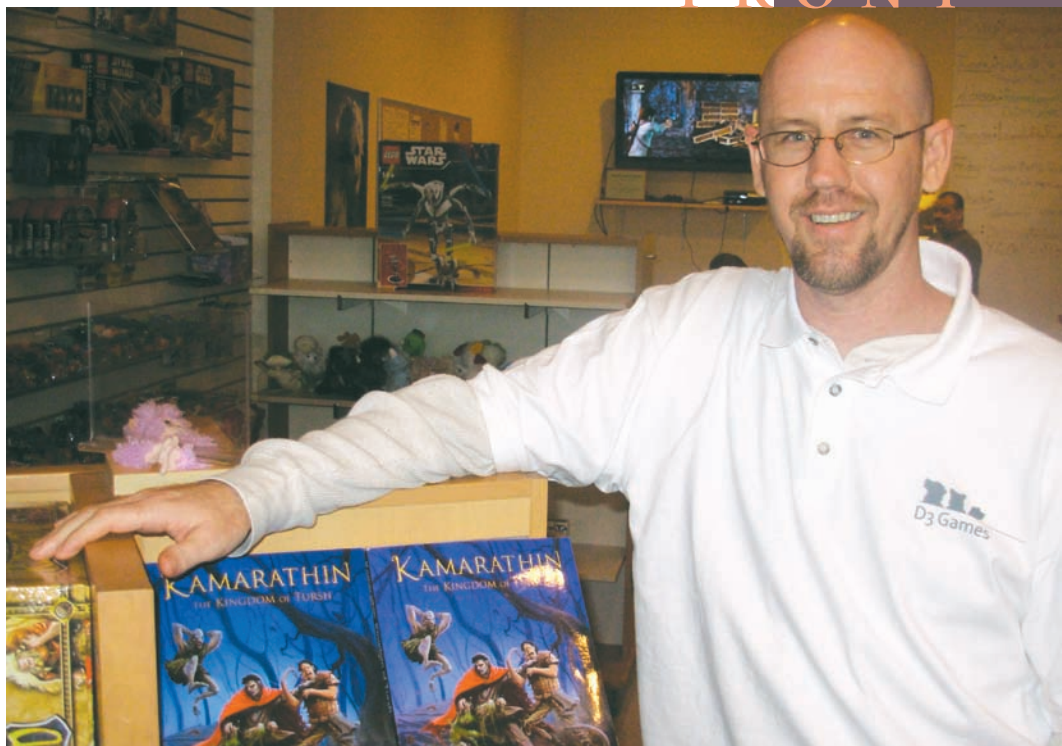
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Jason Yarnell with his book: “Cultures evolve through their religion and their language. I tried to incorporate that into my world”

Rod Belcher

Master of the game >

Executive Summary:

In the complex and intriguing world of games, Jason Yarnell is more than a player; he’s a creator.

By Rod Belcher

Jason Yarnell is helping create a hero, not out of flesh and blood, but paper and imagination.

Yarnell points to columns of letters and numbers on the sheet of paper that Jeremy Bethel, is holding. To a casual observer, the combination of abbreviations looks and sounds like parts of the periodic table, but Yarnell explains each one calmly, casually.

“See, your CON, here—that’s your constitution. It’s how healthy your character is and how well you resist things like illnesses or poison.”

Bethel, the manager of a local game store, is one of the players in the adventure game

Yarnell is directing this evening. It takes place in the world of Kamarathin—an imaginary world Yarnell has created and populated.

The character, created with formulas from a rulebook, will, when completed, be as detailed and engaging as any hero or heroine you’d find in a novel, TV show or movie.

Role playing games, or RPG’s, have existed since the 1970s with the granddaddy of them all, Dungeons and Dragons, and manages to survive today in an age of computerized competition, like World of Warcraft. A cross between those how-to-host-a-murder dinner parties you used to get invited to and the most vital, and primal, aspects of the art of storytelling—RPGs are interactive fiction where the storyteller and those listening help create the story.

Yarnell and his wife, Anne, are taking his imaginary world of Kamarathin, and turning it into the cornerstone of a real world entertainment business. The Yarnells’ company, D3 Games, released its first book—Kamarathin-The Kingdom of Tursh—and it has been well-received by



Jason Yarnell and Jeremy Bethel of Cosmic Castle games shop work on an outline

Rod Belcher

critics and gamers, alike.

"I've developed the world, on and off over the last 14 to 15 years," Jason says. "It took about a year and a half to develop the book."

The couple started D3, named for their three dogs, in 2007, after an initial foray into computer game development.

"Our business model went from computer games to pen and paper games," Anne says. "With computer games, the majority of our investment capitol went into development of the project. Costs were lower with this project."


The book details Kamarathin in painstaking detail for gamers wishing to explore it.

"Anthropology and religious studies are hobbies of mine," he explains. "Cultures

evolve through their religion and their language. I tried to incorporate that into my world."

While Jason oversaw the books development and wrote, he coordinated with a team of writers and artists, including Alec Rosenblit, David E. Mcguire, Adam Schmidt and Avery Wells.

Jason says that D3 has several new projects on the horizon, including a new Kamarathin release in June, a miniatures line in production and plans to publish other people's game products as well as continue development of the massively multiplayer computer game.

"At this point," Anne says, "we're looking at funding and investment options for the future. Jason is really talented at what he does. We're counting on imagination to keep driving the company forward." 



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Cammy Nolen, David Shanks (top left) and Tim Clontz offer assistance daily at the Small Business Development Center at Radford University

Tim Jackson

RU Center assists small businesses >

Executive Summary:

Small business owners often need a helping hand and the SBDC at Radford University has one to offer.

By Tim W. Jackson

Small businesses typically have limited resources. Time and money are in short

supply, so assistance is often welcome in developing ideas, business plans, marketing plans, and financial sources. Radford University's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is helping businesses to begin in the New River Valley in addition to helping existing businesses thrive—or in today's economy, at least stay alive.


The SBDC has worked with an array of clients over the years—some have been high profile, while many have been small businesses with just one or two employees. David Shanks, director of the center, says that this year the SBDC has been working more with existing businesses than start-ups. He suspects the economy has many small businesses eager to strengthen their business plans and develop new customers.

Shanks, counselor Tim Clontz and administrative assistant Cammy Nolen are in the SBDC office on a daily basis. Reed Kennedy assists with the SBDC part-time. Together, they work with about 200 clients a year. The number has dropped in recent years, but that doesn't mean less work. Shanks says in 2006 the center assisted about 250 clients and that number was down to 173 for 2008. But Shanks says the number of hours per client is intensifying.

Blue Mountain Organics/Sweet Water Market of Floyd has required a lot of staff hours. Since 2004, the SBDC has invested almost 1,500 hours to get the business started and then help it grow. The business, known for its organic fruits, nuts, butters and a new non-dairy ice cream product, has gone from an idea to a home-based operation to a business that now employs about 20 people and continues to increase its sales.

The SBDC has also worked with Bull & Bones Brewhaus and Grill, which opened at the beginning of this year in Blacksburg. Shanks says the center has worked with Bull & Bones for more than 70 hours, helping create a business plan and providing research into financing opportunities and potential investors.

The center offers a variety of mostly free service. There is a charge for some courses and software offered, but free services include consulting, financial analysis, marketing assistance, providing economic and business data and assisting in finding sources of business financing. The center assists with business forms and offers human resources information.

"We're here to help in any way we can with small businesses," Shanks says. "We want them to consider us a key resource." 

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This is what we do. You don't quit just because of the economy.

—Sue Brozovsky



Neil Ames and the attack of the mosquito

Rachael Garrity

Collaboration not so off the wall >

Executive Summary:

A group of seven artists combines a variety of disciplines and a single goal: to make good art.

By Rachael Garrity

According to Scott Adams, who draws the popular Dilbert cartoon, "Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep." A conversation with the seven of this region's artisans who call their collaborative venture Art Off the Wall offers ample proof of just how right he could be.

Diverse in background—some hailing from as far north as Minnesota and as far south as Texas and others home-grown—these up-front people celebrate their differences, enjoy what they do, and work together because, as one of them put it, "We like each other, and we like our art."

Rather than opting for a gallery tour, as some other local groups do, they hold at least one show per year, the latest one staged the first weekend in May at the Jacksonville Center for the Arts in Floyd.

"We think people really enjoy coming to

one space to see a variety of items," explains Linda Osborne, who moved to this region via California, Florida and Michigan, and fashions not only jewelry, but other decorative items out of the lampwork beads she creates.

Dale Norton, a technical writer by profession, who began hand-turning bowls and other forms from native wood only four years ago, points out that after the seven had joined forces they realized none of their work requires a frame or hangs on



Dale Norton hanging



A copper-winged butterfly by Neil Ames



Linda Osborne's beads



Ames' Copper fox

a wall, hence the moniker.

That sparks a chuckle from Ann Hess, perhaps best-known to citizens of Montgomery County for her community work, including two terms on the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors, and a potter who is fierce about forming pieces that are as functional as they are attractive. She says, "We're all a bit off the wall, too."

Also very active in community work, especially as it relates to art, Nancy Norton is the incoming president of the Blacksburg

Regional Arts Association, works in the Blacksburg Public Library and still finds time to devise dramatic pieces from stained glass. She is incorporating wine-bottle bottoms into the work, and has included among her shows this year both North Cross School in Roanoke and Claytor Lake.

Fiber artist Glenda George, whose shibori creations are familiar to visitors of various galleries and gift shops in Floyd, as well as to shoppers in Abingdon, is an avid gardener, and a volunteer at the Jacksonville Center. For example, she and other artists play an

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Coat by Glenda George


A flying heron in copper

active role in the local "Empty Bowls" food program, the proceeds from which provide food for needy children.

Neil Ames, a landscaper who prefers to be called a "gardener" creates a variety of nature-inspired sculptures out of copper, brass and steel. Most of his work is on commission, one recent one a specific mosquito (*Aedes aegypti*) for scientists at Virginia Tech. He has also exhibited at the Miller Off Main Gallery in Blacksburg.

Sue Brozovksy, once known for her work as

a blacksmith, now concentrates on sculpture in alabaster and soapstone, and teaches for the Blackburg YMCA in a new studio she has created at her home.

It was she who responded first when the group was asked if the current economic situation had dampened their enthusiasm. "This is what we do," she emphasizes. "You don't quit just because of the economy. What's more, this is one-stop shopping, paying a reasonable price, supporting the local community, and adding beauty to life. Can it get any better?" 

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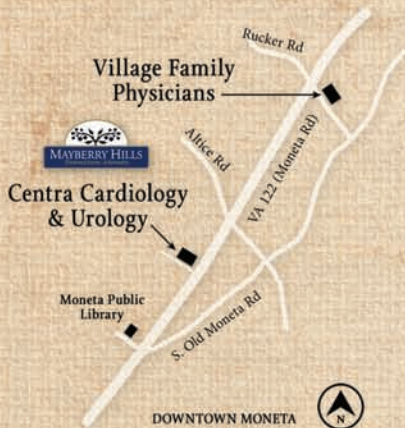
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This is not your daddy's public radio.

—Seth Williamson

Back Roads & Blue Highways
Saturdays / 8pm—midnight
WVTF Public Radio (89.1FM)
(other frequencies accessible outside
Roanoke, Lynchburg, NRV)



Seth Williamson at work

Tom Field

Off the beaten path >

Executive Summary:

Seth Williamson's Saturday night Americana, and acoustic music show, is causing quite a stir.

By Tom Field

In almost deadpan fashion, in between songs you never hear anywhere else, on a local public radio station of all places, listeners hear the following quips and setups:

"...she sounds like Sheryl Crow, but twice as pretty."

"...you find yourself waking up in a colorful bathroom because of it [tequila]."

"...it's a wonderful love story... up until the part when the cops arrive."

The announcer (he doesn't call himself a dj) is Seth Williamson. Anyone within WVTF public radio's 89.1 FM broad-reaching market is all too familiar with the name. And after 43 years in the business (starting in high school in Orange County in 1966) everyone in radio knows him. But playing all kinds of music, from marching bands to the expected classical genre, Williamson has a little different take on his new show that airs on Saturday nights:

"This is not your daddy's public radio."

An understatement. And another classic Seth Williamson deadpan remark.

The show, *Back Roads & Blue Highways*, is approaching its first birthday (July), but to listen to it, you'd think it was brand new.

It's that fresh. Every Saturday night. "Americana" is a term that could mean different things to different people. But Williamson opens up the genre, simplifies and clarifies like a professor of musicology.

"You hear roots of the blues, rock and roll, country, and rockabilly," he says.


The playlist is eclectic, featuring artists from Delbert McClinton to Lucinda Williams to John Hiatt, to bands you might only meet on a back road, with names like Asylum Street Spankers, Micky and the Motorcars and Black Joe Lewis.

The show seems to be just the ticket for a growing audience. And just right for Williamson. He says good radio is all about "creating moments" for people, and this program is the most fun he's ever had. He also says the program is the most successful one ever launched at the station since he's been there, judging by the feedback. But like his setups for the songs he plays, Williamson's comments are always tempered with a dose of reality, and plentiful use of phrases like "I think" and "I hope."

"Our listeners are more willing to take a chance," he says. "I think we've tapped into an underserved market. I hope Arbitron [ratings] will agree."

Williamson is enthusiastic, but says on air he wants to sound "like a normal person."

If you didn't listen closely, the growing audience for *Back Roads* might actually believe the announcer *is* a normal guy, with his deadpan delivery.

But like the show itself, Seth Williamson is far from normal. That's why we listen. 

Our people doing our work >

My View

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

Executive Summary: *In recent years, far too many contracts for local construction and design have gone to out-of-town firms. The practice should come to a screeching halt. And if that sounds provincial, then so be it.*

The City of Roanoke has determined that it would be a good thing if you shop locally, invest in the local economy, support our merchants and our institutions. The idea will be especially effective if the city follows its own advice, which it has a disturbing recent habit of not doing.

There are quite a few examples—most notably of late, the renovation of the Roanoke City Market building—and there are the usual explanations for selecting firms from Charlotte or Atlanta or Washington or Philadelphia to do Roanoke projects, but they don't work, especially in this economy when jobs are being lost and money is being funneled away from our own people—even federal dollars for the local federal building (see Tim Thornton's story on page 44).

Let me cite the example of the \$120,000 Roanoke recently sent out of town to an architectural/engineering firm to determine that the Market Building is a mess. That money did not need to be spent. The condition study had been done—with exactly the same conclusions—in each of the two previous years. The \$120,000 represents the amount of money the city would have needed to re-open two closed swimming pools (serving poor children) or saving two to four city jobs that are being cut. (Money has since been found for the pools.)

Roanoke's history of hiring local firms to design or rehabilitate its buildings is spotty, but there are some excellent examples of success. The Roanoke Civic Center was designed by a consortium of local firms because none had the expertise to do it all. It's a good facility many years after completion. The new addition, designed by an out-of-town firm, has come under considerable ridicule because it doesn't fit with the original design and many people have a problem with the way it works.

Former City Manager Bern Ewert made sure that local firms were at the center of his Design '79 facelift of downtown Roanoke, the one that gave us today's vibrant, lively City Market. Most of the private work taking place right now in areas to the west of City Market is being done by locals and the rehabilitated buildings, most of them residential, are forming the basis for an exciting kind of downtown living most often reserved for big cities. The local architects and engineers understand Roanoke, its people, its buildings, its commercial interests, its shopping habits, its government and its goals.

Assistant City Manager Brian Townsend says state law determines how most purchases are made: "... Localities cannot make 'set asides' or related policies to provide a 'leg up' for local businesses ..." In seeking A&E contractors, says Townsend



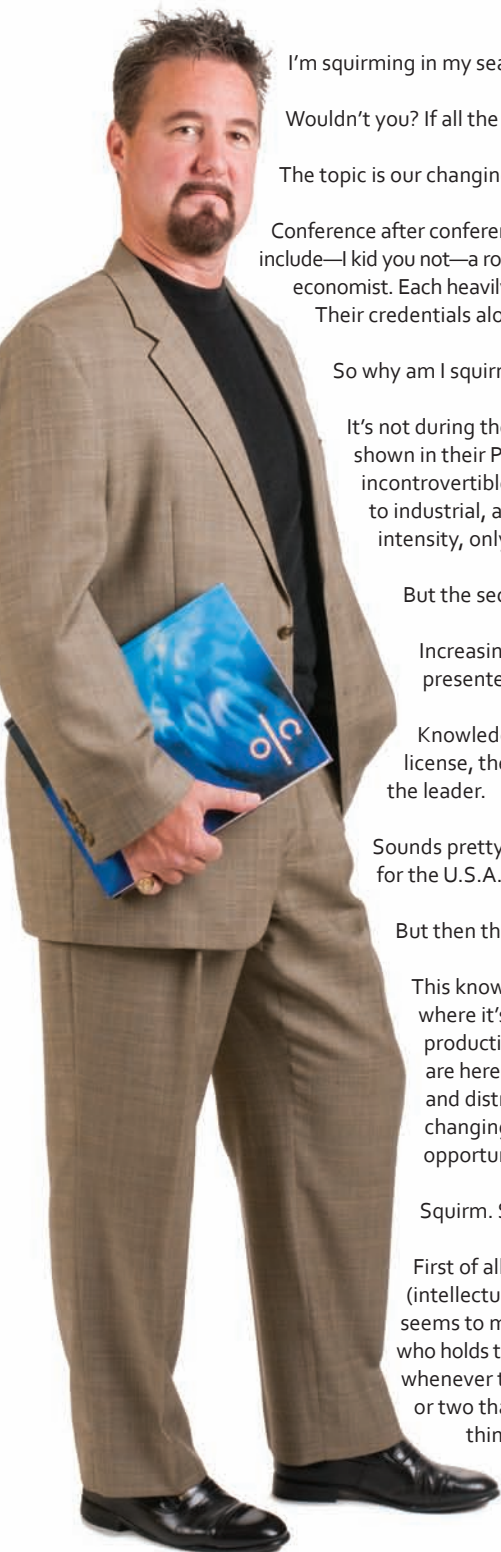
continued to Page 62

The whole chain >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

BLOG: [ontapfrompub.blogspot.com]



I'm squirming in my seat.

Wouldn't you? If all the experts are saying the same thing ... and you disagree?

The topic is our changing economy—and what to do about it.

Conference after conference. Interesting talks. And the latest expert presentations include—I kid you not—a rocket scientist, an acclaimed futurist author, and a respected economist. Each heavily involved in research and successful in his own enterprise. Their credentials alone should shut the mouth of any skeptic.

So why am I squirming?

It's not during the first part of their talk, I can tell you that. The changes, shown in their Power Point slides and books and Web Sites, are incontrovertible. We know about our own society moving from agrarian to industrial, and though there may be variances in the speed and intensity, only a fool would not see we have to move to a new epoch.

But the second part of their talks?

Increasingly, everyone is coming to the same conclusion. And it is presented as a brilliant deduction. Here's how it usually goes:

Knowledge is king. Intellectual property rules. He who holds the license, the invention, the ownership of idea—is the winner and the leader.

Sounds pretty good. Makes a lot of sense. Sure would work out nicely for the U.S.A., given our strong intellectual superiority.

But then the experts take it further.

This knowledge capital is so valuable, we need not worry about where it's produced. We own it; therefore it doesn't matter if production is exported, if skills are imported, if material resources are here or elsewhere. Their message is clear: anyone can produce and distribute, but only one can own. There is no need to fear this changing workforce. If we're smart, we'll embrace the new opportunity and retreat to our R&D labs with increasing fervor.

Squirm. Squirm. Squirm.

First of all, no matter what part of the supply chain you hold (intellectual, product or service, resource or raw material) it seems to me the one holding more of it is ahead of even the one who holds the most valuable part of it. Globalists cry out "isolationist" whenever this is brought up, but I know a middle eastern country or two that wields an awful lot of power over one little crude thing beneath their soil.

continued to Page 63



These drawings (above and below) are from local and outside firms competing for the City Market Building job. The one above is local; the other one got the job

Smith / My View

from Page 60

"The state procurement act requires us to negotiate with the most qualified [candidates], based on their experience, background, and content of their response to the Request for Proposals, etc. While we obviously like to engage local firms in encouraging them to participate in the city's procurement opportunities ... it is my understanding the location of the business within the city would not be an acceptable/ permissible criteria for selection based on state code." To me, that says the city can pick anybody it wants, within reason, as long as it doesn't say, "We pick you because you're local."

City Attorney Bill Hackworth says in an e-mail, "The city's Procurement Manual [provides] that 'special emphasis should be placed on including local vendors, small, minority, women-owned, and service disabled veteran-owned businesses on all solicitation mailing lists.'"

One of the most successful architectural-engineering firms in this region of late is Spectrum Design, led by Roanoke native John Garland. This firm has been at the center of the Downtown Renaissance and its portfolio is a what's what of Roanoke 's recent projects. John says that architectural/

Uniformity is in; creativity/innovation is nice work if you can get it.

Look at that god-awful new Social Security Building on Campbell Ave. in Roanoke. This is a perfect example of a design firm building what it has built before and smacking it between two attractive, smart buildings like a blister.

Spectrum teamed with a Cincinnati firm to build the lively new Fire/EMS building at the corner of Franklin and Elm. The Cincinnati firm had the credentials; Spectrum had the designers. The building looks good, works well and everybody's happy, including those of us who want locals building locally.

John Garland talks about local firms' motivation to do well: "We have to live here," he says. "We have to face our critics every day. We depend on them for work, so we'd better do it well."

I recently took a look at the proposal for the rehabilitation of the City Market Building that the city administration favors and the one Spectrum presented on behalf of Downtown Roanoke Inc. The outside firm's (Cunningham / Quill is its name, if that matters) final proposal looked to me like it had been thrown together by a student and its most noteworthy point of interest was the presentation of a bunch of fruit.



Spectrum's work (done early in the interview process and not a finished product) was professional, innovative, artistic, graphically appealing and it understood all that had come before, while presenting new elements. It was, frankly, a far superior plan.

The city administration, in recent years, has appeared reluctant to listen to those who live here when it comes to projects and

Letters

The Credentialed Society

Editor,

Your "My View" piece for May ("Just looking for a chance") rang out loud and true with me. Chris Berry's desires from life seem much like mine and equally as frustrating.

My husband has often run into being shredded by HR due to no four-year degree. He's successful because he's passionate and smart. He also has good connections and gets good jobs because of it. I look good on paper with four certifications, BS, MBA and I've had good jobs because of it. At 54 I look fresh on paper, but am I full of fresh ideas and the energy that another person might have without all the "right stuff"? Maybe not.

When I was a purchasing manager for [a local company] the resumes I saw were not screened by HR. But, I did the same thing they do: no college degree equaled File 13. Boy, was that stupid. Fortunately, File 13 wasn't a shredder. The degreed people I interviewed were either dimwits or unmotivated. The person I hired, without a lick of college on her resume, was the best integrated circuit buyer around. I got her for cheap, not free, and on a trial basis. Debbie was, and probably still is, a star.

When 100 people apply for a single professional job, the fastest first screen is formal education. It's frequently a poor choice to make. In my 35 years of

work [including owning a business] it seems to me that people like Chris, with or without degrees, are valued less and less. Is that where businesses should be going if they expect to move ahead of their competition or be around in 10 years?

The place for people like Chris appears to be in their own companies, being true to themselves and generating loads of fun ideas and opportunities for their own staff of fresh minds.

Susan J. Stengel
Lynchburg



John Phillips

Correction:


In the May cover story on "Predictions: What we see in our region's future," an incorrect photo was placed for John Phillips, president of Premier Transfer and Storage.

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

has been roundly criticized for that.

It's time for our representatives to listen to and act on behalf of those who love their city and who have the talent and the experience to work on its buildings. There are a lot of procedural excuses that can be made for many of the failures here,

but the goal should be to keep as much work as possible local.

When this region's companies get the work, the money stays here, jobs stay here and we don't wind up wringing our hands over what we could have done with that down-the-rathole \$120,000. 

Field / On Tap

from Page 61

But there's even a more dangerous possibility none of the experts seem to consider. An idea so foreign, it doesn't appear to be a legitimate threat on their radar screens of intelligent prognostications.


What if intellectual property and all the knowledge-based capital they put full trust in, became the commodity? Instead of the other way around?

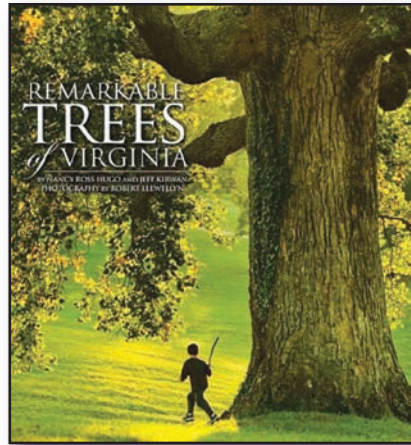
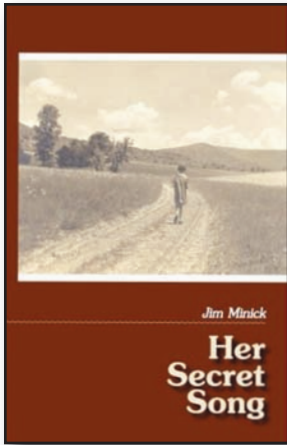
In the 15th century, one could have foreseen the need for a reliable time piece, commissioned some smart folks over in Switzerland to develop it, then produced watches for the new world to

advance ahead of everyone else.

Designing the next great energy source—or producing it? Discovering the cure for cancer—or producing it? Inventing efficient housing and transportation for growing populations—or producing them?

Given the choice, I'd like to be the one who owns and operates the entire chain. But if we only get one part of it, I'm not convinced the non-producer is the best end to hold.

Now, let's invent that squirmless chair and build it here, as well. There's more than one furniture plant in southside Virginia just waiting for the order. 



Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our editor and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Each month, we ask or assign readers to submit two or three well-crafted paragraphs about a book they've read lately. You're invited to take part.

Powerful poetic voice

Jim Minick is a pitch-perfect poet. His rare gift, whether telling the story, in *Her Secret Song* (Motes, \$10), of his beloved aunt's illness with all of its suffering and grace, or the stories of *Burning Heaven* (Wind Productions, \$15)—coming upon two crows mating on a road, his memory of a hayfield—is his utter sincerity.

His poems, for all their wonder and compassion, refuse to look away from what vision sometimes bears: "real and angry and alive." As striking as his unswerving gaze is his gorgeously hewn language. In the final poem of *Burning Heaven*, Minick asks what would happen if we "witnessed this world's steady unfolding?" and his poem answers, "We too would bloom."

These books are the stunning blossoms of a man who has listened deeply to the music of being human and who sings it.

—Melanie Almeder

Remarkable Trees of Virginia (University of Virginia Press, 2008) is a coffee table-sized book with beautiful prose, beautiful photographs, and best of all, beautiful subjects. It was written by noted garden writer Nancy Ross Hugo and Jeffrey Kirwan; photography by Charlottesville's Robert Llewellyn. The culmination of a project begun in 2004 to identify the Commonwealth's most remarkable trees, the book features not only champion-sized trees, but historic, community, unique and noteworthy trees (one in Roanoke), as well as a chapter on mighty oaks. Who knew that there are red cedars in Giles County over 450 years old, and trees in Virginia over 800 years old? This stunning book would convert Paul Bunyan to tree hugging.

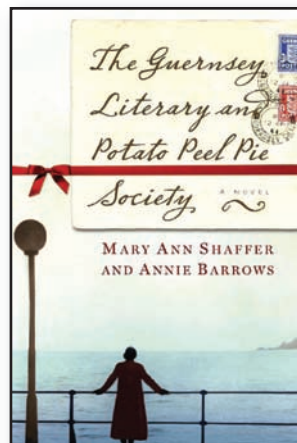
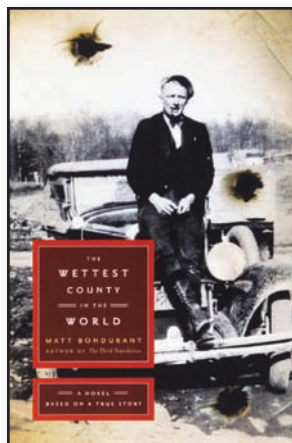
Kirwan, a Virginia tech forestry professor, will present a free illustrated talk on the book at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 23, at Christ Lutheran Church, Grandin Road and Brandon Avenue.

—Bill Hackworth

Curiosity

Just about any time I am in a gathering of writers—whether professional or wannabe—somebody pushes a self-published book at me and asks if I'll review it. Most are nice family mementoes. A few are decent. A good one is a lottery winner. Camelia McNeil Elliott's *Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains* (\$19.95, Infinity) is none of the above, but it is a curiosity of the first order and worth the time you'll spend on it—for reasons you'll determine yourself.

I never figured out if it was a memoir, family



history, rambling ruminations, Appalachian history or ... well, what. But it was interesting in one way or another all the way. Give it a shot if you can find it.

—Dan Smith

Looking for a pulse

I tried really hard to like *The Wettest County in the World* (Scribner, \$25) but found it the most difficult book to finish since my aborted attempt to read *Doctor Zhivago* in Russian many years ago. I figured *Wettest County*, by Matt Bondurant, had a lot going for it when I picked it up. It is, after all, a novel based on Prohibition-era events involving Franklin County moonshine, a subject near and dear to my heart and, on occasion, to my gut.

Also, Bondurant is a Virginian, and that counts for a lot with me, and his family has roots in Southwest Virginia, and that counts for even more. But the book is long on fine writing and short on good old-fashioned story telling. The writer Sherwood Anderson appears in the novel as a central character, but even his presence can't jumpstart the anemic pulse of this novel. It's dull.

—Rex Bowman

Good tale, well told

The title, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows, \$14 Dial Press), sucks you in and the book doesn't disappoint, delivering a delightful, heartwarming tale with enough

eccentric characters to populate, well, a small British village. The story starts in war-ravaged London, a year after the Germans surrender. A young newspaper columnist who had moderate success with her first book is casting about for an idea on what to write about next and she discovers the plight of the people of the Channel Islands, in this case, the Isle of Guernsey, who were invaded and subjugated by the German armed forces. As bad as her life was in bombed-out London, she realizes there are folks who had it much worse and yet, in good British fashion, maintained that stiff upper lip and an amazing outlook on life.

Caught out after curfew one night, the citizens create a book club on the spot to explain their breaking of the rules, but the Society becomes a lifesaver in a very real way, showing the power of literature to get you through really hard times. The tone of the book is like spending the weekend with your favorite maiden aunt, bookish and somewhat highbrow, on your best behavior, full of jokes and good stories.

—Becky Hepler

(**The reviewers:** Melanie Almeder teaches English at Roanoke College and recently released the poetry collection *On Dream Street*; Roanoke City Attorney Bill Hackworth is a Western Virginia Land Trust board member; Becky Hepler is a school librarian in Montgomery County and a freelance writer; Rex Bowman is a Roanoke-based two-time Pulitzer Prize nominee who is working on his third book. His most recent is *Blue Ridge Chronicles*. Dan Smith is the editor of FRONT.)



photo: Dan Smith

A Tech-type plan >

Virginia Tech students, working on six different architectural and engineering projects in Roanoke, made a presentation on their conclusions at the Claude Moore Complex in May. Here Associate Professor Karen Till (center) addresses a packed room.



photo: Christina Koomen Smith

Greening business >

Roanoke City Councilwoman **Gwen Mason** jokes with Berglund Chevrolet's **Will Farrell** (center) and **Bill Tanger** as they gather on Earth Day to report on the Valley's Clean and Green Business Coalition's progress toward its goals. The coalition announced its members reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 13 percent last year, among other things.

Fast training at Foodies >

Linda McNutt Foster (left) introduces **Newt Barrett**, author of *Get Content. Get Customers.* at a seminar Foster's FastTraining and Mel Wheeler Inc. sponsored in May before a full house at Foodies in Roanoke. This is one of a series of seminars, primarily about marketing, Foster is putting on for the business community.



photo: Dan Smith

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

FRONT 'N ABOUT



photos: Tom Field

Grab your Fork. And Cork. >

The first annual **Fork&Cork** was held at First in Main in Blacksburg on the first Saturday in May. The retail shops and restaurants combined with outdoor booths, displays, antique cars, entertainment and a large sequestered wine tasting area to attract more than 2,500 visitors, according to **The Blacksburg Partnership** president **Diane Akers**, who said she was "very pleased with the turnout." About a dozen regional vineyards were represented.



photo: Jane Dalier

SunTrust's economic view >

SunTrust's "Business Over Breakfast" event was held April 23 at the Jefferson Center. **Jeanne Rossomme** spoke to a large crowd on the topic of "Finding Growth in a Challenging Economy."



photos: Tom Field

A "Sparkinar" >

Dr. **Mark Mandell** led a sales workshop, co-sponsored by the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce at Hotel Roanoke on April 29. Account manager **Debbie Call** and presenter **Shawn Bean** managed the literature table for a crowded room to hear the founder of **SparkYourCompany.com**.



photo: Jane Dalier

A mountain mingling >

Area chambers of commerce gathered for the annual **Mingling on the Mountain** event at the historic **Mountain Lake Hotel** on May 8.



photo: Dan Smith

Clark-Nexsen opens its house >

General Contractor **Bob Fetzer** of Building Specialists (right) and **Al Wilkinson** of Sign Design in Roanoke were on hand to take a look at their work as an expanded **Clark-Nexsen** held an open house on May 13. They helped complete the LEED-certified project inside the old Dominion Bank Building downtown in sixteen weeks.



Caught on tape >

Krista Engl of the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge prepared to interview **vbFRONT** Publisher **Tom Field** (center) and Editor **Dan Smith** in anticipation of the Arts Council's annual Perry F. Kendig Awards in June. Field and Smith are the first winners of the Council's Literary Awards and are among several winners in various categories.

A New Building for an Old Neighborhood



Valley Bank South Roanoke Branch

Rife + Wood
ARCHITECTS

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WG Photography

Deborah Huso: "It's actually not a bad idea for a company to hire someone who has worked in journalism to handle public relations"

Executive Summary:

A freelance writer strongly recommends a heavy emphasis on telling your story when the economy is causing difficulty selling.

Need for marketing in tough times >

Being a working writer is tricky at best, so writers need a lot of tricks in their bag. Take Deborah Huso.

By Elizabeth Barbour

Write Well Media is her marketing, advertising, and public relations firm, specializing in the real estate development, building and design, hospitality and tourism industries set in rural Highland County.

While waiting for freelance writing to establish a steady income, Huso figured something out. "It's actually not a bad idea for a company to hire someone who has worked in journalism to handle public relations," she says. "A journalist knows what kind of story pitches grab editors' and reporters' attention, and she is also going to have the industry relationships and trust necessary to be successful in getting solid publicity for clients."

Today's market conditions offer special challenges. "One of the first things businesses tend to cut in troubled economic

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

times is their marketing budget," she says. "But you can't 'sit out' an economic crisis and expect customers to be knocking on your door when it's all over.

"A number of my clients continue to invest time, energy and money in advertising and PR and are still doing well. Yes, they've seen a decrease in sales, but they're still selling. Those who have slashed their marketing budgets are selling virtually nothing.


"The last thing you want to do is take yourself out of the running. When the economy turns around (and history tells us it will) you don't want to have to start from scratch again. Stay visible."

The Homestead Preserve, a thriving green luxury home development on 12,500 acres near Hot Springs, is a neighbor of Huso's and one of her clients. Preserve GM Don Killoren, founding principal of parent company Celebration Associates, says, "Most real estate developers fail because they don't understand the market, their

needs or what makes their offering a compelling opportunity."

The question for Celebration when the Preserve was conceived was, "How do we distinguish ourselves from every developer who claims to be green?" Killoren says, "This is where Deb Huso comes in. She excels in communication and marketing our concept so we appear different where we really are."

Killoren says, "If you add advertising and marketing together, we spent approximately \$2 million in the first two years and we sold 150 home sites for an average of \$450,000 each." That sales record is a good trick with public relations right in the bag.

Huso says before slashing any marketing consider this: "Even if your product is not going to resonate with buyers as much when they're feeling a pinch in their pocketbooks, it's important to hold the confidence of your existing customers. New prospects will already have you on their radar when things turn around and they start purchasing again." 



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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Banks

Kelly Dowdy has been named chief BSA/compliance officer at HomeTown Bank in Roanoke and **Donna Young** is a new assistant VP/deposit operations manager. **Joseph Pennington** has been named VP and controller.

First Citizens Bank in Roanoke has named **Chad Scott** a financial services manager.



Wade

Member One Federal Credit Union has announced the promotion of **Alan S. Wade** to Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer.

Insurance

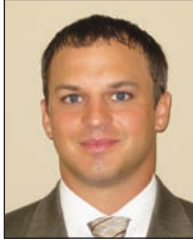
William L. Kite Jr. and D&S Life Agency in Roanoke have earned an Eagle Agency status in the nHealth Agency Recognition Program. D&S is one of only 13 Eagle Agencies in Virginia. nHealth provides an alternative in healthcare coverage for small businesses.

Investing

Beacon Wealth Consultants Inc. has named **Shaun J. Redgate Jr.** associate wealth advisor in its



Redgate



Arney

Lynchburg (Wyndhurst) office.

Drew Arney has joined the staff at McLeod & Company in Roanoke in its tax department.

LEGAL FRONT



Laymon



Goodlatte

Law Firms

Garren R. Laymon has joined Roanoke's Magee Foster Goldstein & Sayers as an associate.

Maryellen Goodlatte, a shareholder with Glenn Feldmann Darby & Goodlatte in Roanoke, has been recognized by Virginia Lawyers Weekly in its inaugural class of Influential Women of Virginia.

WELLNESS FRONT



Bailey

Dental

Tina A. Bailey, who has been Delta Dental's Smart Smiles executive director for the Virginia Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, has moved to Delta Dental of Virginia as public benefits coordinator.

Seniors

Harmony Senior Services of Roanoke has named **Susan Eckert** president.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Awards

João Setubal, associate professor at the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute and the Department of Computer Science in Virginia Tech's College of Engineering, has been awarded the 2009 Business Software Alliance (BSA) Distinguished Innovators' Award.



Warner

Page Warner, vice president for Premier Transfer and Storage in Christiansburg, has been named by Mayflower Transit as the salesperson of the month for February.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Khalilian



Van Hyning



Fedak

Have a career announcement?

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



Beckstrom



Johnson



Bower

Architects, Engineers

The Roanoke office of AECOM Transportation has announced the following promotions: **Kamran Khalilian** to project manager; **Chad Van Hyning** to highway department head; **Ryan Fedak** to assistant

highway department head.

Lisa Beckstrom of S&ME, an architectural and environmental firm in Roanoke, has earned LEED accreditation.

Mike Johnson has joined Anderson & Associates in Blacksburg as a traffic engineer.

Project Manager **Brian Bower** of Thor Inc. in Roanoke has completed the U.S. Green Building Council LEED accreditation exam for new construction and major renovations.

Housing

Scott Reithel has been named VP of property management for Community Housing Partners in Christiansburg.

Real Estate

Dave Stewart has

been added in sales by Prudential Waterfront Properties at Smith Mountain Lake.

Restoration

SERVPRO in Salem has named **Julie Wilburn** office manager.

RETAIL FRONT

Automotive

Roanoke-based Advance Auto Parts has named **Chris Rowe** VP marketing-commercial. **Sarah Powell** is a new senior vice president, general counsel and corporate secretary.

RECREATION FRONT

Perdita Gudrun Andrea Acevedo has been named director of catering at Hunting Hills

Country Club in Roanoke.

EDUCATION FRONT

Colleges

Roanoke College has named **Richard A. Smith** vice president and dean of the college. **Garry Fleming**, Shannon Professor of Business Administration and Economics, has been named a Virginia Association of Economists Distinguished Fellow. **Jonathan Lee** has been named director of development and alumni relations and **Ellen Hinlicky** is the new director of special gifts. **Paul Hanstedt**, associate professor of English, has been named a Fulbright scholar to Hong Kong.

Scott F. Midkiff, a professor of electrical and computer

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Career FRONT



Midkiff

has named **Russ Hendershot** chairman of family medicine.

The Virginia Military Institute department of civil and environmental engineering has named **John E. Riester Jr.** as its head.

engineering at Virginia Tech, will become the new electrical and computer engineering department head in August. **Greg Adel**, a 27-year veteran of the department of mining and minerals engineering at Virginia Tech, has become department head. He has served as the interim head for the past academic year.

Virginia Tech's Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine

CULTURE FRONT



Mellenthin

Non-profits

Wendy E. Mellenthin has been named to the

board of Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition (RVCCC), an organization promoting efficiency and clean energy in the region. Mellenthin recently retired as CEO of the Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Council.

OTHER FRONTS

Transportation

Bittle W. Porterfield III, president of Rice Management in Roanoke, has been appointed to the board of directors of the Roanoke Regional Airport Commission, replacing **Granger Macfarlane**.

Carl Palmer has been

named general manager of Valley Metro in Roanoke.



Stamus

Chambers

Annette Stamus has been named marketing and communications manager at the Smith Mountain Lake Chamber of Commerce.

Media

WDBJ7 in Roanoke has named **Brian Boush** national sales manager.



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MEMBER FDIC



Don Simmons Jr

A death in our family >

Veteran journalist **Don Simmons**, who was Valley Business FRONT's Outstanding Contributor of the Month (December 2008 issue) for a story he did on Floyd, died April 23 after a long illness. Don was a veteran who had worked for The Roanoke Times, the Blue Ridge Business Journal (when the FRONT's owners were in charge) and was named the Journal's Editor's Award winner for 2008. He was a colorful, popular character who was a talented musician and dancer and whose writing was called by Editor Dan Smith "the voice of a mountain angel. God! He could write." He is survived by his widow Candice.

CONTRIBUTORS

Elizabeth Barbour is an award-winning freelance writer, who lives in Roanoke. She has been published in a variety of publications and is working toward a law degree. [webarbour@juno.com]

Rod Belcher is a busy Roanoke-based freelance writer, whose work appears in state and regional publications. He is also a science fiction writer of some note. Web site: [www.rsbelcher.net]

Anne Giles Clelland is the founder of business news site Handshake 2.0 (handshake2.com) and the president and CEO of Handshake Media, Inc., a new media public relations firm and member company of VT KnowledgeWorks in Blacksburg. She has Master's degrees in education and in counseling and is part of a team organizing the inaugural New River Valley Triathlon. [anne@handshake2.com]

Jay Conley is a journalist and freelance writer who has written thousands of stories about the people, places and happenings in Southwest Virginia. He was most recently a reporter with The Roanoke Times. [jayconley@ymail.com]

Jane Dalier is an Account Executive for FRONT, with extensive experience in publication sales and small business ownership. [jdalierFRONT1@verizon.net]

Donna Dilley is FRONT Business Etiquette columnist, and owner of ProtoCorp in Salem. She has been an etiquette consultant for years. [donna.dilley@gmail.com]

Jill Elswick is a veteran freelance writer living in Roanoke. She is a former senior editor at Employee Benefits News and worked in media relations at Virginia Tech. She has a master's degree in English from N.C. State University. [jill.elswick@gmail.com]

Georgia Willis Fauber is a retired bank president, member of the University of Virginia board of visitors, identity theft consultant, small business owner and freelance writer, who lives in Lynchburg.

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

Rachael Garrity is the owner of Penworthy LLC, a New River Valley-based publications services and consulting firm. [penworthyllc.gmail.com]

Tim W. Jackson is a Radford-based freelance writer and editor. He is editor of the online publication New River Voice and teaches as an adjunct instructor in Media Studies at Radford University. He is host of the radio show "The Listening Room," on WVRU in Radford. [timwjackson@mac.com]

Rob Johnson's journalism career began in 1972 and has included a two-decade stint at The Wall Street Journal, reporting on such industries as energy, manufacturing and tourism. He was later business editor of The Roanoke Times, where his reporters garnered national and state awards in 2007. These days he contributes articles to The Wall Street Journal's periodic special reports on small business and retirement. [bobbyj7575@gmail.com]

Linda Nardin owns an advertising, marketing and PR consultancy at Smith Mountain Lake. Previously, she worked in business communications management roles for IBM, Pillsbury and Green Giant Company. [blueskypublicrelationsllc@yahoo.com]

Deborah Nason writes for national, statewide and regional publications, focusing on emerging business issues. She has owned several small businesses, has an M.A. in Management and HR Development, and is an active member of the American Society of Business Publication Editors, the Society of Professional Journalists, and the Society of Business Editors and Writers. [dnason@c45b.com]

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

Michael Ramsey has been a regional life officer for a Roanoke bank, spent a decade marketing architectural and engineering services and prior to that worked in non-profit association management. He has been heavily involved in the community, especially the library system, and has reviewed restaurants for years. [repton@cox.net]

Dick Robers is an Account Executive for FRONT, whose background includes civic and corporate administration at the executive level and non-profit management. [drrobers@aol.com]

Leigh Ann Roman is a veteran freelance writer based in Vinton. A recent transplant from Tennessee, she has worked as a staff reporter for The Tennessean newspaper in Nashville and for the Memphis Business Journal. She is married and has two children. [leighroman44@hotmail.com]

Dan Smith is editor and co-owner of Valley Business FRONT. A native of Asheville, N.C., he has been a journalist for more than four decades and has won many journalism awards (writing, photography and design), and several awards for Public Radio essays. He is married, has two grown children and a grandchild. [dsmith@vbFRONT.com]

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

Tim Thornton is a writer and prize-winning dulcimer player who lives in Montgomery County. He has won a number of journalism awards over the years, most recently from the Society of Environmental Journalists and the Southern

Environmental Law Center for his stories about mountaintop removal coal mining, conservation easements and the New River while working for The Roanoke Times. [timothywthornton@gmail.com]

Nicholas Vaassen is a graphic designer with ten years experience, specializing in publications. Before joining Berryfield, Inc., and the Valley Business FRONT magazine assignment, his design projects included lifestyle, real estate, municipal, classified sales and cultural organization magazines in the Roanoke and southwestern Virginia markets. [nvaassen@berryfield.com]

Greg Vaughn is an award-winning Roanoke area photographer for more than 30 years whose work has appeared in local and international publications. [greg@gregvaughn-photography.com]



Rob Johnson

MAY 2009 > Contributor of the Month

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

Rob's cover story on "Predictions: A look into the region's crystal ball" was a real keeper. So much so, in fact, we all might want to go back and re-read it six or twelve months from now... to see who was most accurate.

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

FRONT Notes



Virginia Tech-developed robotic hand

Tech develops robot hand

The Robotics and Mechanisms Laboratory (RoMeLa) of the **College of Engineering at Virginia Tech** has developed a robotic hand that can firmly hold objects as heavy as a can of food or as delicate as a raw egg, while dexterous enough to gesture for sign language. The fully articulated robotic hand is powered by a compressor air tank at 60 psi and a novel accordion type tube actuator. Microcontroller commands operate the movement to coordinate the motion of the fingers.

The grip derives from the extent of pressure of the air. A low pressure is used for a lighter grip, while a higher pressure allows for a sturdier grip. The compliance of

compressed air also aids in the grasping as the fingers can naturally follow the contour of the grasped object.

"There would be great market potential for this hand, such as for robotic prosthetics, due to the previously described benefits, as well as low cost, safety and simplicity," says Dennis Hong, director and the faculty adviser on the project. The concept won RoMeLa first place in the recent 2008-2009 Compressed Air and Gas Institute (CAGI) Innovation Award Contest.

Closings

Martinsville call-center **GSI Commerce**, which had 279 jobs, has announced plans to close, another slap in the face of a locality that already had 20 percent unemployment, the highest rate in Virginia. GSI will consolidate its center with three other centers in Florida, Georgia and Wisconsin.

Birmingham-based **O'Neal Steel Inc.** has announced plans to

close its Botetourt County welding facility, eliminating 115 jobs. O'Neal Steel supplies parts to **FreightCar America** in Roanoke. FreightCar has announced a suspension of production because of slow sales, putting 210 more employees out of work.

Expansions

HoneyTree Early Learning Centers has opened its 10th center, expanding to Franklin County for the first time. The center is on Booker T. Washington Highway in the Smith Mountain Lake area.

Suit dismissed

The Bank of Floyd breathed a sigh of relief recently when the U.S. Supreme Court wound up seven years of legal argument by siding with the bank against David Welch, who claimed he was wrongfully dismissed. Welch has become a college professor in Ohio in the interim. He had gained whistle-blower protection under Sarbanes-Oxley,

giving him protection in criticizing the bank. He had reported to the bank and the state what he called irregularities in the way the Bank of Floyd was operating.

New investment company

Scotttrade, a branch-supported online investment firm, has opened a new branch office in Roanoke in the Kagey Village Shopping Center. It is managed by Jim Furlong. Scotttrade provides the tools and research necessary for individuals to make their own investment decisions. The firm does not provide investment advice, but stock brokers are available at branch offices to answer account-related questions, provide customer service and give tutorials on Scotttrade's online trading services.

HomeTown profits

At a time when major banks are reporting major losses,



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HomeTown Bank of Roanoke has announced a profitable first quarter of 2009, recording a net income of \$194,000. As of March 31, total assets were \$254.6 million, total loans were \$226.5 million, total deposits were \$210.0 million and shareholders equity was \$24.3 million. President/CEO Susan K. Still says, "We are very pleased to report positive earnings, particularly in light of our having invested heavily in growth, our being just over three years old and considering the current economy and market conditions."

Earnings reported

National Bankshares, Inc. of Blacksburg has announced first quarter net income of nearly \$3.39 million, up by 6.48 percent over the \$3.18 million reported for the quarter ended March 31, 2008. This translates to basic net income per share of 49 cents, as compared with 46 cents a share last year.

Shenandoah losses

Shenandoah Life Insurance Company in Roanoke, which is in receivership, lost \$92.2 million on investments in 2008, while making a record \$11.7 million through its successful insurance business. Losses for the year were \$80.5 million. Shenandoah Life earned \$8.4 million in 2007.

Practices

Village Family Physicians in Moneta has joined **Centra** in a move that will expand resources for patients of the Smith Mountain Lake area practice. As part of Centra, the Moneta practice has direct access to all of Centra's services, including Centra Lynchburg General Hospital and Centra Virginia Baptist Hospital and other specialty services. Village Family Physicians includes Drs. Janice E. Luth, Kathryn L. Humphreys, Todd H. Dehli, Virginia A. Blanks and Gene W. Amstutz, Patricia H. Hayes, Patricia M.

Have an announcement about your business?

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

Gilhuly and Carey A. Cole.

Quality award

Delta Dental of Virginia's call center in Roanoke has been recognized for excellence in customer service, earning the Benchmark Portal certification from the Center for Customer-Driven Quality at Purdue University. The call center is now a "Certified Center of Excellence." Delta Dental of Virginia received the certification following an audit of best practices against a peer group of comparable centers.

Willard buys spa

The Willard Companies has added another business to

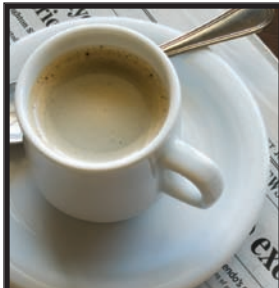
its portfolio, assuming ownership of the former **Good Looks Salon** and named its new business **Westlake Salon & Spa.**

New Goodwill planned

Goodwill Industries of the Valleys plans to open a store in Madison Heights in June. The store will have 10,500 square feet of retail space as well as a drive through donation center.

Premier acquisition

Premier Transfer and Storage, an agent for Mayflower Transit in the Roanoke and New River Valleys, has expanded statewide by acquiring Lee Moving & Storage in Richmond. Lee is 40 years old. Premier will now



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Nicole Drew,
Aftercare Coordinator
982-2100



FRONT Notes

operate in the Richmond area, in addition to its existing facilities in Christiansburg and Salem. This acquisition will immediately double the company's hauling capacity. All of the company's business lines, including corporate relocation and household and commercial moving services, will be supported by sales, customer service and operations personnel in the new market.

Data base available

Attaain Inc. in Blacksburg has announced a licensing agreement with Hoover's Inc. for the integration of the extensive Hoover's database of companies and executives into the AttaainCI market and competitive business intelligence system. The system is used by companies in a wide range of industries to identify and track key sales prospects, customer growth opportunities, competitor activities, strategic partner prospects, industry developments and more, across

single or multiple lines of business.

Luna losses mount

Luna Innovations of Roanoke has announced a net loss of \$40.9 million (\$3.66 a share) for the quarter ending March 31. The loss comes on the heels of a \$36.3 million verdict against Luna in a lawsuit filed by a California company.

Incubator challenge

The New River Competitiveness Center, a business incubator in Pulaski, is looking for an infusion of \$2.6 million to refinance the loan on its building. It is asking localities in its small region for help. There are nearly 20 agencies at the incubator, employing more than 60 workers. New River Valley Development Corporation is the owner.

Boxley center opens

Boxley has completed its flagship **Boxley Block, Brick and**



Boxley Block, Brick and Hardscape Center

Hardscape Center with the opening of a 4,000-square-foot Outdoor Living Showroom on Blue Ridge Drive in Roanoke. The 15,000-square-foot center offers one of the region's largest selections of masonry and hardscape products. Many products are incorporated directly into the design and construction of the center and outdoor living showroom to give customers a perspective of how products look installed and to spur ideas for their own projects.

Farmers market

Grandin Village, the granola capital of Roanoke, has finally opened its own farmers market, the Grandin Village Community Market, which debuted in early May. The market, behind West Pharmacy and Surf N

Turf restaurant, is sponsored by the Roanoke Natural Foods Co-op and is an absolute natural for a neighborhood that sponsored Earth Day four days ahead of schedule.

The market is just down the street from Grandin Gardens, a new age co-op that grows its own foods, holds lifestyle classes and is home to Local Roots Cafe. Vendors will pay the Natural Foods Co-op 10 percent of their sales each day. The Co-op expected its investment to be about \$4,000. The Roanoke Valley has town or city markets in Roanoke, Salem and Vinton.

Ashley bought

Sam Zedian of Richmond, who owns a large furniture store in Mechanicsville, has purchased the **Ashley Furniture HomeStore** in Roanoke. Zedian has been in the furniture retail business for more than 20 years.

Hollins meets challenge

Hollins University has officially met and

A CALL TO WRITERS

The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge has expanded its services to include literary artists. Membership is open to all genres — creative, technical, journalism, marketing/P.R. — including published writers and those aspiring to be published.

Member benefits:

- Directories of area writers and businesses that use their services
- Grant opportunities
- Mastermind groups, roundtables, peer review and workshops

Writer's Workshop Series

presented by **The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge**

- June 16, 7-8:30 p.m. Kurt Rheinheimer "Writing Short Fiction"
- July 21, 7-8:30 p.m. Cara Modisett "What Magazine Editors Want"
- August 18, 7-8:30 p.m. Gene Marrano "Freelance Writing in This Market"
- September 15, 7-8:30 p.m. Lawyer David Paxton "Protecting Yourself Legally"
- October 15, 7-8:30 p.m. CPA Joe Schaban "The Financial Side of Writing"
- November 17, 7-8:30 p.m. Sharyn McCrumb "History, Folklore in Fiction"

the ARTS
COUNCIL
of the Blue Ridge

Contact Rhonda Hale at (540) 224-1205

Calendar

**Economic Summit VI:
It's ALL About the Economy**
June 2
The Hotel Roanoke &
Conference Center

Business Basics
June 9, 4:00–5:30pm
Roanoke Regional Chamber, \$10
Information: 983.0717 ext. 239

**Tinker Mountain Writers
Workshop**
June 14, 9:00am–5:00pm
Hollins University
Call 540-362-6229

Technology & Toast
June 18, 7:15–9:00am
Holiday Inn University,
Blacksburg
Information:
www.thetechnologycouncil.com

Perry F. Kendig Awards
June 24, 6:30pm
Arts Council of the Blue Ridge
Taubman Museum of Arts
540-224-1203

Ready-Set-Network
June 25, 7:30-9:00am
Roanoke Regional Chamber
of Commerce
\$10 per person
Call 540-983-0700, Ext. 231

Rotary Club of Roanoke Valley
Tuesdays, 7:00–8:00am
Hidden Valley Country Club,
Roanoke
Call Bob McAdam, 540-776-2583

Kiwanis Club of Roanoke
Wednesdays 12:30–1:30pm
Schaal's Metamorphosis,
Roanoke
Call Judy Clark, 540-344-1766

**Cosmopolitan Club
of Roanoke**
Wednesdays, 12:15–1:15pm
Call Mike Russell, 540-772-2778

**Toastmasters International
Clubs (Roanoke)**
(Various times and places)
For second and fourth
Thursdays, 7:00pm,
call 540-342-3161;
For first and third
Thursdays, 7:00pm,
call 540-989-1310;
For noon Thursdays,
call 540-483-0261;
For first and third
Fridays, noon,
call 540-983-9260

**We invite you to send your
listings to news@vbfront.com**

exceeded a challenge from the John M. Belk Educational Endowment to raise \$500,000 in order to receive a matching grant of the same amount. Claudia Watkins Belk of Charlotte is a member of Hollins' Class of 1960 and a University Trustee since 2000. She committed last fall to give the funds to the study abroad endowment established in her name in 2007 by her late husband, provided Hollins was successful in raising an equal amount in gifts and pledges.

Expansion planned

The **Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine** at Virginia Tech will expand its Doctor of Veterinary Medicine professional class from 90 to 95 students effective fall 2009. This marks the

first time the college has increased enrollment in the program since 1995, when the class size was expanded from 80 students to 90 students.

Tech online M.S.

Virginia Tech has developed a new online master of science in life sciences with an option in health product risk management and accompanying 12-credit hour graduate certificate. The program launched in May.

New Institute at Tech

The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (CRC) has formed an entrepreneurial mentoring organization called the **VT Midas Institute** with several business-related goals.

Among them: helping high-potential companies grow, engaging successful business leaders with the university, energizing entrepreneurship and educating the next generation of leaders of the new economy.

The Institute will help successful business owners coach high-potential company owners. University students having an interest in entrepreneurship will be used as interns. The VT Midas Institute director is Joel S. Williams, who is founder and managing principal of Joel S Williams|An Alliance of Wealth Advisors.

Early exit at Taubman

The director responsible for leading the construction of the Taubman Museum of



Georgeanne Bingham

Art in Roanoke has decided to leave her position earlier than expected. Georgeanne Bingham, who had announced her retirement, effective at the end of the year, left the job in early May. Bingham's assistant LeAnn Turbyfill has also resigned. Bingham is 73.

The museum will be run temporarily by Chief Operating Officer James Beckner until a new director is found.

Compiled by Dan Smith

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