

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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THE

NEW

BUILDERS

Joe Miller,
E.J. Miller
Construction



Bonz Hart

*Bonz Hart is founder and president of Meridium, a software product developer. The company develops and markets its products to large, asset-intensive companies around the world.
Bonz moved to Virginia with his family at the age of four.
Here are his thoughts as a Valley businessman.*

DOING BUSINESS IN MY VALLEY, DOING BUSINESS WITH MY BANK.

Recruiting top talent and expertise is crucial to our business. Sixty five percent of our people moved here from other areas. The Valley, with all its natural beauty and abundance of recreational opportunities, makes for a great place to attract people.

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WELCOME to the FRONT

Ours is an industry that often questions itself about whether to be involved in the community. That's not a dilemma for those of us at FRONT. While there are occasional possibilities that conflicts of interest will take place, we believe that serving the people in our regional, local and hyper-local communities is not just good citizenship, it is absolutely essential at this point.

Community organizations, charity organizations and the arts are all in perilous positions because of an unsound economy and giving that has been severely curtailed in many instances. Government, business and personal budgets are being cut with meat cleavers and these community organizations are often the first dollars to be withdrawn by traditional givers who have seen their own incomes, savings and investments shrink like a salted slug.

With all that bad news swirling, the good news is that even if you don't have money, you can make time for your community because volunteer hours are as good as money to many organizations. And the return on the investment is positively invaluable in so many measurable and intangible ways.

We have heard some criticism from colleagues and competitors for our deep and broad involvement in the community, but we simply would not pull back just to please their senses of propriety. We have our own and it fits our needs and the community's, as well.



Tom Field



Dan Smith

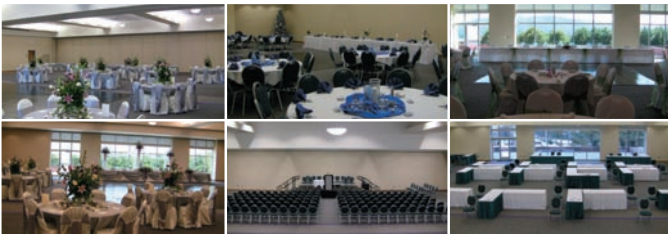


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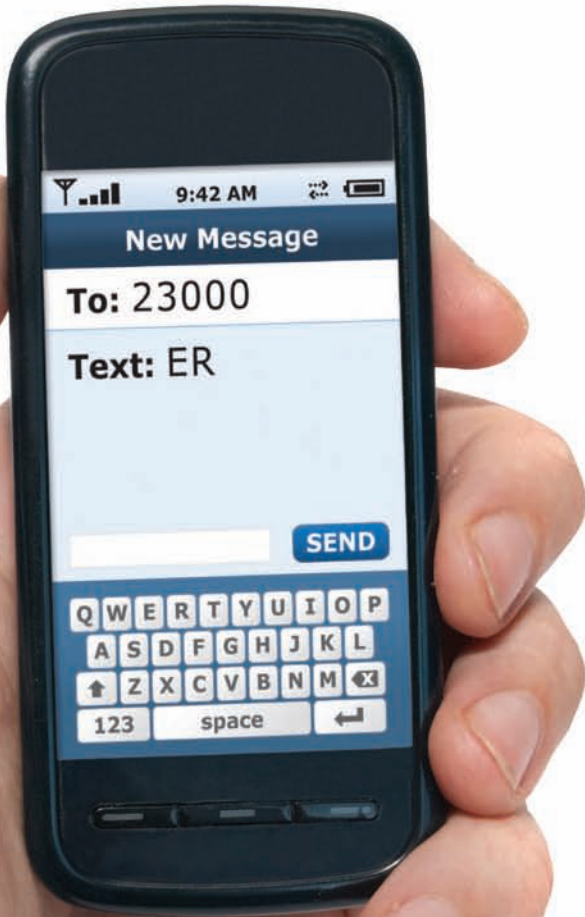
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Valley Business FRONT

Roanoke office at
Jefferson Center
Suite 100

P.O. Box 1041
Salem, VA 24153
(540) 389-9945
www.vbFRONT.com

Staff

Publisher /
Creative Director

Tom Field
tfield@vbFRONT.com
(540) 389-9945

Editor

Dan Smith
dsmith@vbFRONT.com
(540) 556-8510

Account Executives

Jane Dalier
(540) 239-2610

Jo Lynn Seifert
(540) 589-1439

Graphic Designer

Nicholas Vaassen
nvaassen@berryfield.com

Production

Berryfield, Inc.
PO Box 1041
Salem, VA 24153
(540) 389-9945

Departmental Contacts

Advertising
Subscriptions
News / Releases
Admin / Ops

ads@vbFRONT.com
info@vbFRONT.com
news@vbFRONT.com
info@vbFRONT.com

(540) 389-9945
vbFRONT.com
morefront.blogspot.com

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JUNE



Susan M. Ayers



Anne Giles Clelland



Paulette Jayabalan



Rob Johnson



Michele Shimchock



Dan Smith

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 66.

Editorial Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of 16 diverse business professionals, who will serve as a sounding board throughout the 18 month rotational term that will turn over every year and a half.

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

CONTRIBUTORS



Jane Dalier



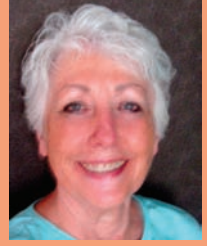
Donna Dilley



Tom Field



Huong Fralin



Rachael Garrity



Janeson Keeley



Gene Marrano



Michael Miller



David Perry



Jo Lynn Seifert



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen



Greg Vaughn



Alison Weaver

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- Mary Miller** IDD (Tech/Industry)
- Ed Murphy** Carilion (Wellness)
- Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners (Development)
- John Williamson** RGC (Tech/Industry)

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

“How can a cubicle mate get any work done?”

— Page 16

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Twitter: [@vbfront](https://twitter.com/vbfront)
Blog: morefront.blogspot.com
Editor's blog: editrdan.blogspot.com



Greg Vaughn Photography

Joe Miller? Yes, that's him as our FRONTcover model for this issue. A little less intimidating here, and more of an "average Joe" construction guy, Miller's a builder and is featured in our story. If he looks especially fierce on the cover, keep in mind there's no oxygen in that mask. Thanks, Joe! What a good sport.

Building to last >

Executive Summary: Builders, designers and suppliers are tweaking every aspect of construction to create structures that are a whole lot more friendly to the Earth, with an eye toward adaptability, efficiency and longevity. It's not a fad, they say. It's good business sense.

By Alison Weaver and Dan Smith

THE NEW BUILDERS

Joe Miller's naturally sleepy demeanor is wide awake and his mouth is a blur. He's talking about what's coming and you know he knows that he's stretching the boundaries of credibility, so he's selling hard.

First, he says, in 10 years, maybe less, many homes will be energy neutral. Those are the ones that aren't producing energy for the electric company. They're taking care of their own needs with these little box-like wind generators—maybe three of them on a roof—and selling the excess to Appalachian Power. APCo is quickly becoming an electricity distributor, not a producer, and is selling mostly to business and industry.

Builders are exploring new materials that are deceptively ingenious. Miller just put in kitchen counters in a new home that are made of used paper. They feel like marble and wear like chrome steel. He points to siding that's made of cement (no, not concrete), looks like wood paneling and feels like fiberglass. It insulates like the walls of a cave and is made locally from local materials. Water for everything but drinking is channeled off the roof and collects in a large tank buried under the garden. Steel-beam baffles on the side of the house reflect sun in the summer and absorb it for heat in the winter.

Miller can't even slow down, let alone shut up. He's part of a new dynamic in the building construction and design industries that is changing the way we live, the way we consume, the way we behave toward our world. It's not just the environmental dynamic, either. This is about creating solid, long-lasting, efficient structures.

They ain't your grandpa's buildings, but they'll be there for your grandkids to use.

* * *

Ed Tuchler, owner of Shelter Alternatives, a custom builder in Blacksburg, shares Miller's passion and is a firm believer that buildings should outlast people. "We were among the first ones doing EarthCraft homes in this area. It's steeped in our blood," he says. "A lot of people consider what we do 'green building.' I like to think that a lot of what we are doing is just good building practice. There are new homes built everyday that just don't perform."

EarthCraft House is a certification program that examines every aspect of designing and constructing a home that is

environmentally friendly, durable and energy-efficient.

"We're doing a lot of education," Tuchler says. "People seek us out because of our reputation and then we show them some of the [green] options."

Shelter Alternatives has a staff member dedicated to researching new materials and green-building techniques. Its Web site contains more than three dozen suggestions on going green. The company is so committed to encouraging buyers to think in environmental terms that it cuts into its profits to offer significant rebates if they upgrade to better insulation, more energy-efficient appliances or passive solar features.

Tuchler explains the motivation behind offering the rebates: "If I'm encouraging energy efficiency and I'm making money off it, that's a mixed message. I didn't want to dilute the message that way."

Tuchler predicts that in the near future, every home will have an energy rating, similar to today's appliances. Buyers will be able to gauge not only the initial cost of purchasing the home, but also the year-after-year cost of providing utilities.

Buyers are rapidly becoming more astute, he says. But there's still a long way to go in helping them understand the bigger picture. Take bamboo flooring, for example. "People say, 'Oh, bamboo is a green product—use it.' It's sustainable in that it's quickly renewable. But it's being shipped from China. How much energy does that use?" Tuchler asks. Instead, he tries to point buyers to a local group that does sustainable harvesting of hard woods.

He makes a similar argument against granite countertops. "In my mind, there's a lot of embedded energy in granite ... what's the harm to the environment to harvest it?" But he gives a heavy sigh and notes, "That can be a hard sell for buyers. People want their granite countertops."



Richard Simmons workers put in the geothermal grid at Northside High

What they're saying >

Ed Tuchler, Shelter Alternatives:

If I'm encouraging energy efficiency and I'm making money off it, that's a mixed message. I didn't want to dilute the message that way.

Bob Fetzer, Building Specialists:

Owners want to monitor energy usage and be able to control areas of the building so that lights and mechanical systems only operate when they need to. Now, individual work stations have their own lighting controls and HVAC systems can be zoned for smaller areas of operation.

Annie Pearce, Virginia Tech:

What seems like an insignificant fringe movement today in green, sustainable, or high performance facilities has been growing with surprising speed in the commercial and residential construction sectors. [It] stands to become a driving force for the industrial and heavy sectors, as well.

John Garland, Spectrum Design:

One of the reasons we are experiencing a rejuvenation of activity in building renovations downtown is because our forefathers built buildings that they were proud of and ones that out lived themselves. It is only responsible to think beyond yourself and your immediate activity and create opportunities to leave a legacy.

continued to Page 11



Martin Pruitt

Dan Smith

Good bones

John Garland of Spectrum Design in Roanoke asks a rhetorical question: “What makes a building able to reinvent itself after 40 to 50 years? [It] is a building that has ample room vertically from floor to floor, one that has a substantial structural system (good bones) and one that has a durable exterior envelope. All interior systems (plumbing, HVAC, electrical) get worn out, fall out of code compliance and become dysfunctional.

“If the building does not deteriorate on the exterior, its bones do not sag or deteriorate and you have plenty of vertical space for new and improved systems, then it will be ready for the next makeover.

“Commercial buildings of today are, for the most part, short-sighted and are built for the immediate market demand. Most commercial owners are not concerned about the longevity of their buildings. We have seen the big box of yesterday not be big enough for the next generation store (i.e., Walmart at Hunting Hills and Clearbrook). We have seen the suburban commercial buildings of the last generation become the thrift stores and churches of today (i.e. Roanoke-Salem Plaza on Melrose), while the new suburbia moves further out for so called ‘new and improved’ versions. What gets left behind are buildings that are worn out and not particularly adaptable.

“In my short career (35 years) I have already seen buildings built, torn down, another one built and torn down on the same site. These were built to accommodate the business model for a 10-year period.”

Annie R. Pearce, Virginia Tech, an assistant professor in the department of building and construction, has written and studied the new trends for the past few years. She foresees a multitude of process changes. Industries, she says, should be grouped by complementary type and “the construction industry must consider ways in which it can find niches within this industrial ecosystem in order to maximize value to industry.”

Consumer-driven

Government incentives and stricter building codes may be pushing the market toward more durability and efficiency, but many builders and suppliers say residential consumers have been the true driving force in the past decade.

Mike Bryant of F&S Building Innovations, known for its Four Seasons Sunrooms, says homeowners are demanding better efficiency. "Five to 10 years ago, green building was kind of a niche. Homeowners are asking more questions; the public is more educated about it. They want to know about the R-value, the cost of heating, cooling and maintaining" a mostly-glass room."

In response, F&S is constantly upgrading as new products become available. "We've got a 12-layer patented formula that reflects heat out in the summer and keeps heat in during the winter. You can have a room that's nearly all glass yet be energy efficient."

The product also helps allay buyers' concerns about the amount of energy and water required to clean the exterior of a glass room. It features a "self-cleaning" technology, a microscopic coating that fills in the naturally porous nature of glass and allows rain to sheet off the surface instead of settling into it.

Martin Pruitt of Cornerstone Builders in Roanoke has also found that "efficiency is becoming increasingly important to the homeowner. One product that I have been using the last few years is spray-in-place foam insulation. By spraying the insulation in place, it foams around every nook and cranny to completely seal up a house.

"Windows are the weak link in thermal performance of a wall. Even the very best windows are not nearly as efficient as a solid wall, so I believe you should always use a high-efficiency window ... We have also been installing geo-thermal heat pump systems to heat and cool houses. Basically, these systems use the temperature of the ground, which is relatively constant, to produce heating and cooling."

Pruitt says that the systems, "while more costly to install, are extremely efficient and have much lower operating costs than conventional systems. The systems we have installed recently have qualified for a 30 percent tax credit for the cost of installation which makes them a competitive choice for the homeowner."

Joe Miller agrees: "One of the main items that have improved the efficiency of houses is the way they are sealed and insulated. We are installing pressurized crawl spaces that do not have exterior foundation vents, but are sealed and insulated with rigid foam on the exterior walls ... We are installing better insulation systems that seal the house envelope from air infiltration as well as insulates. We use caulking to seal the exterior wall penetrations and all joints before we apply spray foam insulation and then we install a fiberglass batt insulation that gives us a higher R-value of insulation."

What they're saying >

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Martin Pruitt, Cornerstone Builders:

Today, you need to think in terms of thermal value (insulation plus air movement) in lieu of R-value that has been the traditional term for insulating a house. Some of these foams are made from soy beans.

Ray Sarver, Kennard-Pace:

We get lots of questions about the tankless water heaters, but not too many buyers.

John Turner, Miscellaneous Concrete Products:

The trend is to try to incorporate materials that have a low impact on the environment as well as creating an energy-efficient finished product.

Tim Lawrence, Blue Ridge Home Improvements:

Recently our clients seem to be concerned with energy efficiency and durability the most. In my opinion, a home's durability is one of the more important factors to consider in green building techniques, because the longer your building materials last, the less energy is required to produce new materials to replace them.

Mike Bryant, F&S Building:

Homeowners are asking more questions; the public is more educated about it. They want to know about the R-value, the cost of heating, cooling and maintaining [a glass room].

John Travis, J&D Builders:

A lot of what I'm doing today is going to be pushed into the standard building code for all builders.



John Garland with son Mark, at their Windsor Ave. project

Family project: Set an example >

by **Dan Smith**

John Garland of Spectrum Design and his sons Mark and Aaron recently made a modern building example out of a 1928-era apartment building on Windsor Avenue in Roanoke, spending \$1.3 million on the rehab project.

John Garland says they bought the building for \$600,000 at auction (“we overpaid by a lot”) “not so much because it was going to be a profitable venture in the short term, but to

Dustin Derrick of Evergreen Insulation says, “We’ve seen, especially on the residential side, a very, very big interest in our spray-apply products. You don’t need 10 inches; you only need two to three inches, depending on the project.”

Derrick emphasizes that the insulation has to work with the rest of the house as a system. “You have to have a properly-sized HVAC unit, quality doors, windows and glazing. It all works together to create efficiency.”

Derrick also says consumers are becoming more educated not just about the different types of insulation, but also on where to put it. “The biggest savings for a homeowner is to move the HVAC inside a conditioned space. If the HVAC unit is sitting in an attic, it’s outside the envelope. If you insulate around it, you’re essentially bringing it ‘inside’ the home. You can cut as much as 30 to 40 percent off your heating bill.”

John Travis of J&D Builders is committed to building homes that are 20 percent to 30 percent more energy efficient than standard homes. While he admires the qualities of spray foam, he notes that it’s expensive. “We’ve been using silver, foil-faced OSB. It lowers the temperature in an attic by 30 degrees and doesn’t affect the shingle warranty.”

He also advocates conditioning the crawl space and using structure board on exterior walls to provide an R3 gain in insulation while creating a tighter envelope.

“The last home that we had an EnergyStar audit done for was 43 percent more efficient,” he says. He predicts that by the time the 2011 Building Code is implemented, “A lot of what I’m doing today is going to be pushed into the standard building code for all builders.”

Underground heat

Stephen Brooks of R.A. Simmons Drilling in Lithia has been installing geothermal systems for some years and put in the high-profile system at Northside High School in Roanoke County.


add benefit to a community neighborhood, to pay respect to the integrity of a previous generation that did buildings the right way and to reinvent a marvelous structure that deserved to continue well into the future."

This one was truly a family project. John and Mark are engineers with Spectrum (John is an owner) and Aaron, whose education is in recreation, was the superintendent of the project. Mark took 1970s-era exterior soapstone removed from the Verizon building downtown and made countertops from it. All three pitched in on labor.

They created eight two-bedroom and eight single bedroom apartments that rented

immediately (there's a waiting list).

"Everybody said we were crazy to do this because we paid so much for the building," says John. They also said the Garlands were crazy to salvage a badly damaged eight slot garage out back, but the result looks like a 19th Century British stable.

The building is LEED certified and is in the process of being verified as an historic landmark (where state and federal tax credits can be available for construction costs: 20 percent federal, 25 percent state). John Garland says that "90 percent of what came out of the building was recycled" including old plaster, which went to condition the soil on his farm. Many of the fixtures remain in use. 

"When I began working for R.A. Simmons Drilling, geothermal installations were few," he says.

Simmons' corporate offices have had the system since 1978. "Funny thing, those who wanted geothermal were convinced and ecstatic even before the work started."

Warranties for the systems are 55 years and electric/fuel costs are often cut by a third to a half. "Once the initial cost is covered, the annual savings can be tremendous," says Brooks. About 30 percent of installation can be covered by tax credits, he adds.

Says Joe Miller, "As geothermal HVAC systems, solar panels for hot water and radiant heating, and small wind turbines for single-family houses are brought on board and refined, housing in the very near future will be zero or near zero net users of energy. All of these items are available now, but they are very new and need to be tested. We are at the beginning of this technology, but it is coming fast and it will allow housing to be a leader in using less of our energy."

Taking credit

Tax credits are floating out there for diverse improvements, mostly dealing with a building's efficiency. Tim Lawrence of Blue Ridge Home Improvements explains, "There are larger tax credits available for more exotic projects like geo-thermal heat pumps, solar energy collectors, and wind energy generators. Of these options, the items that we have seen the most interest in are tax credits that apply to windows, doors, insulation and HVAC upgrades."

Ray Sarver of Kennard-Pace Company says most of its HVAC and plumbing customers still shy away from the more exotic alternatives. "We get lots of questions about the tankless water heaters, but not too many buyers."

Kennard-Pace primarily does replacement/remodels and Sarver says that customers quickly change their minds when they see the cost of the tankless heaters and the intensive labor required to retrofit a system into an existing home or building. They do the



Dan Smith

Simmons' Steve Brooks with geothermal controls



Dan Smith

Bob Fetzer

math and decide the additional cost would take far too long to pay for itself in terms of reduced energy costs.

Meanwhile, he says, buyers are flocking to take advantage of other tax credits. "A lot of folks are upgrading to the higher-efficiency condensing units and gas furnaces. I'd say 90 percent are going with the more energy-efficient products. The tax credit has been a good incentive."

New building blocks

With 35 years in the construction business, Bob Fetzer of Building Specialists is an expert on trends in the industry. "In recent years there has not been a huge change in the building materials used

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Boomers and building >

Education, retail sans buildings >



Tim Lawrence: Design for a generation



Richard Rife

Dan Smith


COVER STORY

in commercial construction. The areas where we have seen change has been in the increased use of products with recycled content and those which have less environmental impact (through more environmentally-friendly manufacturing processes—fewer harmful chemicals, etc., the use of pre-consumer and post-consumer recycled content in products, products that can be recycled at the end of their usable life, particularly carpet, fabric, electronics, and upholstery)."

Fetzer also notes that more attention is being paid to the effects materials have on the air inside a building. "Paints and coatings are designed to reduce the release of chemicals into the air during their drying and throughout their life. Materials that prevent the spread of mold and improve indoor air quality are becoming more common and less expensive."

Cement and concrete remain building basics but they're being used in new ways. The huge James Hardie plant in Pulaski is churning out a cement-based siding using sand from New Castle and cement from Botetourt County, and contractors are paying attention. "Builders are relying more on regionally-produced materials as fuel prices have increased long-distance transportation costs," Fetzer says.

John Turner of Roanoke's Miscellaneous Concrete Products is in the business of adding decorative touches to buildings and he also touts the new materials. "Local supplies of Portland cement and aggregates save considerably on fuel and transportation costs. New additives increase strength and durability [and] many of these are not petroleum based.

"I think Wachovia Tower in downtown Roanoke is a good example of a building that is primarily concrete in design and construction that should be here for many decades to come. It is architecturally in keeping with the rest of the area, and the material used had a mix design that could last for centuries." 

to read these stories below go to www.morefront.blogspot.com (June 1 posting) Also accessible at vbFRONT.com

Efficiency on the cheap >



Dan Smith

Paul Glassbrenner, Greeley Wyatt and Frank Lemanski work on a Salem Avenue Habitat for Humanity renovation project.

Old is new again >



Andy Kelderhouse

Alison Weaver



Chewing gum: 'Disrespectful, rude' >

A great teacher once shared this rhyme with her class:

What is the difference between a gum-chewing girl

And a cud-chewing cow?

Oh, yes! I have it now!


It's the intelligent look on the face of the cow.

It seems that chewing gum in public has risen to epidemic proportions. At the 2010 Academy Awards presentations, viewers were able to watch Hollywood stars such as Cameron Diaz and Sarah Jessica Parker decked out in haute couture and dazzling jewels while chewing their gum. Sam Worthington's gum chewing while presenting an Oscar received Fandango's "worst Oscar stage moment" of 2010.

Gum chewing in a professional business setting is disrespectful and rude (unless you are in the business of baseball). Corby O'Connor, an etiquette and communications consultant, writes that "non-chewers are subjected to the incessant slurping, cracking, blowing and popping noises coming from the offender. Pass gas or belch and it is over; put a wad of gum in your mouth and the offensive noises continue again and again and again. How can a cubicle mate get any work done with the constant chomping racket?" Aside from the noise that many gum chewers produce, the visual image of gum chewing does not create a positive impression.

While gum chewing should be avoided in a professional setting, it may be enjoyed in a casual or informal setting following a few basic rules of common decency listed below:

- Chew gum with your mouth, or rather lips, closed. Open-mouthed chewing is disgusting.
- Spit out gum discreetly into a tissue, not into the street, parking lot or underneath a restaurant table.
- Avoid chewing gum in a religious service, a courtroom, during professional meetings including job interviews, and in classes in which discussion occurs regularly.
- Speak to older people, especially relatives, without gum. This demonstrates respect and attention and helps with proper articulation.

Many habitual chewers and advertisers extol the breath freshening qualities of gum. While horrendous breath is a business blunder, avoid inappropriate chomping in the workplace and have a mint instead. 

Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

Executive Summary:
*One word of advice on
chewing gum: Don't.*

Who's trying to get you fired? >


Dear Getting a Grip: *She's trying to get me fired. I know she is. Every single mistake I make, every oversight, every task that I didn't think to do that way, but did this way, she points out to our boss. It's incredible! My co-workers say they notice it, too. Why does she have it in for me?*

Dear Points Out: Any criticism in public, whether from a co-worker or boss, stings. That said, let's see if we can get to the essence of this by starting with the reality of the situation. Could your co-worker actually get you fired? Does she have that power over your boss or over the company's hiring and firing decisions?

And what's the truth of her concerns? Are you making mistakes, missing details, doing tasks in ways that aren't in accord with the company's work flow? Is this co-worker simply the one who's willing to speak out? If she weren't there, might another co-worker be able to point out the same problems?

I ask because most people are quite focused on their own jobs, their own careers, and their own lives. They might care on some level whether or not someone gets fired, but the time and thought required to "get" someone fired costs time and thought they would rather spend on pursuing their own goals.

Getting a Grip: Conflicts with co-workers are almost always best handled through a company's mediation or conflict resolution process. Speak matter-of-factly with your H.R. manager or with your boss. Meetings will probably be called and, from there, concerns can be aired and, ideally, resolved.

Like that idea? Then proceed. In a well-run company, your good work will speak for itself. If you don't like that idea, and envisioning a candid discussion about the quality of your work, whether solo with your boss or in a meeting with your co-worker, breaks you out in a cold sweat, she's not trying to get you fired. You are. You need to ask yourself why. 

Need to start "Getting a Grip" on a personal problem at work? E-mail your question to grip@handshake2o.com.



Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:

Are you sure it's not you? Maybe you need to consider a good book at the situation and the potential solution.

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Business Dress

Men's formalwear and the trends >

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

If it's a black tie event, follow the rules. And here they are.

Will this year's formalwear trend be bowties or string ties, bright-colored vests or classic cummerbunds, or possibly the dreaded denim tuxedo of a few years ago?

Every year a different feature of the tuxedo is seized upon as the must-wear style of the season. Weddings and proms are fertile ground for the latest trends to sprout. It seems everyone wants to look unique.

However, let's not forget the purpose of formalwear. Formalwear was created over 200 years ago as a means to reject the ostentatious fashions of the era and instead adopt understated colors, superb tailoring and attention to detail for evening formalwear.

Today black tie attire has a timeless appeal and the classic black tuxedo has become a fashion icon. The tuxedo creates a pleasing silhouette for a man and levels the playing field, making any man wearing it appear debonair, elegant, and successful.

So the question is, does a man want his formalwear to create elegance and reassuring conformity to custom or opportunity for self-expression and costume? When deciding how to dress for a formal affair, keep in mind these points:

- Consider the hosts of the event. If their invitation stipulates traditional black tie attire, then it is important to honor the request. After all, they have spent considerable time and money planning a memorable evening. If the dress code is unspecified, then being creative with color and fashion trends won't offend the hosts.

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- Keep in mind the occasion and the location. Trendy or creative black tie is more appropriate at a media or gala affair in a quirky location; traditional black tie is called for in formal and traditional venue.
- Be creative without going overboard by limiting changes to a few accessories of your formalwear.
- Black tie attire already has a casual counterpart: the white dinner jacket is considered casual black tie attire and is worn for summer black tie events and cruise formalwear only.

Admittedly, a tuxedo can be found in any color and style—even bright orange—but that doesn't mean it's a good choice. Regardless of the trends, keep in mind the spirit of black tie: timeless elegance. Stick with classic styles that show respect for tradition and you will never go wrong. Shine your shoes, get a sharp haircut, and every woman in the room will notice how handsome you look in your tuxedo. 



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Western Sizzlin' Corp. >

Compiled by Paulette Jayabalan

Overview:

The Western Sizzlin Corp., based in Roanoke, operates and franchises several restaurant concepts: Austin Steaks & Saloon, WesterN SizzliN Steak & More, WesterN SizzliN Wood Grill, Great American Steak & Buffet, Quincy Steakhouses, and Market Street Buffet and Baker. The flagship chain is 173-unit WesterN SizzliN Steak & More, known for its signature "Flamekist" steaks. It employs 271.

On March 30, 2010, Western Sizzlin' became a wholly owned subsidiary of Steak 'n Shake (NYSE: SNS), an Indianapolis-based company.

Until its acquisition by Steak 'n Shake, Western Sizzlin's shares traded on Nasdaq under the stock symbol WEST; as of March 24, it has notified the exchange of its intent to delist its shares from Nasdaq in conjunction with its merger with Indianapolis-based Steak 'n Shake, itself a subsidiary of Biglari Holdings Inc. (NYSE: BH).

Biglari Holdings Inc. founded in 1934. It was The Steak n Shake Company until a name change in April 8, 2010.

Source: [www.ask.com], [www.western-sizzlin.com], [www.roanoke.com], [investing.businessweek.com]

Market Commentary

"Biglari Holdings Inc. has announced that it has commenced an exchange offer for up to 1,409,367 shares of [Roanoke-based] Advance Auto Parts, Inc. The exchange ratio for the offer is one share of Advance common stock for 0.1179 shares of Biglari Holdings common stock. Biglari Holdings' offer is not conditioned on any minimum number of Advance shares being tendered." 4/30/2010 Source: [investing.businessweek.com]

"Year over year, Biglari Holdings Inc has seen revenues remain relatively flat (\$610.1M to \$627.0M), though the company was able to grow net income from \$23.0M to \$6.0M. A reduction in the percentage of sales devoted to cost of goods sold from 82.56% to 80.46% was a key component in the bottom line growth in the face of flat revenues." Source: [investing.businessweek.com]

"San Antonio, TX, March 30 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/—The Steak n Shake Company (NYSE: SNS) announced today the closing of its acquisition of Western Sizzlin Corporation (Nasdaq: WEST), effective as of March 30, 2010. The acquisition was affected by means of a merger of Western Sizzlin with and into a subsidiary of Steak n Shake, with Western Sizzlin continuing as the

surviving corporation and as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Steak n Shake.

As a result of the merger, former Western Sizzlin stockholders will receive a pro rata portion of subordinated debentures issued by Steak n Shake in the aggregate principal amount of \$22,959,000 (or approximately \$8.07 principal amount for each former Western Sizzlin share). This new issue of 14% redeemable subordinated debentures due 2015 will be issued only in principal amounts of \$1,000 or whole multiples of that amount; fractional interests in debentures will be settled in cash." Source: [investing.businessweek.com]

"The Steak n Shake Company (NYSE: SNS), and Western Sizzlin Corporation ("Western") (Nasdaq: WEST), have jointly announced the execution of a non-binding Letter of Intent relating to a proposed merger of Western into a wholly-owned subsidiary of SNS. The Letter of Intent was negotiated between special committees of the boards of directors of both companies both of which were composed entirely of independent directors." 08/13/2009 Source: [www.western-sizzlin.com]

Total Executive Compensation: Biglari Holdings Inc.

Name	Title	Amount
Sardar Biglari	Exec Chair, CEO	\$467,200
Duane E. Geiger	Interim CFO	\$284,700
Dennis J. Roberts	Sr. VP of Operations	\$212,400
J. Michael Vance	Interim Chief Info Officer	--
Michael Williams	Chief Marketing Officer, Sr. VP	--

Source: [investing.businessweek.com]

Board of Directors

Name	Primary Company	Age
Sardar Biglari	Biglari Holdings	31
Phillip Cooley	Biglari Holdings	65
John Ryan	Biglari Holdings	80
Ruth Person	Biglari Holdings	64
William Regan Jr.	Biglari Holdings	62

Biglari Holdings closed at \$391.25, down \$10.85 on volume of 17,000 shares on April 30, 2010. The company has a market capitalization of \$591.6 million.

Source: [investing.businessweek.com]

Sources

[www.ask.com] / [www.western-sizzlin.com] [www.roanoke.com] / [investing.businessweek.com]

Note

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

Jobs bill has incentive for hiring >

Executive Summary:

Adding new employees right now could be an advantage for some small businesses. SBDC offers some tips.

By Gene Marrano

Economists and politicians generally agree that getting more Americans back to work is a good way to overcome the recession. Telling folks there's been an uptick on Wall Street doesn't do much for someone out of work. The jobs bill signed into law several months ago by President Barack Obama is called the 2010 HIRE Act, a piece of legislation that could encourage more small businesses—always the backbone of the American economy—to take a chance on hiring additional employees.

Among the \$17.5 billion package of tax cuts, credits and subsidies (for construction bonds) is an allowance exempting businesses that hire unemployed workers from paying a payroll security tax (6.2 percent) through December. That employee must have been hired after Feb. 3 and he still pays his share of the tax. (To qualify the new employee must have been without a job for at least 60 days.)


Tom Tanner, who oversees the Small

Business Development Center for the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce, says HIRE is "actually for any business [to take advantage of]."

In addition to the payroll tax exemption for new hires, retaining workers for 52 consecutive weeks entitles the employer to a \$1,000 tax credit on its 2010 income tax return. There's more information about HIRE restrictions at irs.gov.

"It doesn't apply to someone just switching jobs—he has to be out of work," stresses Tanner. "If you need to expand, this is a great incentive to go ahead and hire that next person ... rather than wait and see how your business does."

Not having to pay the employer's share of the payroll tax constitutes "a considerable savings," says Tanner. About 40 percent of his clients are startups. Tanner works with them on everything from finding additional capital to marketing. There are also seminars on various business practices offered on a regular basis.

The Chamber's Small Business Development Center—funded by the federal Small Business Administration and local governments—is also cautioning firms to steer clear of shady outfits that offer to help apply for funds available through SBA programs. One scam includes charging a high fee to help apply for a loan, and threats that a business won't be eligible for Small Business Administration funding if they don't use the third party. 



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Dave Cohan: “I think she saw dollar signs.”

Dan Smith

You paid for it, but do you own it? >

Executive Summary:

In this tight economy, everyone’s trying to save a buck, but taking shortcuts when it comes to copyrights can end up costing you plenty. Attorney Dave Cohan shares some tips about potential pitfalls.

By Alison Weaver

A local company hired a graphic artist to create a logo. The company paid thousands of dollars and was pleased with the results. The logo became well-known and the company expanded its use, putting it on a variety of items not originally contemplated.

It sounds like a typical tale of successful marketing and planning, except the ending isn’t sweet. The artist sent a “cease and desist” letter, saying she still owned the copyright rights to the logo. And, it turned out that the artist was correct.

“Generally, if you commission someone to create a work for you, there must be a

written agreement stating that it is a ‘work for hire.’ If not, then the copyright rights remain with the creator,” says Dave Cohan, an intellectual property and corporate lawyer at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke.

The aforementioned company was his client. “The company had an implied license to use the logo for certain promotional purposes—advertising, brochures—but not for other, more commercial purposes. [It] ended up having to pay thousands to the artist, who felt her work was akin to fine art and that she had the right to control future usage,” Cohan relates. “I think she saw dollar signs.”

Unless the creator of the work is your employee, then it’s crucial to establish copyright ownership in advance. “One paragraph is all it takes,” Cohan says. “Many people think that putting © on their materials means they’re fully protected. They’re not.

“In addition to establishing ownership of the work, it’s important to register your copyright. If you don’t register by filing with the copyright office and you discover an infringer, you lose several significant remedies.”

First, you give up the right to recoup attorney’s fees in an infringement action, which may be


significant. Secondly, if you haven't registered your copyright, then you lose the chance to get statutory damages without having to prove that actual damages occurred or that the infringer profited from the infringement.

In theory, registering a copyright appears to be relatively simple and inexpensive—\$35 if submitted online to the Electronic Copyright Office. You must also submit a "deposit" (sample) of the work with the Library of Congress. What you submit varies depending on the type of work and whether it is published or unpublished.

"It's not easy to navigate the Web site, and it takes anywhere from six to 18 months to obtain registration, depending on how you file," Cohan cautions. "If you don't submit everything correctly, then you might find out that it's been rejected and you have to start over."

Cohan recommends engaging a lawyer to assist you the first time to explain the terminology and requirements in order to avoid unpleasant surprises in the future.

Cohan says it's prudent to make sure to include a copyright notice on brochures, Web sites, software, etc. as soon as they are created. A proper notice can deter unauthorized use and helps eliminate an "innocent infringer" defense. ("But your Honor, I didn't know it was copyrighted!") It also helps people locate you if they want to seek permission to use your copyrighted work.

A "proper" copyright notice includes the ©, or Copyright, or Copr; indicates the year the work was first published; and provides the name of the copyright owner. Cohan also suggests adding "All rights reserved" which can be helpful in safeguarding your copyright in other countries. 

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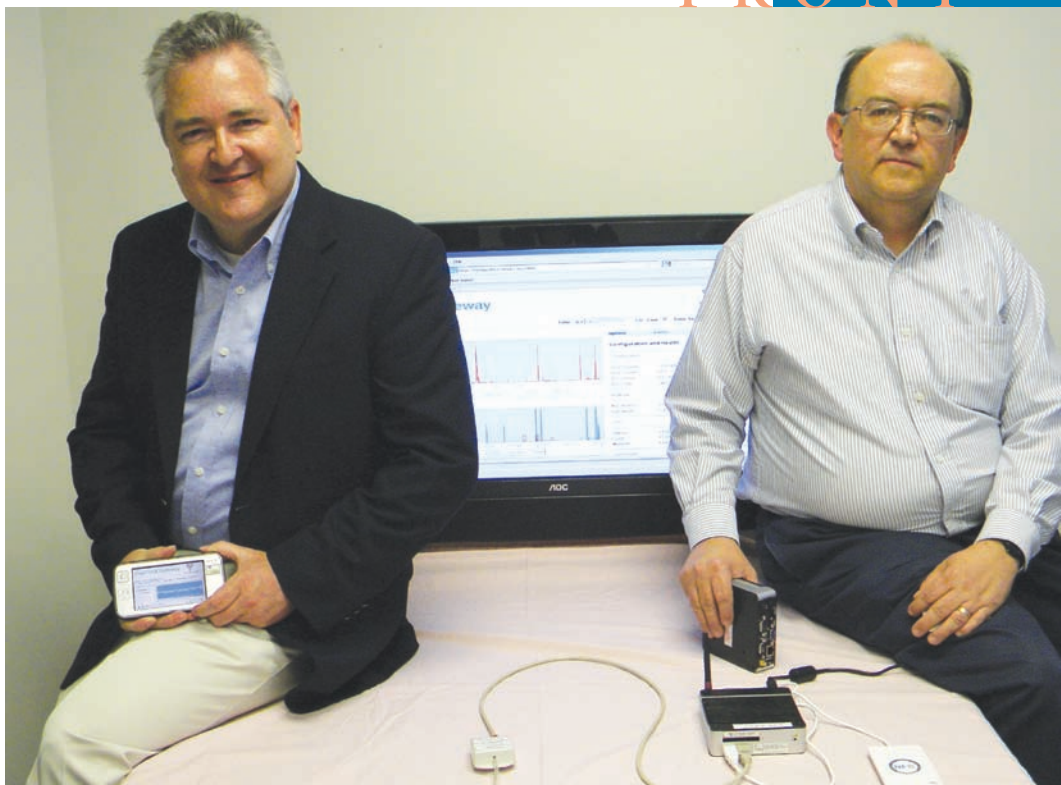
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Dan Wrappe (in jacket) and Stan Huffman of Wireless MedCARE

Michele Shimchuck

Rent-a-CFO fills a need >

Executive Summary:

The technical professionals at Wireless MedCARE are not financial professionals, and they didn't need a full-timer in that spot, either. But they found a solution.

By Michele Shimchuck

For CEO Dan Wrappe of Wireless MedCARE, it's a life of logged miles, hotel key cards, and knowing the front desk personnel by first name. But he trusts that all the travel from his home in Winston-Salem, N.C., is worth its time and effort as he builds his Roanoke-based company and readies to launch the VivaTRAK system in a market he believes is the perfect confluence of technology, medicine, and long-term healthcare.

VivaTRAK is a state-of-the-art technological development designed for use in long-term care facilities. Using sensors, a miniature computer, and a hand-held device similar

to a cell phone, VivaTRAK is able to collect valuable data pertaining to a patient's care. It is Web-enabled and employs wireless technology. The device can monitor a patient's slightest shift in the bed and log a caretaker's hour and minute of assistance. It can help prevent pressure ulcers and falls, two common liabilities associated with long-term care.

However, Dan Wrappe is not just breaking ground with his technology. He also ventures into new frontier with the financial management of his business. Wireless MedCARE has hired Stan Huffman, former CEO and CFO of Friendship Retirement Community, as a contract, or "fractional," Chief Financial Officer. Wrappe admits his small team is "challenged by the daily issues of running a pre-revenue healthcare IT business.

"Wireless MedCARE wanted a true member of the executive team to be focused on financial issues, but a full-time resource is not needed at this time. We also wanted someone with a deep understanding of our business, company culture, and long-term



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goals. We are better at Web enabling sensors than we are tax planning. Under the circumstances, a "fractional CFO" just made good sense."

Huffman, whose departure from Friendship Retirement Community led to the formation of his own business, Huffman Consulting, PLC, agrees: "A contract CFO manages a company's financial affairs, serves as a business advisor to the owner, and is an active participant in working with the other members of management of a company. The time commitment can be scaled to meet the needs of the company, which can range from quarterly services to regular weekly services or help with projects on an as-needed basis."

Both men stress this idea of "scalability" or, in other words, Wireless MedCARE's growth potential, especially as it pertains to its financial management system. Wrappe notes, "Too often startup and early-stage

companies don't want to spend the money on professionals and experts. Their focus is on selling something quickly. What an expert can do in a few hours at the early stage of a venture to get it well organized can pay off later. A shoe box full of receipts is not the right way to document expenses." Huffman's level of commitment will adjust to the demands of the company as it grows.

Wrappe insists that "local is better" when it comes to Wireless MedCARE's financial management, and Huffman concurs. "This type of work is difficult to do from a long distance away. Some things can be done remotely in the accounting area with remote computer access, but the active participation with others in management works best with direct face to face interaction."

So, as Wireless MedCARE prepares to transition to market, Dan Wrappe is willing to log as many miles as it takes. 

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Dan Smith

Dwight and Cynthia Luedtke: "I have had a colonel poking his finger at my chest ..."

grown to 10 employees and expects revenue of about \$1 million this year. The company's specialty is planning new construction on bases in the U.S. and overseas.

To prepare building designs, Sigma's analysts review everything from troop projections to deployment plans and budgets in cooperation with architects, construction companies and, of course, the military brass. The latter sometimes target the Luedtkes.

Helping to reshape the military >

Executive Summary:

Sigma Group in Cloverdale isn't involved so much with the military's mission as it is in how that mission is accomplished.

By Rob Johnson

Military contractors are usually identified with the likes of jet bombers, camouflage uniforms or—by their critics—\$300 toilet seats.

Sigma Group Inc. doesn't fit the mold. Still, its mission is sometimes a battle all its own. Imagine telling a colonel that in his outfit's new building he'll have a smaller office.

"There are egos involved," says Cynthia Luedtke, majority owner of Sigma, which plans renovations and new construction of various facilities on military bases—from company headquarters to brigade command centers. The former real estate agent and Army National Guard clerk runs the company with her husband, Dwight Luedtke, a retired Army major and combat engineer. They operate out of an office suite in a converted farmhouse in Cloverdale.

Founded by the couple in 2002, Sigma has

"I have had a colonel poking his finger at my chest, not quite touching me but poking at me over and over" in annoyed disagreement with a Sigma proposal for new command offices that the officer considered too small, says Dwight Luedtke.

Such opposition doesn't surprise Sigma, which is part of the vanguard of forces—economic, political and cultural—that are gradually overhauling the military. From base closings to smaller units that specialize in mobility, the Army—which represents 95 percent of the Luedtkes' clientele—is changing amid the glare of federal deficits that threaten everything from the development of new weapons to the size of a refurbished rifle training range.

Thus the Luedtkes are required to be efficiency experts of sorts. For example, one contract required them to design a modern version of the traditional company headquarters. At first glance, that task might seem mundane, considering the traditional bungalow-style buildings of the World War II era, many still in use during the Vietnam conflict. Those structures required little beyond desks and filing cabinets for the commanding officer, first sergeant and company clerk.

But in recent years the increasingly rapid pace of overseas deployment means company headquarters has become a "go-to-work assembly area," says Dwight. "That's the last place where you check soldiers' equipment before they fly out to the combat zone."

So Sigma conceived a company center that houses everything from soldiers' personnel files to their helmets. The new composition has separate areas for administration and "a readiness module" where weaponry and other equipment is stored.

The Luedtkes' journey to entrepreneurship has taken an international path. Dwight's military tours took the couple to bases from Fort Lewis, Washington, to Heidelberg, Germany.

The Luedtkes moved to the Roanoke area in 1995 after Dwight retired from the Army and found a job with R&K Engineering Inc., where he worked on military contracts.

In 2002, the couple decided to take a chance on their own, seeking out planning work at military installations that were being modernized. To find their first contract, says Cynthia, "We started calling friends. This business is about networking."

It's also about traveling. Dwight says he was on the road visiting military facilities for about 100 days last year. Cynthia, who sometimes travels with her husband, handles most of Sigma's administrative duties and still manages to find enough time to be a mom. The couple has four sons, ages 16 to 26, including one still in high school and living at home. (She's also an accomplished quilter.) One of the boys is in the Army Reserve and is an Afghanistan veteran; another did two Air Force tours in Iraq.


Sigma's future seems bright, although



Cynthia Luedtke with one of her prized quilts

Dan Smith

neither Dwight, 58, nor Cynthia, 53, exhibit burning ambition for growth. "We're not out to become a Fortune 500 company," he says.

But they seem to be a dedicated pair, intent on helping blueprint military buildings that enable service people to perform their national defense duties in high-quality conditions. Says Cynthia, "They don't need a Taj Mahal, but they shouldn't have to work in old, rat-infested buildings. And we have seen that." 

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Michael Fleming: "I had to learn what questions to ask."

Michael Miller

Leadership as part of the course >

Executive Summary:

The founder of TORC Technologies in Blacksburg isn't like most techies: He can run the company, too.

By Michael Miller

The problem with most tech startups is that they are almost always started by technologists.

Why is this a problem? After all, the technologist is usually the first person to recognize the potential for a new invention, and generally has the most passion for trying to introduce it to the marketplace.

The problem is that the technologist is generally the least equipped person to accomplish all the non-technical activities that can actually make the vision a reality: legal issues, tax issues, payroll, human resources, funding, marketing, strategic alliances, distribution channels, etc. Technologists just don't know how the world of business really works. This is especially true when the time comes to give up control of their baby to secure needed financing.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Take Michael Fleming, founder and CEO of highly successful tech startup TORC Technologies ... and engineer.

Fleming didn't know it at the time, but his training to lead a technology startup began with his first internship during his freshman year at Virginia Tech. On his first day of work, his supervisor brought in a large stack of files and told him, "Here are your projects," then left Fleming to sort it out. For the first couple of months on the job, Fleming "felt dumber and dumber every day."

"I had to learn what questions to ask," he says. And that is one of the reasons TORC has flourished under his leadership. He knows he doesn't know everything, and he is willing to ask more experienced mentors for advice.

Fleming's second lesson in entrepreneurship happened the next year when Hurricane Floyd flooded his workplace. He and the other employees had to work 14-16 hours per day, seven days a week to clean the place up and get it back into running order.

The TORC founders started their corporate endeavors in an unusual way for most technologists: They thought about the customer rather than the technology. Outside corporations routinely visited the laboratories of the Jouster team at Virginia Tech and were impressed by their accomplishments. They were so impressed in fact, that they wanted to purchase some of the robotic systems developed by the team. Unfortunately, Virginia Tech cannot sell product from its laboratories, and no outside business entity existed to market products from the work. So Fleming and the other founders spent a year pondering how they could best make

this technology available before they began operations.

This patience and focus on the needs of the customers paid off big for the fledgling company. A glimpse of the product offerings on their Web site reveals a set of robotic vehicle building blocks that enable the customer to easily carry out almost any project with plug-and-play interfaces guaranteed to work together. TORC's vision has made life easy for robotic vehicle system developers.

Perhaps the most innovative aspect of Fleming's leadership at TORC is his "upside down" company focus. In most tech companies, engineers are hired to carry out the decisions of the company administrators. At TORC, the administration exists to implement the work of the engineers. Says Michael, "I want to maintain a work

environment in which the only limitation on the engineers is their own will."

As for his personal style, Fleming believes that the best way to garner respect from his team is to admit when he is wrong.

"I have a lot of good mentors to give me advice," he says, "but I still make mistakes. Everybody on the team knows when it happens, and they appreciate it when I stand up in front of them and publicly admit that I blew it."

While this is an example of great leadership, Fleming hasn't had to practice it very often. TORC is a regional poster child for how to do a tech startup right. Any prospective entrepreneur would do well to have a conversation with Michael Fleming before launching into the world of high-tech business. 

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Sherwood Memorial Park is more than a place to be remembered—it's a place for gathering at those times of year that are rich with meaning. It's a place to honor those that have served our country. And it's a place where the most stunning beauty that nature can provide envelops and surrounds some of the most innovative and moving architecture that man has created.

A community gathering place. Those special times that we all cherish and hold dear require equally special venues. Sherwood Memorial Park is the focal point for community events throughout the year, from an interpretation of the Passion at Easter to a somber yet stirring tribute to our country's fighting men and women on Veteran's Day.



A tribute to our veterans. Sherwood Memorial Park's Veterans Garden provides a moving and unique tribute to those who serve. Bronze and black granite combine to form a poignant reminder to all that "freedom is not free." As one travels the Veterans Memorial Circle and Walkway, the peaceful backdrop of the grounds and images of visitors are subtly reflected.

Natural beauty... The ancient folds of the Blue Ridge Mountains form the backdrop to Sherwood Memorial Park. These timeless, haze-covered peaks and valleys remind us of the eternal.

...combined with architectural brilliance. Belvedere Gardens Mausoleum is a striking contrast of wood, stone and bronze merged with flowing water and trees. The architectural community has recognized the exceptional design as well, voting Belvedere Gardens in second place in Valley Business

Front's FrontList15: Best Buildings in the Region in 2009. Said Virginia Tech Dean of Architecture Jack Davis, "Probably the finest design and architectural execution in our area...This design is exemplary in its incorporation of the landscape and careful architectural detailing. It is sophisticated, timeless, appropriately understated and respectful."

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netFRONT

Eight things you don't
want on your Web site >**Executive Summary:**

Create an important favorable impression with a Web site that serves visitors well.

By Janeson Keeley

Many business owners equate getting more traffic to their Web sites with getting more business from them. This may not happen if your Web site creates an unfavorable impression of your business.

This checklist, with comments by Roanoke area Web professionals, will help you identify features that may be standing in the way of the professional image you want your Web site to project.

Splash or "click to enter" home pages. "The name of the game here is to keep your user's clicks to a minimum," recommends graphic designer Patrick Carrell. Replace the splash page with the main content page, and more people will see your Web site content.

Automatically loading sound or music. "Music that comes up when the site loads can be annoying when you're browsing the Web in a business environment," reports Carilion Web application developer Buffy Lyon. Be respectful of prospective clients who may be visiting your site from their cubicles at work, and put post links to videos or sound tracks so visitors can listen at their convenience.

Too many special effects. "There is nothing I hate worse than pages that are in constant motion while I'm trying to read," says Web site developer Chris Berry of Roanoke. One animation or rotating picture sequence may be an asset; more than that can be distracting.

"Unique" navigation. Menu bars on Web sites are traditionally located across the top or



Janeson Keeley

Dan Smith


down the left side. While it may be tempting to do something "different," it's not a good idea. "Don't force your viewers to relearn the basic navigation layout," cautions Jackie Frackelton of Lab in Kilt Design.

Purposeless content. If your visitor can't tell within the first few seconds what your site is about, he isn't likely to try to figure it out. "If the site is trying to reach prospective clients or customers, it must give information they need ... in the first few paragraphs," recommends Christian Moody of Web Writers Inc.

Outdated content. Carrell suggests giving "your Web site a once over to make sure the content is still relevant." He notes that outdated content can make your site look "stagnant, or worse, abandoned."

Errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation. This should go without saying, but these types of errors are common. Have a professional copy writer proofread your site.

Hidden or missing contact information. Make sure that you contact information is complete and easy to locate. "If it is too hard to reach you, I can easily move to your competitors," warns social media consultant John Lusher.

Your Web site is a reflection of your business. By avoiding features and errors that make your Web site appear unprofessional, you can measurably improve the likelihood of doing business with your Web site visitors. Remember: your competitors are only a few clicks away. 



Exterior of Lanford Brothers' new offices

David Hungate



Bulldozer highlighted in the interior

David Hungate

Work Spaces

Taking the LEED in Botetourt >

Executive Summary:

Lanford Brothers' new headquarters building is both an academic case study and a functioning, environmentally-friendly building.

By Huong Fralin

Virginia Tech graduate Ken Lanford wanted to make a statement about and a connection with his university. He teamed with Tech assistant professor Annie Pearce and created

a live case study at Landord Brothers' new facility in Botetourt County.

The new building includes documentation of plans and processes, earning the company an education point in its Silver LEED certification through the process.

Lanford knows that green is the new black in energy efficiency and the new building is the first building in Botetourt to become green-certified, joining only three others that have achieved LEED designation in the Roanoke Valley.

LEED is an acronym for the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design building rating system, which is essentially an



Three generations of Lanfords

Huong Fralin



Meeting area

Huong Fralin



Training room

Huong Fralin

Olympics for high-performance buildings. Credits are earned for incorporating various features that reduce the building's impact on the environment or improve the well being of occupants.


Lanford is president of Lanford Brothers and is on the board of the School of Construction at Virginia Tech. Lanford Brothers specializes in bridge repair, asphalt and concrete milling, and the installation and repair of guardrails and highway signs. Lanford Brothers is a private company that is 100 percent owned by the employees (250 at peak season) under their Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

Since the majority of the company's work is done out in the field, there is only a shop house where equipment is repaired or stored, in addition to office space that make up the 8,800-square-foot facility.

A few of the green building features are low-flow plumbing to reduce water consumption by 34 percent, hot water equipment designed to achieve a 42

percent reduction in energy, construction materials with a high percentage of recycled content, regionally produced materials which reduces the environmental impact of transportation and natural light in 93 percent of the space, with sensors that turn lights off automatically when not in use,

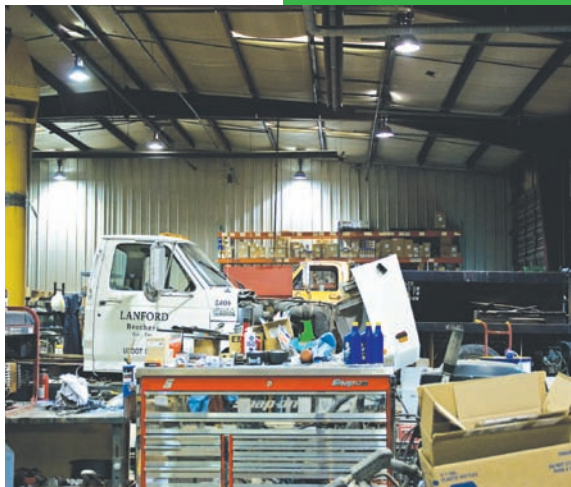
"We recognized as a business that there was a value in the public perception of contractors and felt that we needed to set a higher standard for ourselves on how we build and do things," says Lanford. He adds, "Our electric bill went down over the course of this year and that's after we doubled the square footage of our building."

The biggest issue that Lanford wanted to address while undergoing renovations was air quality since the shop is connected to the office and fumes and dust became a problem. The new HVAC system and an air lock chamber between offices and shop have remedied the matter, and employees say they definitely notice a difference. 



Air lock chamber

Huong Fralin



Shop

Huong Fralin



Mark McCaskill

Dan Smith

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission has cobbled together the latest working draft or "Scenario Planning" document, focusing on the effects that refugees and immigration might have on long-range transportation planning in this region of Virginia.

Previous scenarios created over the past few years by planners for the RVARC entailed what impact the retirement of the Baby Boom generation might have on transportation needs, as well as the impacts of climate change and rising fuel prices. Some of these reports are available online at rvarc.org.

Aging baby boomers that may lose their driver's licenses or stay off the road because of declining vision will need public transportation options if they are to live comfortably in the Roanoke area, a point driven home in the report.

Transportation: A contingency plan >

Executive Summary:

Baby boomers and immigrants are the focus of a new Regional Commission plan for the transportation future of the region.

By Gene Marrano

Spectrum
stays
in a
building
long after
it's
complete



DEVELOPMENT FRONT

The newest document in draft form looks at the transportation habits of just-arrived immigrants, strategies to address their future needs and any intersecting relationship to the transportation needs of baby boomers.

RVARC senior planner Mark McCaskill is a member of the team creating those immigrant scenarios. "That's something we're working on this fiscal year," says McCaskill, noting that it hasn't gone through the organization's Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (RVAMPO) unit for final tweaking.

A report from California contained in the scenario document stresses that quality public transportation must be in the mix, especially for newly arrived immigrants who may not have driver's licenses. Some are more prone to ride bikes, at least initially, making pedestrian friendly roads more of a must.

According to the report, Hispanics comprise the largest percentage of immigrants in the

region; between 1990 and 2007 their numbers increased about four-fold. Numbers include 2,300 residents in Roanoke City and 1,700 in Roanoke County.

"The most requested transportation improvement from stakeholders who interact with refugees and immigrants is extended public transportation hours for those who work second shift," states the RVAMPO working draft. Funding has always been an issue when it comes to extending Valley Metro service hours or bus routes in the Roanoke Valley.

Mentioned also is the 419 Corridor Report, crafted with the help of VDOT, private consultants and public input, which calls for new routes along that busy thoroughfare and intersections with other routes to bring refugees, immigrants and anyone else from Roanoke City to the county or vice versa.

"Rideshare marketing," targeting transportation strategies such as carpooling,

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Councilwoman Gwen Mason on Roanoke's downtown trolley


van pooling and biking to work, is also part of the scenario planning exercise. So is a concept called car sharing, wherein members rent a vehicle on a trip-by-trip basis. Some European cities and the Washington D.C. area have successfully implanted car sharing, according to the draft document.

"The RVAMPO area may not have the market density to support a car sharing system," it continues. "However, the future immigrant and baby boom retiree markets previously described could provide the necessary density and demand."

The 2010 census results, when compiled and disseminated in the next few years, "will change the tools and the data we use," says McCaskill. The 2000 Census was used by the RVARC to create its scenario for the transportation needs of Baby Boomers.

The absence of overwhelming congestion here means that the region has almost a clean slate to work with, according to McCaskill. "[Larger metropolitan areas] are facing different realities."

Transportation needs will help drive economic development and vice versa, according to McCaskill, who often attends local government meetings to keep an eye on related issues.

Witness the new Carilion-Virginia Tech complex rising on South Jefferson Street in Roanoke: the subsidized rubber wheel trolley service instituted to shuttle employees there to and from downtown Roanoke may only be the beginning of a more comprehensive public transportation plan. The South Jefferson corridor could become a residential zone for those working or going to school on the Carilion-Virginia Tech campus. 

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Harvey Dentistry, Salem Office



Joe Pugliese: "I was very, very nervous last year this time."

Chuck Herron

At Sal's, it's about tradition >

Executive Summary:

Joe Pugliese loves the family's restaurants—Sal's and Nico's—and loves his family. It's making the two compatible that's the challenge.

By Rachael Garrity

To say that Joe Pugliese has learned his business from "the ground up" may well be accurate, but it's not at all sufficient. In fact, it's like saying Pavarotti started his career singing in the shower.

In 1978, Domenico Pugliese, Joe's father, decided to take over Sal's, a restaurant his brother had opened earlier that year in Radford. From the beginning, it was a family affair. Joe's mother sometimes worked as cashier; he and his brother and sister were often in the kitchen. Today, Domenico still manages Sal's, while his sons have continued the tradition on their own.

In 1997, Paisano's opened in downtown Radford (Sal's is farther west on Main Street).

Alessandro, Joe's brother, opened Sal's Junior in Fairlawn four years ago. Then, in 2007 Joe opened Nico's in Roanoke. "Ah, a wonderful place. I loved it—a little more formal, higher-end cuisine," he remembers. After two years of operation, though, he sold the restaurant, in part because of the commute from Radford, but also to concentrate his efforts on opening the Sal's on South Main in Blacksburg.

What he had not planned for, of course, was the economic downturn. His voice reflects just how intense the time was when he explains: "We opened Feb. 11, 2009. I had used my own house as collateral. I was very, very nervous last year this time."

Unlike so many others, his operation has weathered the storm well, a success he attributes to several factors, the first being loyal clientele from the other restaurants. In fact, just as he had named the Roanoke restaurant for his eldest son, Domenico, he toyed with naming the one in Blacksburg


Enzo's for three-year-old Vincenzo. Instead, he decided that he would do well to capture the reputation that Sal's has built.

With the same reasoning, he opted to keep the prices the same for menu items offered in the Radford restaurant. "Yes, we have some higher-end additions, but customers can find what they have become accustomed to over the years to be just the same. We make some of our own pasta, we fly in buffalo mozzarella, olive oil and other ingredients come from Italy."

Finally, Joe believes the other important reason for his success is—what else?—family. "This is a demanding business, with long hours, lots of work," he says, more than a little fervently. "I love what I do, I love the people I see come in over and over; I want to make everyone comfortable. I can do that only if I'm there, and I'm there only if a family at home understands."

Joe met Megan, his wife, when she came for dinner at Sal's in Radford. "Of course, I had to get her a bottle of wine," he muses. They now have three sons, and a fourth child due soon. While he doesn't talk about their children being part of the business, it's clear they most probably will have the opportunity.

Asked where he hopes to be in 20 years—he's 35 now—he is quick to reply, "I'd like my own building, a place with a garden behind for weddings and nice affairs, one where I could make myself a nice plate of pasta and pour a glass of wine. . . ."

On the restaurant's Web site beside a picture that looks much like a family reunion, the Puglieses offer: "We're here to serve good foods and make friends. So come visit one of our three locations in the Radford-Blacksburg area and become part of our family." 

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Boards are banking on leadership >

Executive Summary:

Retired bankers seem to be naturals for important roles on a variety of boards of directors in the region.

By Dan Smith

Boards of directors for a wide variety of institutions are often stacked with what are quietly referred to as “money people,” most often a reference to the depth of their pockets. But there’s another money elite whose pocket depth is not necessarily the most important point of reference for their membership.

These are bank executives, many of whom are retired. They have spent their working lives running organizations and keeping them profitable and part of their training—from the day they show up as a teller—is in community involvement.

Says 63-year-old Wayne Carpenter of Pulaski, whose long banking career wound up with a bank he helped found (Select Bank of Lynchburg), “I believe bankers have two opportunities to make themselves good community members. First, every member of the community ... has some relationship with a bank. That gives bankers exposure to things that are going on around them and with some good analysis they can relate items and discern trends. Second, a good banker will continue on a self improvement course that increases effectiveness in communication and leadership.”

David Caudill, who retired from Dominion Bankshare Corporation in 1993 (he’s 74 now) agrees: “As one works his way up the corporate ladder, assuming major managerial and leadership responsibilities, he must also assume major leadership responsibilities with charitable organizations ... The process continues until retirement [but] many of us want to remain active beyond retirement and we want to continue serving our community.”

Some are more involved than others. Warner Dalhouse (75 and a 1996 Dominion Bankshares retiree), for example, can’t seem to say “no” when somebody asks him to serve. He says, in a massive understatement, “A significant amount of my time since retirement has been involved in various fundraising [efforts] for non-profit organizations, especially campaigns for such things as The Roanoke Higher Education Center, Jefferson Center and the Shaftman Performance Hall, Center in the Square, The Taubman Museum of Art and The Grandin Theatre.”



Tim Jackson

Wayne Carpenter



Dan Smith

David Caudill



Dan Smith

Warner Dalhouse



Dan Smith

Bob Lawson



Dan Smith

Doug Waters

And here's why: "The one thing I was sure I could put to use after over 40 years in banking in this community is that I knew where the money was." His involvements include Carilion Clinic, Carilion Foundation, Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, Carilion Biomedical Institute, Art Museum of Western Virginia, Center in the Square, Shenandoah Life Insurance Co., Roanoke Higher Education Center, HomeTown Bank Luna Innovations, and Virginia Western Community College Foundation. If that's not a Who's Who, it's certainly a What's What.

Carpenter has been involved in a wide variety of organizations ranging from economic development to health care to minor league baseball and says, "Technology has changed banking tremendously and people don't necessarily have to bank locally, and many banks don't have high level management in localities. Today's local banker must work harder to be as effective a leader as those of us who were around for the last 35 years."

Bob Lawson, who retired from SunTrust as its top executive in this region in 2007 (after 34 years), says, "So many retired bankers have had so much experience for so long [that] many of them have taken on leadership roles in different organizations and have proven themselves. Former bankers ran organizations ... in my case our region had 750 employees ... so they know what it takes to run an effective organization."

Doug Waters has become something of the King of Retirement: he's done it five times (more than Bret Favre). He has retired from Bank of America, Hollins University, Silent Preferred Partners LLC (truck assembly contractor), Foundation for Roanoke Valley, and Downtown Roanoke Inc. He was also an Army officer at one point. And he's only 64.

Waters' involvement in the community has been as deep as it is wide and he's not just a guy looking for a title. He's served—in retirement—as both board member and volunteer (hanging pictures at the Taubman Museum for its opening, for example). The explanation is all pretty simple: "I enjoy the people contacts and friendships, staying

mentally engaged, and I get to keep making a contribution to the community. Each of the organizations I have been part of has needed both leadership and also hands-on work to be done."


Waters sees mutual benefit. "Smart bankers also understand that their bank will only prosper as their community prospers and that prosperity requires leadership and work as well as money."

Caudill loves the opportunity to learn about other industries. He's been on the boards of Carilion Clinic and Carilion Medical Center and says he has "learned operations of a major hospital; establishment of a medical clinic and the launching of a medical school."

Dalhouse says getting started is pretty simple: "Retired people can become involved in the community by deciding what their interests are and becoming available. After that, it's a business of commitment and dependability. Some retired volunteers seem to think they can be more casual about showing up and keeping commitments. They won't be asked to help again with that kind of reputation.

"Local banking is very much a business of building relationships. That is most successfully accomplished one-on-one in persuasive cultivation efforts to establish rapport and trust and often even friendship. When someone has done that for decades in a career it just doesn't shut down."

Lawson suggests that retirees "pick an area of interest ... and make contact with the executive director of a favorite organization and offer to serve. It's a big tent and they (the not-for-profits) are always looking for volunteers."

Dalhouse concludes, "It is fundamental to successful banking that when the community thrives the bank gains more deposits, makes more loans and enjoys more profits. Anything the banker does to enhance the community also enhances the bank. It becomes a way of living that doesn't stop with retirement." 

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Frazier Hughes: "I can sell you any car ..."

Susan Ayers

Getting loud with Facebook >

Executive Summary:

Former radio guy Frazier Hughes uses the same enthusiasm and charisma he employed at the microphone to sell cars for Berglund.

By Susan Ayers

Frazier Hughes has never had a problem with pumping up the volume. As a disc jockey and a professional basketball PA announcer, getting the crowd involved was at the center of his purpose.

Now, he's selling cars and with the use of Facebook as his new microphone, he may be the most innovative car salesman in the region. He has the entire educational process down to a science with some showbiz thrown in for good measure. He makes the purchase of a new vehicle an experience for the customer.

Prior to working at Berglund SUV & Imports in Roanoke, he was a disc jockey at six radio stations, owned and operated a voiceover

business, produced and wrote commercials for TV and radio using his voice, appeared in commercials and even did character voices.

According to Berglund General Manager Robbie Brookshire, Frazier can get people to dance in front of cars they've just bought. Before they drive away, a photo of the buyers is taken with Frazier (provided that they are in agreement and they normally are). Frazier then puts the photo on his Facebook page, tags the customers who can include the photo on their page and the networking is off and running. Customers tell their friends about the new car they just bought and what Frazier dubs as "The Frazier Hughes Experience ... Buying a vehicle like you never have before."

"My idea, 'The Frazier Hughes Experience' originated from a half-hour TV series that I watched in 2006 called 'The Jamie Kennedy Experiment,'" he says. "The show was about a comedian who played practical jokes on unsuspecting people with hidden cameras in place. While I don't use those tactics, both the show and the process that I use to sell cars are about the experience that people are having during a particular time."

Employing social media in the automobile industry is a relatively new concept compared



Frazier Hughes' posters get extensive plan on Facebook and give a huge, wet kiss to his customers

to other business lines and it is becoming increasingly more important. Effectively using social media helps to round out Web presence, carve a niche and establish a brand. Using traditional media like print ads continues to have value. The problem with newspapers and phone books is that the number of subscribers to the daily newspapers has dramatically decreased and use of phone books may have even surpassed newspaper subscriptions in its decline. Frazier says a lot of car places around here are slow to catch up with social media and he just grabbed and went with it.


Because he grew up in Roanoke and was in radio, he continued to run into a lot of people who told him that if they had known he was selling cars, they would have gone to Berglund to see him. With his Web site already in place, Frazier made the decision to try to locate all of his friends on Facebook—including those he went to high school with—to get the word out as to where he was and what he was doing.

He then began using additional forms of social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Youtube

and Linked In and inter-connected them to his Web site to maximize communication opportunities. Collectively, they help generate conversations, cultivate relationships, reach the targeted market, conduct follow-ups, provide status updates and deepen the connection with his customers.

With Facebook alone, there is built-in chat and e-mail, alerts to events and more. "I can even update Facebook from my phone," Frazier says.

His business card says, "Ask for Frazier Hughes. I can sell you any ride at any Berglund Location..." He adds testimonials on his Web site from customers who purchased vehicles from him.

In 2009, Frazier was runner-up in the "Salesman of the Year" competition for the Franklin Road Berglund location. While he was pleased with his accomplishment, he quickly and diplomatically gives credit to Sales Manager Bryan Vess and Sales Consultant Sal Pinnelo. "We all work as a team here and we have a lot of fun," he says. The "fun" part goes without saying. 

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TV's war of words >

Executive Summary:

While two of the region's TV stations go head-to-head at noon (with guests who pay to be on), WDBJ7 chooses to stay above the fray with its early morning news show.



By David Perry

Jay Prater and Natalie Faunce of "Our Blue Ridge"

Dan Smith

Two television stations in the Roanoke-Lynchburg market are producing their own noontime talk shows—and one station is very clear that it's not in the talk show business.

WSET, the ABC affiliate out of the Hill City, has been broadcasting "Living in the Heart of Virginia" for a couple of years, while Roanoke's NBC affiliate, WSLS, has begun airing a similar program, "Our Blue Ridge."

"Living in the Heart of Virginia," or "LHOV" as host and producer Tab O'Neal calls it, airs Monday-Friday at from 12:30-1 p.m. O'Neal is a veteran TV man who talks unbelievably fast, but who also handles his solo host duties with comfort and ease. The show features a basic living room-style set with chair, couch and coffee table, and progresses through several segments punctuated by short commercial breaks. The segments feature local guests—business owners, event organizers, and so on—some of whom pay to appear on the program, as indicated by the "Portions of the program were paid for by ..." disclaimer.

Meanwhile, "Our Blue Ridge" features a more conversational flow, fueled by the presence of two hosts, Natalie Faunce and Jay Prater, a veteran radio disc jockey and son of the legendary DJ Bart Prater. The overall set looks more "newsy," with a street scene of downtown Roanoke framing Faunce and Prater behind a desk and an "Our Blue Ridge" graphic displaying the local temperature in the lower right corner of the screen.

WDBJ7 is not in the talk show business or the paid guest business, although its "News7 Mornin'" features a more relaxed feel and studio interviews by Bob Grebe in each of its three segments. Kimberly McBroom is a veteran anchor and weathermen Brent Watts and Leo Hirsbrunner handle that chore.

Says WDBJ7 News Director Amy Morris, "'Mornin'" is a 90-minute newscast. It is produced by the news department and our journalists contribute to it. It is like our other newscasts in other parts of the day. It is simply named 'News7 Mornin'" and it follows the same journalist ethics and expectations of any other newscast on WDBJ." That would include, presumably, no "pay to play" segments, although the stock report and other offerings are sponsored by local businesses.

To be fair, it's not apples to apples when you compare what are clearly labeled as paid programs on WSET and WSLS to WDBJ's morning news program. However, it's no coincidence that "Our Blue Ridge" occupies a traditional news time slot, and "Living in the Heart of Virginia" follows immediately after WSET's noon news broadcast.

Faunce says it's affordable to appear on "Our Blue Ridge": "Sponsored segments on the show can go for \$400, and commercials for \$50, so it's a great value, especially for smaller advertisers, since cost of entry is so low."

"The show is all about places to go, things to do and people to see locally," says O'Neal.

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WSET's Tab O'Neal interviews writer Janis Jaquith



"News 7 Mornin's" Bob Grebe, Kimberly McBroon and weatherman Brent Watts

Dan Smith


"There are certainly resources for local information, but the way we have conversations, walk through locations and share information really can't be found elsewhere."

Faunce agrees: "We believe there are enough outlets for news during the day, and this gives people an alternative to find out other things that are happening in our local community ... Anything local is appealing to us ... The first few weeks we placed a lot of calls to various organizations and individuals trying to offer some exposure with the show. Since we have been on the air, our phone has been ringing with people wanting to come on."

On the subject of in-studio guests, WDBJ's Morris says, "The only live interviews we schedule are for newsworthy reasons. We preview events that viewers may want to know about ... We also shy away from

interviews if it feels as if it is just a commercial and there's no real news value to the segment."

Given the shows' low production costs—there is less on-air talent and no reporters to pay or trucks to roll—the talk shows are solid earners in a slow economy. Says O'Neal: "A single host show compared to a four anchor newscast would cost less to produce in talent salary alone. As host of the show, I don't have the exact numbers, but I know LHOV is a successful show from a revenue and business perspective."

"We really want to stress that this is a localized 'Regis and Kelly' type of show. It's not news," sums up Faunce. "We love that it gives the station a chance to connect with the community on a different level, and showcase events, clients and non-profits that probably wouldn't get featured on regular newscasts." 



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My View

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

Executive Summary: *If you're in the building trades, these are the best of times—no matter what the economy says.*

Among the great joys of my profession is the vantage point I have in watching other people live their professions to the fullest. That has not been as much in evidence the last couple of years with an economy that makes professional enjoyment more of a challenge than ever.

The exception, in my experience, is in the building trades where a confluence of technology, ideas, technique, materials, philosophies and opportunity have created a level of enjoyment for practitioners that I have not seen in the past.

It's not just the "green building" emphasis of recent times, but it is the entire notion that, once again, we can build solid buildings, efficient buildings, attractive buildings without running the price tag to the stratosphere. There are builders who will tell you the contrary is true, but I know enough people in these trades who can show you examples of good and affordable in the same building, right here where we live.

They can demonstrate the new, the renovated and the combination. They can show you old technique, combined with new materials and technology to create a marvel of efficiency and stability.

Alison Weaver and I put together this month's cover story and I don't know who had more fun. I'd say I did, but she'd counter that with a solid argument from her end. I got to spend hours with people like Joe Miller, who showed me a futuristic home—that is being lived in—with so many bells and whistles that I could only ... well ... whistle. I spent time with Bob Fetzer who was so excited about a house he is renovating in South Roanoke that he held a "pre-construction" party to show the neighbors what he was up to and they held a press conference to show off the geothermal heating system.

John Garland and his son, Mark, showed me the 1928 building they renovated using the best of the past and

continued to Page 50



A must read >

By **Tom Field**
 Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

BLOG: [ontapfrompub.blogspot.com]

Okay, this is just crazy.

First of all—this is not the usual place for our book reviews. That section is a few pages forward. And second—here’s the really crazy part—I’m honestly admitting I haven’t even finished reading the book. In fact, I’ve *just started it*.

Oh, but what a book!

I just have to tell you about it. I’m compelled to—because it’s compelling. The main character, the heroine, is fascinating. The story starts in 1992, and the setting is remarkably similar to right here, where we live. The plot is just developing, but I already get a sense of excitement, fullness, color, and texture. There’s a hint of mystery, a taste of the unknown and unexpected—especially with the part I’m at now. And though the story has been as beautiful a story that has ever been told, and you cannot fathom how it could possibly get better—you just know it will.

A real page-turner!

But back to that main character. *I’ve got to tell you about her*. She makes you laugh. The funny scenes and simple moments of pure joy are plentiful. She also makes you cry, and sometimes even a bit perplexed—all because she’s got that grip on your heart that just won’t let go, no matter what. She’s no shallow character, that’s for sure. How can one be so simple and complex at the same time? A character so rich and dimensional, she soothes and warms your heart in one chapter, and quickens your soul to keep you up all night in the next. Like tonight. It’s 3:49 am right now, and I can’t put it down. She’s so real. Utterly essential.

Destined to be a classic!

The book really can’t be rated. On a five-star grade, it’s already doubled that—and it’s un-finished. But it also transcends classification and genre. Part *mystery*—maybe—because the reader is never entirely sure what might happen next. But it’s no standard formula, because there are predictable moments, once you get to know the character so well. A *love story*? Most definitely. It fully engages the heart, and yet it’s nowhere close to happily

continued to Page 50





Joe Miller at a futuristic Roanoke County home he built.


Dan Smith

Smith / My View

from Page 48

the best of the present to present a building that is better than both periods.

What I got from all these guys—and what Alison found, as well—is a level of enthusiasm for their profession that has been absent for a while. It is invigorating to be around people who live what they do and who want to tell you every detail of it, especially when it is something as important as putting up the buildings we live in and work in, buildings that will be with us for quite a while and will help define the lives of the people who built them.

There are a lot of reasons to love journalism—and nobody loves it more than I—and I thoroughly enjoy wallowing in them as I did this past month. Thank you, gods of work. 

coming-of-age story, where the girl is stepping into her role as a woman. The beautiful child is dancing across the floor to young adulthood. It's a time of transition. But in essence, the whole book is transitional. The next page is *always a new page*, whether it's a brand new chapter, or you're in the middle of a paragraph.

Yes, you could even say it's a business book—with very practical applications. Product development, as this book illustrates, is not just about improvement to the next release, version, or generation. It's about serving the moment within the entire life cycle. Customer satisfaction is also about the here and now. The business plan is never long term. It's not even short term. It's today's plan. What are we going to do *today*?

Just read it!

Field / On Tap

from Page 49

ever after, riding off into the sunset. Right now, the book is primarily an *adventure*. A

Sorry, I don't have a picture of the cover. The Publisher hasn't assigned a photographer or illustrator yet, because it's so new. It's difficult to decide what's best to show on the front now, because the scenes and elements

*Some things are worth preserving...
So are your final wishes.*



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Letters

Banker's Delight

Editor,

The FRONT has become a great resource for me in the banking industry in keeping up with Roanoke and finding new leads to pursue. Thanks again for all you do and keep up the great work!

Chad M. Scott
First Citizens Bank

Print Please

I'm glad the 'all digital' issue is an option rather than an all out permanent move. As a fan of the

high-quality piece of work, the monthly physical magazine is my one guarded respite from the computer. Whether visiting a coffee shop, relaxing by the pool, or just taking care of business, it's a delight to be able to catch up on local business matters and be away (even if for a short period of time) from the almost ever-present technology of a computer, iPhone, BlackBerry, Kindle, etc.


Raymond McKee
Star-Spangled Specialties

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

thus far have been wonderful, captivating, everlasting. Can you imagine how difficult that decision will be while the story continues, becoming even more interesting? Of all the fascinating symbols that arise in the story, which will we choose to adorn the cover?

I'm at the part now where our heroine has traded in her little Mary Jane shoes for high heels. The little red and yellow plastic car she rode in has driven away from a distant yard sale and now she drives her own little black

SUV. Fisher Price is Blackberry now. My, how time has flown. The story is a little quicker pace than I expected. But our little girl is just as sweet as ever. Enduring. Dark chocolate eyes. Smiling, moving, expressing. Embracing life and painting colors along the way. The Author is now describing the scene where she's wearing a golden robe. Graduating from high school.

The book—this most pleasurable read and completely glorious experience—is simply entitled *Kelsey*. 



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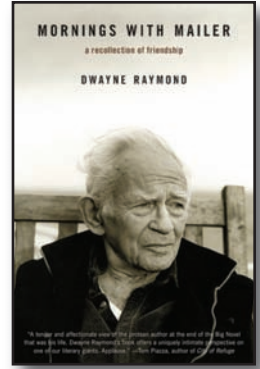
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Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our publishers and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit 125-word reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to Editor Dan Smith at dsmith@vbfront.com



Through Mailer's eyes

For the last years of Norman Mailer's life, Dwayne Raymond served as research assistant, cook, general factotum, friend. Raymond learned much about Mailer, about the discipline and commitment required to create great literary art (Mailer's final, masterful novel, *The Castle in the Forest* was completed while Raymond worked for him), about the challenges of celebrity and, ultimately the challenges of old age.

He also learned, as his memoir (*Mornings with Mailer*, Harper Perennial, \$13.99 paperback) reveals, a lot about himself. Raymond's account of his own growth as a person and a writer is as central to the story as his moving and at times heartbreaking account of Mailer's physical but not intellectual decline. The 84-year-old writer's novelistic ambition undiminished even as he lay dying.

A lovely, thoughtful, insightful book about a great writer, written by a very good one.

—Keith Ferrell

Sea faring men

Fans of the Discovery Channel's *Deadliest Catch* will enjoy two books written by captains from the series: *Time Bandit: Two Brothers, the Bering Sea, and One of the World's Deadliest Jobs*, by Andy and Jonathan Hilstrand and Malcolm MacPherson (Ballantine, \$25) and *North by Northwestern: A Seafaring Family on Deadly Alaskan Waters* by Captain Sig Hansen and Mark Sundeen (Thomas Dunne Books, \$25.99).

Both books flesh out the background of

some of the series' favorite fishermen, the Hilstrand and Hansen families, providing insight into what makes these tough yet entertaining men tick, and what keeps them returning to the Bering Sea year after year. And both use a similar device to tell their tales, alternating between their historical narrative and an emergency at sea (Jonathan set adrift on his salmon boat and Hansen patriarch Sverre fighting a fire).

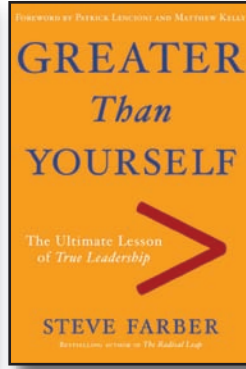
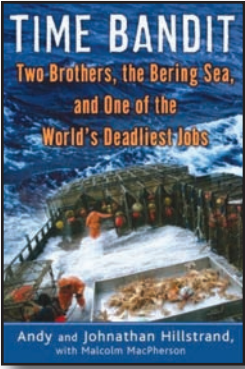
While Sig's book is more historical, the Hilstrand's is more personal, and had me laughing aloud at Jonathan's candor and dark humor. Neither book is great literature, but they're fun, quick reads for fans of the show.

—David Perry

Kingsolver special

As a rule, I don't have a lot of patience with stories told through letters, diaries and news reports. I want my narrative straightforward and spoken, and was, therefore, at the point of giving up on Barbara Kingsolver's *The Lacuna* (Harper, \$26.99) when something stirring happened: it got interesting. And stayed that way to the end. I was initially taken with this book for three reasons: part of it is set in my hometown (Asheville, N.C.), it deals with some mid-century radicals and Communists (Rivera, Kahlo, Trotsky), it climaxes in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee—an un-American activity if ever there was one.

The book's protagonist is the son of a lost soul divorced Mexican mother (and long-gone American dad) who grows up with the Rivera-Kahlo influence, becomes a



writer in Asheville and is ultimately called to account for his previous life before Congress.

Kingsolver (who lives in Washington County, Va., the book banning capital of the U.S.) is a master at moving a story, at being new and creative, at telling a tale at its pace and at a level that is appropriate. Big themes abound, but never at the expense of understanding how people lived and what had their attention. This is a book by a mature writer at the top of her form.

—Dan Smith

Lessons easily learned

Greater Than Yourself (Steve Farber, \$19.95) can easily be read on a flight to the west coast, a perfect book for the road warrior. I was pulled into it when Farber describes a vintage guitar he fell in love with and had to buy. In an unlikely turn of events, the tale grows in to a business parable, and Farber offers a lesson in being “greater than yourself,” which he casually refers to as GTY. *Greater Than Yourself* entertains as it brings the pay-it-forward notion into the world of leadership. I love an easy read that includes a story line and an opportunity to consider the possibility of being a better leader.

If you like a book that helps you question your actions, reactions and growth as a leader, this is it. The story line creates an outline for action while engaging you. The Web site helps bring the lessons home and supplies a bit of structure to get you going, if you are so inclined.

—Johna Campbell

Personal innovation

Perhaps the hottest marketing and business author on the planet, Seth Godin shares insights on how to become indispensable to your organization and survive the flat job market in *Linchpin: Are You Indispensable?* (Portfolio, \$25.95). In his unique way, Godin challenges the status quo, motivates the reader to be different, and gives them the self-confidence to continue to innovate despite institutional obstacles.

The book clearly defines how the system is beating the hell out of common sense. Linchpins are needed to challenge the status quo and to ask why. He suggests that those who reject the system are actually more likely to succeed. Linchpins do not need authority to create a new path—one that actually works.

This new path requires Linchpins to “ship.” Linchpins ship art—unique art to them that make a difference in the organization that only they can do despite obstacles preventing them from being the artists they are. This art is a gift—a free gift—to others and is what makes them indispensable and in demand by others.

—Stuart Mease

(The reviewers: Keith Ferrell is a Franklin County-based writer with a national reputation. David Perry is with the Western Virginia Land Trust. Johna Campbell is with Cogent Management Resources. Stuart Mease is with Virginia Tech’s Pamplin College of Business. Dan Smith is editor of FRONT.)

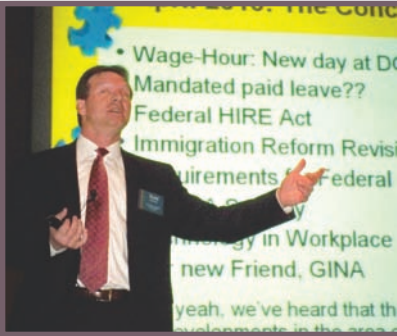


photo: Jane Dalier

Employment talk >

Todd Leeson presents "The New Shape of Employment Law: Recent Developments" at the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center on April 29, a symposium by Roanoke-based law firm **Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore**.



photo: Tom Field

Mountain mingling >

Mountain Lake Conservancy & Hotel was the venue for the annual "Mingling on the Mountain" multi-chamber mixer on April 29.



Hospital dedicated >

Carilion Giles Community Hospital CEO **James Tyler** addressed a crowd of about 300 people at the dedication of the new critical access hospital's 86,388 square foot, \$50 million facility May 5.

Morse celebrated >

LeClairRyan in Roanoke held a celebration May 17 for shareholder **Clinton Morse**, who was named in January chairman of the **Virginia Chamber of Commerce** board of directors. Here he chats with Roanoke Regional Chamber President **Joyce Waugh**.



photo: Dan Smith



photo: Tom Field

Wine festival ripens >

The Blacksburg Partnership's **Fork & Cork** was held May 1 at First & Main. Partnership president **Diane Akers** reported "at least 3,500 people" in the wine garden alone; which, along with the expanded vendors and exhibitors (such as **Blue Ridge Vineyard** at left) represented a significant increase for the event's second year.

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



Agency opens "service station" >

Roanoke advertising agency **Anstey Hodge** hosted an open house May 7 to showcase its new offices, a historic preservation effort from renovating a former service station. Principals **David Hodge** and **John Anstey** (lower left) greeted guests as the mechanic shirt-wearing caterers served a large crowd.



photos: Tom Field

Non-profit lessons >

About 150 people piled into the Dumas Center auditorium May 11 to hear speakers talk about grant writing for non-profits, presented by **Rutherford** and **The Hanover Insurance Company** in Roanoke.



photo: Dan Smith



photo: Tom Field

Parade of colleges >

The **Roanoke Higher Education Center** hosted one of its open houses on May 6, featuring the center's educational institutions and more than 200 undergraduate, graduate, licensure, and certificate program offerings.

Hearing things >

Carl McCurdy, president of Beltone-Roanoke, helps Roanoke City Manager **Chris Morrill** cut the ribbon on the new **Beltone Audiology and Hearing Aid Center** in downtown Roanoke May 4. Joining him were **Lisa Soltice**, economic development specialist with Roanoke; **Kevin McCurdy**, audiologist with Beltone-Roanoke; **Barb Vansomeran** and **Steve Brinkman** from Beltone Corporate.





Dan Smith

Garry Norris: "I thought I had made a serious, serious decision that was wrong."

Always pursuing opportunity >

Executive Summary:

Gary Norris learned some basic, long-standing rules from his grandmother and they have served him well at Express Employment.

By David Perry

Garry Norris owes it all to his grandmother.

"I grew up very poor," says Norris, owner of Express Employment Professionals in Salem. "We lived on the wrong side of town and my grandmother worked three jobs to raise me. She taught us to respect people, work hard, get a good education, follow the rules. Do that and you'll win."

That kind of no-nonsense upbringing led a young Norris to the University of South Carolina, where he received a bachelor's degree in accounting. A turn as a page in the South Carolina House of Representatives led

to a job in the Lieutenant Governor's office. At the same time, he was elected vice chairman of the South Carolina Democratic Party.

"I thought I wanted to be a politician—problem was, it didn't pay anything," Norris says. He knew he needed to enter the private sector if he were going to see the payday he coveted.

He signed on with IBM in 1982 as a marketing representative, and Norris soon knew that he "wanted to ascend to senior executive management of a major corporation." Thus began a career that lasted nearly two decades and saw Norris rise from an entry-level position to the upper echelon of IBM management.

Along the way, he broke racial barriers, traveled the world, went mano a mano with the likes of Microsoft, and caught the attention of rival companies, as well.

"Several companies started to pursue me. I never had any interest in leaving IBM," Norris says, but "Kodak made me an incredible offer I couldn't refuse."

He broke the news to his boss that he was leaving home, which wasn't easy. "IBM was like parents to me," he says. "They taught me how to manage and how to

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

be effective as an executive.”

“They offered to send me back to Paris,” where he had spent time earlier in his career, but Norris felt it was time to move on. “I said no, ‘This is all nice, but I’m done now.’”

Norris continued his success with Kodak and another firm before deciding it was time to buy his own company. He consulted with a business counselor. “I gave him the requirements,” in terms of company size, revenue and location, Norris says. The opportunity to purchase the local branch of Express Employment Professionals “popped up to the top,” and he bought the business in November of 2008.

Ironically, the hunted had become the hunter: “I never in a million years thought I’d be in the recruiting business. I was always the one being pursued.”

And it was at this point that Norris thought his record of success might come to an end as the recession bottomed just when he closed the sale. “I thought I had made a serious, serious decision that was wrong. I had buyer’s remorse.”

Never a quitter, Norris “went back to the principals of marketing, management and staffing. We started growing revenue, clients started calling us back, and in February of this year we became the most profitable we’ve been in 15 years.

“We’re now ranked number nine out of 522 (Express Employment Professionals) offices in the country in revenue.”

In Brief

Name:	Garry Norris
Age:	52
Company:	Express Employment Professionals, Inc.
Location:	Salem
Type of business:	Employment
Title:	Owner
History:	Born to a teenage mother in Queens, N.Y., he was raised by a tough-love grandmother in Charleston, S.C., who set him on the path to success. One of her lessons: “Don’t ever look down at anyone unless you’re reaching down to pick them up.” Armed with an MBA from Duke and decades of success in B2B marketing, Norris is bringing his knowledge to a new field of endeavor: staffing solutions. The husband and father of two makes his home in Salem.

The nine-person company features staffing for professional, office, administrative, clerical and industrial needs, with more than 320 placements and \$1 million a month in billing, Norris says. “We’ve got some very big goals for the Roanoke area,” says Norris. “My territory is so wide that there’s nothing but opportunity to grow.”

A New Building for an Old Neighborhood



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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Accounting

Diana Y. Alexander, a Senior Associate in the Roanoke office of Goodman & Company, has passed the CPA exam.

Banks

Henry A. Logue has been named executive VP of Cardinal Bankshares Corporation and president and COO of Bank of Floyd in Floyd.

Wells Fargo has named **Harvey Brookins** business banking manager and market president for the Roanoke and New River Valley regions, where he will provide financial advice, solutions, and service to local businesses. He will be located in Roanoke.

Insurance

Jennifer Schang has joined the Blacksburg office of Charles Lunsford Sons & Associates as a

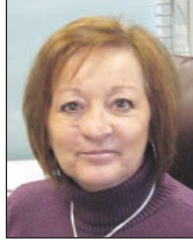


Schang

commercial lines account executive.



Nguyen



Johnston

Toan Nguyen have joined Rackspace Email & Apps in Blacksburg as software developers and **Kathy Johnston** is a new administrative assistant.



Clark

of Realtors.

Poe & Cronk Real Estate Group in Roanoke has formed the Special Asset Services Group and named Senior Vice President **Thom Hubard** as its leader. Hubard has 25 years' experience managing troubled assets for financial institutions and government agencies while implementing optimal exit strategies.



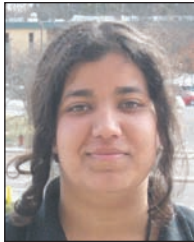
Johnson

Boyd Johnson has been named director of the newly-formed Asset Managed Group (AMG)

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Tibung



Imran

Technology

Carlo Tibung, Shahbano Imran and

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Real Estate

Rob Clark of MKB, Realtors in Roanoke has received the Short Sales and Foreclosure Resource (SFR) Certification by the National Association

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Have a career announcement?

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

of Hall Associates Inc. of Roanoke. Johnson will be joined in this expansion by **Tommy Hendrix**, as director of property management; **Stuart Meredith**, associate broker in charge; and **Roger Elkin**, head of administration and accounting.

Jerad Nielsen portfolio manager in the Roanoke office.



Nielsen

Thalhimer/Cushman & Wakefield has named



Grant

OWPR, Inc. has named three associates: **Andy**



Gibson

Grant, an architect; **Daniel Gibson**, an electrical engineer; and **Jesse Miller**, a civil engineer.



Miller

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Career FRONT

RETAIL FRONT



Spaid

Jewelry

Rebecca "Beckie" Spaid has been named the director of marketing for Amrhein's. Spaid will oversee the marketing initiatives for the fine jewelry, bridal and formalwear, and winery divisions.



McAdams



King

Colleges

Hollins University in Roanoke has named **Dr. Herbert L. "Lee" King Jr.**, VP for External Relations. He will direct development, alumnae relations, marketing and public relations.

Michelle O'Connor, senior VP at CMR Institute in Roanoke, has been appointed to The Center for Instructional Technology Solutions in Industry and Education (CITSIE) advisory board at Virginia Tech.

Woolbright corporate support manager.



Smith

Organizations

Valley Business FRONT Editor **Dan Smith** has been named to the board of directors of the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge.



Hubbard



Rutherford

EDUCATION FRONT

Advertising/PR

Tony Pearman has received the 2010 Silver Medal Award from American Advertising Federation-Roanoke. Pearman is co-creator, CEO and chief creative officer of Access, a Roanoke-based advertising, design and public relations company.



Kiser

tba (the becher agency) in Roanoke has named **Carolyn Kiser** and **Chris McAdams** principals of the public relations and advertising agency.

OTHER FRONTS



Woolbright

Non-Profits

Blue Ridge PBS has named **Robin (Lee)**

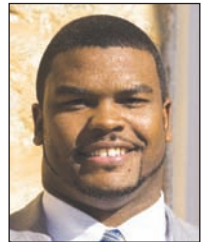


Hardwick

Schultz-Creehan CEO **Nanci Hardwick** has joined the Lead Virginia Class of 2010 as one of 47 participants in this state leadership program. Lead Virginia seeks individuals with outstanding leadership records and diverse backgrounds who will not only benefit from the program, but also contribute to it.



Robbins



Hamlar

Firm; **Blake Travitz**, VP, ophthalmic products rep; **Ryland Hubbard**, secretary, Merrill Lynch; **Judi Jackson**, treasurer, Financial Associates Enterprise Marketing; **Joe Christenbury**, past president, Acorn Construction; **Walton Rutherford**, development, private investor; **Frankie Robbins**, programs, community volunteer; and members **Pam Banks**, Mary Kay; **John Crawford**, retired Roanoke schools; **Judy Goodwin**, retired



Creekmore

Roanoke's West End Center has named the following to its board of directors: **James Creekmore**, president, the Creekmore Law

Salem schools; **Michael Hamlar**, Hamlar Enterprises; **Cortlynn Hepler**, Appalachian Edge; **Linda Mack**, Anthem; and **Jim Joyce**, his own law firm.



Siegel

Recruiting

Alec Siegel, a recruiter in the New River and Roanoke Valleys, has launched his own

business, Siegel Link LLC at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center in Blacksburg. The Company's focus is helping businesses find workers who fit their needs. With the various higher education institutions in the region continuously bringing in new personnel, Siegel Link also works on finding the right employment path for the trailing spouse.

Services

Paula Wilder and **Carol Huntley-Weber** have formed WilderWeber, a consulting firm in Blacksburg that



Wilder



Weber

specializes in helping leaders plan and execute strategic

change initiatives. The firm represents the combined experience of executives in organizational development, and strategic marketing and brand development.

greg

FRONT Notes

Intermet replaced

Virginia Casting Industries intends to create 300 new jobs and invest \$9.1 million to establish a ductile iron components manufacturing operation in Radford at the former Intermet New River Foundry facility.

Virginia Casting Industries is a new company owned by the majority owners of Cadillac Casting Inc. Managers and employees laid off by Intermet will be re-hired by Virginia Casting. Intermet made cast-metal components for automotive and commercial vehicle manufacturers. Cadillac Castings is an industry leader in ductile iron castings, and is headquartered in Michigan.

Boxley buys facilities

Roanoke-based **Boxley**, which specializes in construction materials, has acquired P&T Concrete with sites in Wytheville and Marion and W&S Concrete in Abingdon. This increases Boxley's operations to a total of 10 active plants and one portable plant. Boxley is operating the Wytheville and Abingdon plants and plans to initiate operations at the Marion plant soon.

The Marion plant ceased operation in 2006. "Boxley chose to use the downtime created by the recession's reduced business levels to evaluate how we can improve every facet of our organization and position the company for continued

growth and longevity," says Larry Bullock, Boxley's VP of concrete. "We see tremendous growth potential throughout this region and are pleased to have the opportunity to become a contributing member of these communities."

Radford breaks ground

Radford University officials have broken ground on a new \$44 million, 110,000-square-foot home for the College of Business and Economics (COBE). It is a LEED certified building. The planned completion date is fall 2012 when COBE faculty, staff, and students will move out of their current home in Whitt Hall.

"This new building will make a very bold, very confident statement about what the world can expect from Radford University and the Radford University College of Business and Economics," says President Penelope W. Kyle. Located at the corner of Jefferson Street and Tyler Avenue, the new signature building will also redefine the gateway to campus. "Visitors will see a beautiful, traditional, but modern building that makes the right kind of statement about a university that is on the move," says Thomas E. Fraim, rector of RU's Board of Visitors.

Miller, Arnold inducted

Mary Miller, president and founder of Interactive

vaughn

Design & Development in Blacksburg, who earned her master's degree in computer science from Virginia Tech in 1985, is a 2010 inductee into Virginia Tech's College of Engineering Academy of Engineering Excellence. She joins an elite group of 97 individuals out of more than 55,000 living engineering alumni.

Additionally, **Dick Arnold** of Blacksburg, who earned his bachelor's degree in industrial and systems engineering (ISE) from Virginia Tech in 1956, was selected to the Academy. He is a member of the Sports Hall of Fame. He worked just shy of 30 years at Union Carbide Corp., and then 12 years at Allied Signal. He has worked as a

production engineer, plant manager overseeing 200-plus employees, senior management consultant, and held jobs in corporate public affairs.

The Academy of Engineering Excellence was founded in 1999 by F. William Stephenson, past dean of the college of engineering, and the College's Advisory Board. This year marked the 11th anniversary of the first induction.

Smith wins Tech award

Former Advance Auto CEO **Garnett E. Smith** of Moneta is the recipient of the 2010 William H. Ruffner Medal, Virginia Tech's highest honor, in recognition of his support of the university. Smith

went up the corporate ladder from assistant store manager in 1962 to president and COO in 1985, and in 1997 became CEO. Advance Auto Parts is the Roanoke Valley's only Fortune 500 Company.

He retired in 2000 as vice chairman of the board. At Virginia Tech, he served on the Virginia Tech Foundation Board and as a volunteer in various roles for The Campaign

for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future. He contributed to the W.E. Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center, athletics, University Libraries, the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center, the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, the Holtzman Alumni Center, and the Skelton Conference Center.

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.

photography

FRONT Notes

Wiley gets contract

The Roanoke Symphony Orchestra Music Director and Conductor **David Stewart Wiley** has signed a contract running through 2013. He will continue to lead the region's professional orchestra for at least the next three seasons.

Roanoke bicycle friendly

The **League of American Bicyclists** has named Roanoke a Bicycle Friendly Community. Roanoke joins Alexandria, Arlington and Charlottesville as Virginia's only Bicycle Friendly Communities.

Bicycle Friendly Communities are

designated twice each year based on feedback from cyclists in the community and an extensive application that audits a community's efforts to provide a more bicycle friendly environment.

Inprint wins national awards

Inprint, a Roanoke advertising agency, received two Platinum Awards and one Gold Award in late April when the Hermes Creative Awards announced the 2010 Winners. The Hermes Creative Awards honors outstanding work of creative professionals involved in the concept, writing and design of traditional and emerging

media. Inprint won platinums for campaigns for the Botetourt County Office of Tourism and the 2008 Annual Report for Goodwill Industries of the Valleys. It won a Gold for a heritage tourism initiative for the Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau. Inprint was founded in 1991 by David Harris and David Mikula and serves Mid-Atlantic clients.

Cycle Systems buys Can Company

Cycle Systems, the largest private recycler in the region, is the new owner of the historic Virginia Can Company/Heironimus Warehouse buildings on Albemarle Ave. in

Roanoke, paying more than \$100,000 less than its assessed value of \$377,000.

Brothers Bruce and Neal Brenner will pay \$273,000 (\$260,000 for the 50,000-square-foot property, plus a five percent add-on) for the buildings and property located under an Interstate 581 bridge and in the flood plain. Design agency owner Katie Wallace, who owned the property, had wanted to create an arts center there, but the economy killed her plans.

Salem company sold

RW Connection Inc., a Philadelphia company, has bought **Virginia Carolina Belting** of



[dot]

Salem. The jobs of the Roanoke Valley employees are secure, according to the purchasers, of the company founded in 1983. Virginia Carolina distributes conveyor belts, rubber hoses and the like. It has a small branch in Tennessee with two employees.

Money finds Hollins

For the second time in the past sixteen months, **Hollins University** has officially met and exceeded a challenge from the John M. Belk Educational Endowment to raise \$500,000 to receive a matching grant of the same amount. The grant will support the Claudia Watkins Belk International Scholars Endowment,

which offers deserving Hollins students the chance to study abroad for a semester or a year, participate in an international learning experience during the university's January Short Term, or engage in community service or career internship placements abroad.

In another development alumna Jane Parke Batten of Norfolk has challenged Hollins to raise \$5 million by December 2013 in order to receive a matching grant of the same amount. Earlier Hollins grad Jean Hall Rutherford and her husband, Thomas made a gift of \$1 million to support Hollins' study abroad program in Paris.

Agency of year

The Southwest District of Farmers Insurance and Financial Services has named the **Caleb Agency** of Botetourt County and Roanoke County Agency of the Year Award. The award was given based on leadership in new business production, customer retention (led by Kathy Thompson) and overall customer service (led by Janice Coy), as well as community involvement.

Access wins award

Access Advertising & PR of Roanoke has won a Silver Cannonball Award from the Richmond Ad Club, recognizing work from Virginia advertising, design and production

firms. Access shared the award in the Broadcast: TV category with Abandon Films of Lynchburg. They produced the entry for Carpet Factory Outlet.

TBA wins VPA award

The Virginia Press Association has recognized **tba (the becher agency)** with a silver award was during the Virginia Newspaper Agency Advertising Awards luncheon in Portsmouth. The winning ad was created for HoneyTree Early Learning Centers to promote its Spanish classes.

TPS Displays sold

Scott Llewellyn of Lynchburg and Shauna

com

CONTRIBUTORS

Susan M. Ayers is a Roanoke-based freelance writer who has written articles on a wide array of topics that have been published in various media. As a former mortgage banking executive, she has experience in technical writing and business correspondence including white papers, management briefings, systematic analyses, awards programs, performance standards and responses to correspondence of a sensitive and confidential nature. [susanmayers@cox.net]

Anne Giles Clelland is the founder of business news site Handshake 2.0 (handshake20.com) and the president and CEO of Handshake Media, Inc., a new media PR firm and member company of VT Knowledge-Works 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@handshake20.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]

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 30 years. [tfield@berryfield.com]

Huong Fralin is an award-winning photographer and writer who loves to travel, shoot film and lives by the motto of "happy endings aren't for cowards." Her photographs and writing have appeared in magazines, newspapers and even soda bottles. She is based in Roanoke. [write.to.huong@gmail.com]

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

Paulette Jayabalan is pursuing a graduate degree in library and information science at the University of North Texas. She was an HR training specialist for Roanoke City and a copy editor for Dow Jones Newswires (publisher of the Wall Street Journal, Asian Wall Street Journal, Barron's and Smart Money magazine) in Singapore for seven years and edited financial, breaking news headlines and features. [paulettejayabalan@gmail.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. [bobbyj7676@gmail.com]

Janeson Keeley is the owner of JTKWeb in Roanoke, where she specializes in Web site development and search engine optimization. She is also founder of TweetVA (www.tweetva.com, @TweetVA), "Virginia's Twitter Directory". [janesonkeeley@verizon.net]

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

Michael Miller is senior licensing manager for Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties in Blacksburg. His consulting company is Kire Technology. With more than 25 years as an inventor and technology consultant, working with Fortune 500 companies and startups, he screens businesses for the Case's Best Technology Showcase and mentors tech startups through Development Capital Networks and the National Science Foundation. [mbmiller2@gmail.com]

David Perry, who works for the Western Virginia Land Trust, is an accomplished freelance writer. He is a member 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]

Jo Lynn Seifert is an Account Executive for FRONT. Her experience in regional market media sales is diverse and strategically applicable. [JoLynnFRONT@verizon.net]

Michele Marie Summerlin Shimchock is a Salem-based writer who has worked as a bankruptcy paralegal, a dual-enrollment instructor of English, and a custom frame designer. She holds a Master of Arts degree from Hollins University's program in English and Creative Writing. [mshimchock@gmail.com]

Dan Smith is editor and co-owner of Valley Business FRONT. A native of Asheville, N.C., he has been a journalist for more than four decades and has won many journalism awards (writing, photography and design). He was recently named to the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame and was a 2009 recipient of the Perry F. Kendig Literary Award. He was Virginia's Business Journalist of the year in 2005. He is the founder of the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference. [dsmith@vbfFRONT.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]

Nicholas Vaassen is a graphic designer with 12 years experience, specializing in publications. His design projects include FRONT, 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@gregvaughnphotography.com]

Alison Weaver is a freelance writer based in Roanoke. She contributed to and was a staff writer at the Blue Ridge Business Journal throughout the 1990s before working as a copy editor at The Roanoke Times for eight years. Her recent freelance credits include Redbook magazine. Her story on niche publications won the FRONT Story of the Year for 2009. [alison.weaver03@gmail.com]



Janeson Keeley

MAY 2010 >
Contributor of the Month

Valley Business FRONT congratulates **Janeson Keeley**, who receives the May 2010 "Contributor of the Month" award, including a "One Who's in the FRONT" certificate for her MAY contribution. Keeley writes "netFRONT" each month, offering how-to advice, useful and solid information regarding Web sites, social media, online business, and new media applications, whether you're a novice, power user, or full time net savvy professional. Never too basic and never too technical, Keeley's writing is first and foremost practical, as readers of all experience levels have noted. You can read Keeley's current and back issue columns at vbfFRONT.com

“ ”
windows
are the
weak link

Parsons of Appomattox have bought TPS Displays in Forest, a 30-year-old company with strong ties in the community.

TPS specializes in trade show displays and has in house printing capability as well as display design, rental, storage and fulfillment. Parsons and Llewellyn own EC Services, a trade show promotion company and display sales company.

Tech tuition increases

The Virginia General Assembly's declining financial support of higher education in the Commonwealth has led to yet another tuition increase at **Virginia Tech**, where students will face a nearly 10 percent hike next year. This will be slightly offset by the Obama Administration's tax credits.

The Virginia Tech Board of Visitors Executive Committee has set total tuition and mandatory fees for a undergraduate students at \$9,589, an increase of \$854, partially offset by a \$130 American Reinvestment and Recovery Act grant.

HCA issues IPO

Hospital Corporation of America Inc. (HCA), which operates 162 hospitals and 106 surgery centers in 20 states and the UK, including four in this region of Virginia, reportedly hopes to raise \$4.6 billion in an initial public offering of common stock, its third, according to the Associated Press.

The IPO comes a bit more than three years after it became private, following a leveraged buyout by private equity investors. HCA is based in Nashville and operates Lewis-Gale Medical Center in Salem, as well as hospitals in Low Moor (Alleghany County), Blacksburg and Pulaski.

Pulaski lands company

Pulaski County is anticipating the creation of 240 new jobs by **Phoenix Packaging Group**, which plans to invest \$20 million into a facility at the Pulaski County Industrial Park.

Phoenix's executives are based in Miami, Bogota, Colombia and Caracas, Venezuela. The company makes rigid packaging for foods and has a value of about \$340 million,

according to published reports.

Preservation awards given

Thirteen awards for preservation practices and a Bulldozer Award for razing a noteworthy downtown Roanoke structure were presented by the Preservation Foundation of Roanoke Valley at an annual event in late May. The Bulldozer Award is for the demolition of the former Downtown Learning Center/Roanoke Camera Shop (RoPho) building owned by Greene Memorial United Methodist Church. The 74-year-old structure was placed on the Endangered Sites listing by the Foundation last year.

The preservation award winners are: **Anstey-Hodge Advertising Group, Interactive Design Group, Interactive Achievement, Hanabass & Rowe and The Sanctuary**, all adaptive reuse; **Mill Mountain Tollhouse and Windsor Apartments**, restoration; **Barfield**, rehabilitation; **Salem garden**, heritage; **Bedford County slave history**, education; **Florine Thornhill**

(posthumous), lifetime achievement; **Ed Barnett** (posthumous), education; and **Dr. John Kern**, education.

Siegel Link opens

Alec Siegel (featured on July 2010 FRONT magazine cover as the "headhunter") has announced the opening of **Siegel Link, LLC**, a national search and recruiting firm. With an office in Blacksburg, the firm specializes in technology, placing individuals into permanent positions in all skill set areas and all levels of experience.

HomeTown dividend

Roanoke-based **HomeTown Bankshares Corporation** announced at its annual shareholder's meeting that the Board of Directors voted to declare a 10 percent stock dividend. The dividend will be paid to shareholders of record as of June 18, 2010 and will be paid on July 19, 2010. The dividend will increase shares outstanding by approximately 294,500.

Compiled by Dan Smith

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

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

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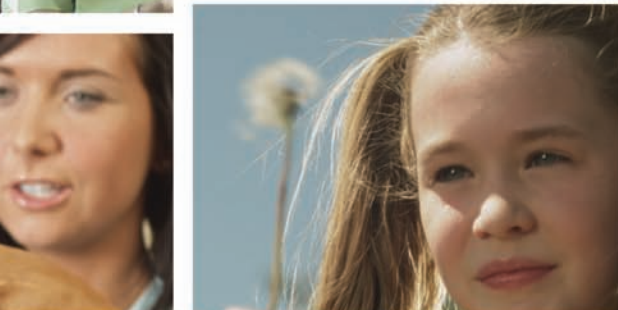
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