

Valley Business

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## *Inventing Themselves*

our 2011 FRONTreport  
on Young Entrepreneurs

Nathan Latka,  
Co-Founder, Lujure



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# WELCOME to the FRONT

The difficult economy we find ourselves surrounded by these days has had a much more mixed effect on employment than the raw numbers will tell you. The high rate of unemployment—much of it long-term—does not tell you that many of the unemployed have given up hunting a job working for somebody else and have pursued what always seemed like a distant dream of working for themselves in an area they love.

While evidence is much more anecdotal than measured, you can simply look around you and see examples. One of the more interesting aspects of the new entrepreneurial spirit is the emergence of young business owners—the topic of our cover story this month.

Twenty-six percent of new ventures in 2010 were started by people aged 20-34, according to the Kauffman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity. That is the equal of their older counterparts in the 35-44 range, the age group most often associated with starting a new business. Women account for 38 percent of the activity and services represent 55 percent of the startups (with construction at a paltry two percent and manufacturing weighing in at a healthy 23 percent).

Though Virginia ranks in the bottom third of the nation's entrepreneurial index according to Kauffman, this region has always been a hotbed for entrepreneurs and our story tells you why.



**Tom Field**



**Dan Smith**



all of us at the FRONT  
wish each of you a joyous  
holiday season and a  
most prosperous new year

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\*Based on 2010 data

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## inventing Themselves

our **2011 FRONTreport** on  
**YOUNG** Entrepreneurs



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David Perry



Greg Vaughn



Randolph Walker

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 69.

**Editorial Advisory Board**

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

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

# CONTRIBUTORS



Tom Field



Rachael Garrity



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Gene Marrano



Anne Piedmont



Dan Smith



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen



Joel S. Williams

“”  
Take a deep breath

— Page 20

“”  
Women are  
from Roanoke  
and men are  
from the New  
River Valley

— Page 61

## 2010 / 11 Members

**Nancy Agee** Carilion (Wellness)  
**Laura Bradford** ClaireV (Retail)  
**Nicholas C. Conte** Woods Rogers (Legal)  
**Warner Dalhouse** Retired (Seniors)  
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**Mary Miller** IDD (Tech/Industry)  
**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.

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Greg Vaughn Photography

**Nathan Latka colors himself on our FRONTcover ... His outfit—boxers while guzzling a Red Bull energy drink—is exactly what he was wearing the night he decided to change from college student to entrepreneur.**

## On their own >

### Executive Summary:

*If it looks like entrepreneurs are becoming younger and younger in this region, which so prides itself on the development of independent business people, then you're paying attention. Here's some of what's going on.*

By Dan Smith

# inventing Themselves

## our 2011 FRONTreport on YOUNG Entrepreneurs

This part of Virginia has been known for many years as a center for the development of entrepreneurs. That is important, especially in a weak economy, because these latter-day pioneers are responsible for the creation of a substantial percentage of new jobs. In the past, these new ventures have most often been created by seasoned people who have considerable experience and expertise.

That's changing.

Bob Summers, one of the region's high-profile angel investors, after naming a number of promising young entrepreneurs, says, "All have more resources available to them than previous groups."

That's saying a lot because resources have been there for a long time. The recent growth, however, has been exponential. Consider just a few:

- VT Knowledgeworks
- TechPad
- 460 Angels
- DayOne Ventures
- The Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council
- RBTC Pitch and Polish Clinic
- CIE Partners
- Virginia Tech Entrepreneur Club
- The Roanoke Regional Chamber's Entrepreneurship Taskforce
- VT5K
- Roanoke Regional Entrepreneurial Center (<http://www.roanokeentrepreneur.com/>)
- Roanoke Entrepreneur Hub
- Synergy Sessions

In Lynchburg recently, an initiative by the area colleges netted the Region 2000 Partnership's Entrepreneurship Initiative



for Higher Education a \$12,000 prize from the state. Interest among college students in studying how to go to work for themselves rose from 2.1 percent in 1979 to 3.7 percent in 2008, according to the Kauffman Foundation.

Sam English of CIE Partners, which is at the center of advising a number of startups, says, "In general this is a very favorable culture in which people support each other. [That] is critical for entrepreneurs. The low cost of living means that a start-up can have a longer 'runway' to figure out the business. In other areas with higher costs, for the same amount of money there is less time to learn what works."

English stresses that "I don't differentiate entrepreneurs with respect to their age. However, experience is a significant factor. Age makes no difference in my world. I like the entrepreneur who is the target customer, which makes some young entrepreneurs better suited for certain types of products or businesses." A crucial point, he says, is that "most successful businesses take five to 10 years to figure it out and then hit their stride."

Beth Doughty of the Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership tends to agree that "low costs, strong support infrastructure, open/welcoming environment and a good place to live all apply in the case of young entrepreneurs. The anecdotal evidence I hear is that everything you need to start a business is here. I hear that over and over from start-ups to veterans."

Joyce Waugh of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce believes "We rate OK, but could always do better. Between the [Small Business Development Center], small groups of entrepreneurs and various technology offerings and other specialized or one-on-one offerings, most can find what they need to be successful. That

## They said it here ... >

Another interesting observation is the diversity of entrepreneurial ventures. Moody's says Roanoke [has] the most diverse economy in Virginia. You can say the same thing about entrepreneurship. There are lots of different kinds of businesses getting their start here.

—Beth Doughty, Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce

Our universities need to work harder at incorporating entrepreneurship into their curriculum and at least providing an option. In addition to curriculum development, hiring more faculty who have entrepreneurial backgrounds will have a huge impact. It is my expectation that future leaders of our business schools will have entrepreneurship in their history.

—Bob Summers, Investment Angel

I am also a firm believer in just put your shit out there and get it done, cause no one is going to help you unless you show you are ready to work.

—Joey Kaylor, Protocol Inc.

Entrepreneurship is not something you do for a few years. It is a way of life. The excitement of working on something with unbounded potential, and working on an endeavor whose success or failure is solely your responsibility is an incredible feeling. I can't imagine ever having a 'normal' job.

—Fred Cook, Heyo

It is a dream come to true to love what you do.

—Christin Burdette

At the time of founding the company, I was 16 and didn't have access to a credit card which happened to be the only criteria for renting a server and purchasing a domain ... My mom refused to give me her credit card details to make the payment for the first month. I managed to find a friend that would donate the \$15 to get me started and within a matter of days I was profitable. Within the first month I received a 2,000 percent return on that initial investment and continued to grow. To this day my mom regrets not supporting me and has offered to invest on several occasions.

—Rishi Ishairzay, mapMonkeys

continued to Page 10

said, I believe the effort or the Innovation Blueprint can raise awareness and assist in creating a stronger culture for young entrepreneurs.

“All that the Roanoke Regional Partnership is doing related to outdoor amenities and all that the Roanoke Regional Chamber does to strengthen and improve the business climate is part of the mix. Specialized groups add a lot to encourage young entrepreneurs. That’s an area for additional improvement.”

Bob Summers strongly supports universities giving students the option to study the entrepreneurial option from people who have backgrounds in business and has attached himself

to Virginia Tech’s active and highly-regarded Entrepreneur Club, which has been producing active business people for the past several years.

Ken Ferris of WirelessMedcare and a noted entrepreneur and mentor to young entrepreneurs, says, “There is definitely an uptick among VT students. The Internet and software development tools make it far easier than 10 yrs ago. Most of those going into their own business are doing some type of software application as the start-up dollars are much less than for a hardware company. Mobile apps and social networking apps are the most prevalent because that is the world they live in.”

Young entrepreneurs in this region come in a variety of styles and formats as the following group of profiles will explain. A number are coming out of Virginia Tech’s technology centers and programs, but others are more traditional: personal care, auto repair, bicycle shops and the like.

Several of these entrepreneurs have already experienced a business failure, but none has gone through a failure of the spirit. Almost all agree they wouldn’t consider working for anybody else.

Here are their stories.

## They said it here ... >

continued from Page 9

I wish I could spend more time exploring their potential, but that will have to wait until after graduation. I’ve already began my next project, not because I lack in faith in the The Black Sheep’s success, but because once you catch the entrepreneurial bug, it’s nearly impossible to shake it off.

—Rebecca Samuelson, *The Black Sheep*

I’ve been having a lot of fun just focusing on what we are doing right now, and working hard to ensure that it is a success; it doesn’t make much sense to think beyond this until I know it is time to move on, and that time is not now.

—Daniel Burgess, *MoGo Mobile*

Simply put, I am an entrepreneur at heart, always have been, and always will be.

—Kevin Bowen, *Campus Carrier Services*

There are few things I’ve found in life that are more satisfying than taking raw materials and turning them into a beautiful product that people really care about and get great enjoyment from.

—Aaron Dykstra, *Six-Eleven Bicycle Company*

We have pivoted a few times already, so we learned to be adaptable when needed. Over time, we have developed a network of like-minded entrepreneurs and seeing their success and challenges tells us that with absolute commitment and execution everything is possible.

—Marek Zareba, *Engagn*

Mobile apps and social networking apps are the most prevalent because that is the world they live in.

—Ken Ferris, *WirelessMedcare*

## The Entrepreneurs

### Frederick Cook

Fred Cook is one of our young entrepreneurs with a burning desire to make a success in something and it doesn't much matter what. He has already found success with Heyo, gathering a group of investors, and then asking that group if it might be interested in Round II with him. "Our investors were upfront about having invested in us as founders, and not in a particular business idea. Under Heyo, we worked on the social fitness app, we worked on a social calendar app, and we worked on a real estate rental web application.

"I'm not sure where we will go from here, but the group of investors I am working with has been incredibly supportive in each of the ventures we pursued, and I plan to continue to work with them, regardless of what project comes next.

**Name of Business:** **Heyo** (formerly)

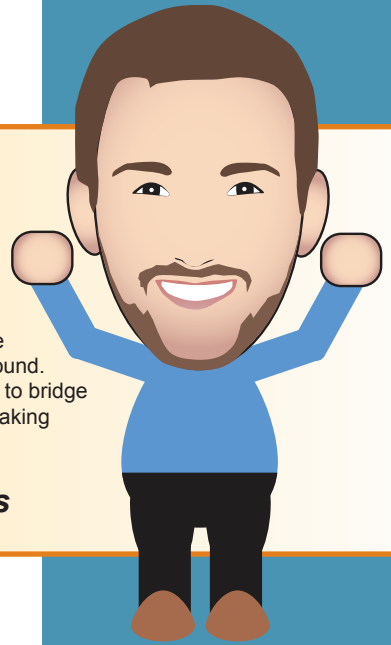
**Owner's Age:** 26

**Location:** Blacksburg

**Founded:** 2010

**How Financed:** Seed investment from DayOne Ventures. "We did a very small follow-on angel investment round. Prior to founding, I used my personal savings to bridge myself from finishing school to founding and taking investment."

**Nature of the Business:** **Various Internet applications**



Frederick

"It took me a while to get comfortable with the idea that entrepreneurship is not something you do for a few years. It is a way of life. The excitement of working on something with unbounded potential, and working on an endeavor whose success or failure is solely your responsibility is an incredible feeling. I can't imagine ever having a 'normal' job."

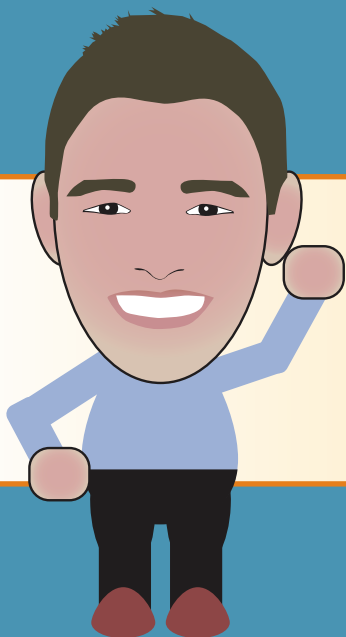
### Nathan Latka, Josh Gunter, Brian Tutt

Latka, the primary figure here, worked in his Virginia Tech dorm room building fan pages until the idea dawned on him to automate the service, which he was already selling. He had designed a "drag and drop platform so small businesses could customize their fan pages without having to use a designer." Latka was providing the designer—his only initial expense—and the pages didn't require coding.

Business has been so good that he has dropped out of school. "I was taking a test I hadn't studied for—no time—when I got two text messages that netted \$1,400 during the test. At that point, I thought, 'I don't need this undergraduate work,'" so he dropped out. He says eventually he'd like to "earn a Harvard

MBA" qualifying for entry because "of an impressive resume" he plans to put together.

His business went from "zero to 23,000 customers in the first nine months," he says. "We're taking on the mammoth Silicon Valley" businesses of this type. He has linked up with some business savvy professionals (Bob Summers among them; he comes up quite a bit when talking to young entrepreneurs) and believes he is getting solid guidance.



**Name of Business:**

***Lujure Media Inc.***

**Owner's Age:**

Latka 22, Gunter 23, Tutt 21

**Location:**

Blacksburg

**Founded:**

January 2011

**How Financed:**

Self-financed

**Nature of the Business:**

***Custom fan page construction***

**Nathan**

Social life? "I live over a bar [Sharkey's] and I connect with my friends at night, then come back upstairs and work some more. Sometimes I live on Red Bull and pizza."

## Christin Burdette

For Christin Burdette, there was never any question. "When I purchased the spa [from Mary Schoendorfer], all I ever thought I wanted to do was be a Professional Makeup Artist in a high end spa," she says. "I have always taken care of myself, but being in this industry now for six years, I have experienced the true definition of well-being. A life change in my diet, spa services and practicing yoga/Pilates regularly, has enhanced my life in every aspect.



**Name of Business:**

***Pure Spa***

**Owner's Age:**

26

**Location:**

Roanoke

**Founded:**

2006

**How Financed:**

Bank loan, loans family

**Nature of the Business:**

***Full service spa***

**Christin**

"The life choice of being healthy and feeling good about yourself is a message that I share with everyone I know ... It is a dream come to true to love what you do."

## Bud So Townsend

"Unlike most startup companies, we don't focus on a core product," says Bud So Townsend. "Our goals surround developing intelligent systems; the Ironman, Skynet, I-robot sci-fi type of intelligent. In order to reach that goal, we take up

projects related to our field from other companies. An example of such a product is a digital secretary, home automation systems, voice recognition, and gesture recognition technology.

**Name of Business:** **NuNui** (a play on words for the acronym Natural User Interface)

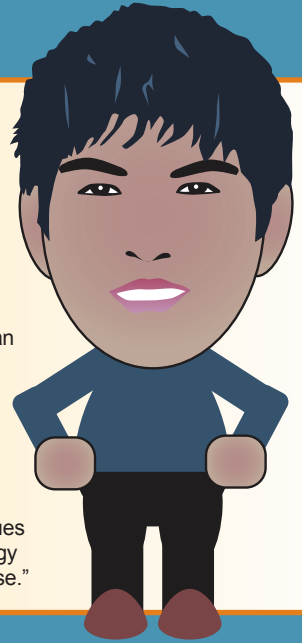
**Owner's Age:** 19

**Location:** Blacksburg

**Founded:** 2011

**How Financed:** "It is financed by my other projects. I own a few other companies with friends, and the seed money originally came from my family when I worked in my dorm freshman year of college."

**Nature of the Business:** "Creating a new sector of the technology market. We are on the forefront of a new technology revolution that a few people have seen a glimpse of: the age of information. Computers are finally approaching sufficient speeds to calculate and find highly complex relations embedded in data. We are trying to develop the techniques to process data intelligently. Applications for our technology range from everything in consumer appliances to military use."



Bud

"Most people think I'm a bit insane and don't believe my ideas at first. The connections I've made with companies have been invaluable. With a large network of resources, I really know how to take any idea from point A to point B. I've seen a good part of the business world, and I've never set foot in a business lecture."

He's convinced that "there's a huge, movie-worthy, crazy story involving how [he and mentor Aaron Bitler] ended up building things together. He was one of the first to develop multi-touch surfaces."

## Rishi Ishairzay

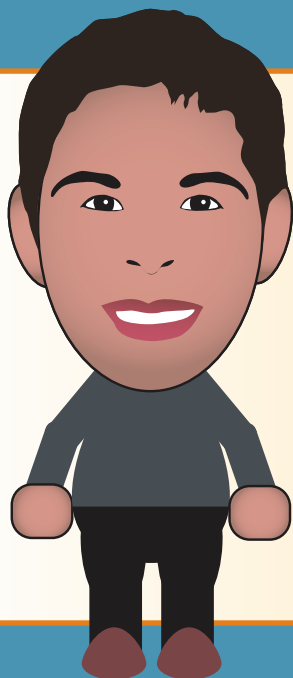
"The website, mapMonkeys.com, started out as a hobby, but there were clear signs of potential within the first week of operation. Within a week, I introduced premium memberships that allowed members full access to all the content on the website.

"I began development on the website during a school suspension for hacking the school network, the result of a prank. I developed the project out of my own needs after not being able to find a true community surrounding video game glitches. It has evolved into the most organized and comprehensive resource for video game exploits on the web.

"We seem to be dealing more with partnerships recently than consumers directly. In the past couple of years, my team of administrators and I have been flown to California three times to test each iteration of Call of Duty (MW3, MW2, Black Ops) before they were released."

The appeal is unmistakable: "The rush and feeling of controlling your own company has been something that has appealed to

me ever since my first company. I've begun several endeavors, some of which were fruitful and some that weren't, but all of which I've learned a lot from ... There will never be a day in my life where I won't be owning my own project during off-hour times, if not full time."



**Name of Business:**

**mapMonkeys**

**Owner's Age:**

21

**Location:**

Started in Centreville. "Travels with me wherever I go."

**Founded:**

2006

**How Financed:**

"At the time of founding the company, I was 16 and didn't have access to a credit card, the only criteria for renting a server and purchasing a domain. My mom refused to give me her credit card details to make the payment for the first month (which was only \$15). An online friend donated the \$15 to get me started and within a matter of days I was profitable. Within the first month I received a 2000 percent return on that initial investment and continued to grow from there. Till this day my mom regrets not supporting me and has offered to invest on several occasions."

**Nature of the Business:**

**Video game website**

Rishi

## Joey Kaylor

After two years of running a repair shop, "circumstances came up that allowed me to take over the operation as my own company. The most reliable market research I did was seeing what my customers wanted, and making sure I could adapt to provide those services. We started with minor repairs and services, but quickly realized that being as isolated as we are people will bring us in anything if we could fix it.



**Name of Business:**

**Protocol Inc.**

**Owner's Age:**

30

**Location:**

Floyd

**Founded:**

2006

**How Financed:**

"We did a small loan from a local bank to fund the purchase of the existing business assets. I cashed in the 401k I had from my previous employer and used that as beginning capital, since most places would not give us a line of credit immediately. The amount was meager, in fact it was basically one good day of sales at our current level, but it was better than nothing ... My current philosophy is 'cash is king.'"

**Nature of the Business:**

**Automobile repair shop**

Joey

"A major cause of the financial difficulties I have encountered with this business resulted from growing too big too fast." He has encountered significant difficulty in getting financing for expansion and has learned important lessons: "it takes a special

kind of person (read: 'nutjob') that will put up with the bullshit of owning and running a business on a daily basis. In the last three years, I have had to make sacrifices to keep things running and people in jobs. Those sacrifices include not taking a paycheck, getting in trouble with the taxation dept, and losing my home. But, when you sit there and realize that you have six people relying on you to put food on the table for their families, and indirectly you have over 20 people relying on you to live, it's a sobering experience."

The future looks good: "Repair services in general have a significant growth future, especially with the current economic situation. After a year of seeing the amount of cars coming through the door stay the same, but the per-invoice repair costs almost doubling, I realized that customers were going to have to keep their cars for a longer period of time, and most people were appreciating our fact-driven approach to repairs."

Entrepreneurism is appealing because "I am too big of an arrogant ass to work for anyone else anymore ... Owning a business in this day in age is cutthroat. You are lucky if you have a dedicated batch of customers like we do, a shop full of good technicians like we do, and are able to produce a quality service that people want and need, like we do."

## Rebecca Samuelson

Rebecca Samuelson, a senior in materials science engineering at Tech, is adamant about her purpose: "The Black Sheep at Virginia Tech was founded from the idea that college students were not receiving a publication with content that they really cared to read. I wanted to bring a sense of entertainment to Virginia Tech and that is exactly what we have done."

### Name of Business:

***The Black Sheep***

### Owner's Age:

21

### Location:

Blacksburg

### Founded:

2011 (locally, 2009 nationally; it is on 31 campuses)

### How Financed:

"Funded mostly by Black Card Media, although it did not take much. We run The Black Sheep off advertising revenue, thus we technically funded ourselves for the most part."

### Nature of the Business:

***Entertainment publication***



Rebecca

"I've always had an entrepreneurial spirit, but as a student taking 18 credits—it was best for me to 'franchise' The Black Sheep to gain some experience before diving into my own project. However, since working on The Black Sheep, it's been impossible to avoid fostering my own ideas."

"I don't think I could ever stop being an entrepreneur. I've worked in the corporate world and I appreciate the experience"

that I've gained, but there's something that is so satisfying about working 50-plus hours a week on something that is completely yours. I carry a notebook with me at all times because I run through about 100 'million dollar ideas' every day. I wish I could spend more time exploring their potential, but that will have to wait until after graduation. I've already begun my next project, not because I lack in faith in The Black Sheep's success, but because once you catch the entrepreneurial bug, it's nearly impossible to shake it off."

## Daniel Burdi, Justin Burdi, Kevin Bowen

This is a combination of two ideas and the linking of a new business with one existing, both from the minds of Tech students Daniel Burdi (who was on the cover of the FRONT's June 2009 issue) and Kevin Bowen (who began his career as a five-year-old with a lemonade stand). Justin Burdi is Daniel's cousin. Bowen explains that he hated doing laundry as a student and wondered why there was no service. He was introduced to Daniel Burdi, who already had a delivery service. He hired Kevin as a manager. "We worked well together and decided we would venture into the new laundry business under the same Campus Carriers brand name as business partners." Justin came on to design the web page and handle technology.



Kevin

**Name of Business:**

**Campus Carriers Services**

**Owner's Age:**

Daniel Burdi (24), Justin Burdi (24), Kevin Bowen (22)

**Location:**

Blacksburg

**Founded:**

2011

**How Financed:**

Funded by the partners. Says Kevin, "The money that I have personally fronted to start the company in large part has been the previous jobs I have worked in college as well as graduation gift money."

**Nature of the Business:**

**Full-service student laundry**

They determine that "although laundry is not the hardest thing in the world to do, it takes time; two maybe even three hours a week for a typical student." The service provides "one more way for students to save time and hassle of an annoying chore, at a reasonable cost." There's a future in this, Kevin says. "Campus Carriers Services is also very interested in researching the marketability for other cleaning services and chores to be done which will save college students time and hassle." They have already had inquiries about starting a service on a number of campuses. Kevin says, "Our goal is to get a solid base of customers at Virginia Tech before we begin researching our next target market, but we hope that will be in the near future."

Entrepreneurism is in Kevin's blood, he says. "Throughout college, when all of my other friends got internships, I was starting a new business. I started Bowen Brothers Car Detailing, College Studs Under Pressure LLC (pressure



washing company). Simply put, I am an entrepreneur at heart, always have been, and always will be.”

## Daniel Burgess and David Payne

As a Radford University undergrad, Burgess worked with Assistant Professor Matt Dunleavy researching “augmented reality (AR) and creating educational apps for Smartphones.” They spun off a company (the first tech startup ever to come out of Radford, according to one insider) and “we are actively working to polish up and prepare for a public launch coming soon. The idea, he says, “has a lot of potential. We’ve already seen a significant interest and buzz around what we’ve been doing. We’re still feeling the market out, trying to understand where we fit best and how much of the market we can capture, but based on what we’ve seen so far, we think we can do well.

### Name of Business:

**MoGo Mobile**

### Owner’s Age:

Burgess, 25, Payne, 28. (Co-owner Matt Dunleavy is 41)

### Location:

Radford

### Founded:

2011

### How Financed:

Says Burgess, “We haven’t needed a lot of capital. We have put in some of our own savings, and have an external grant, which has helped a lot.”

### Nature of the Business:

**Smartphone application**



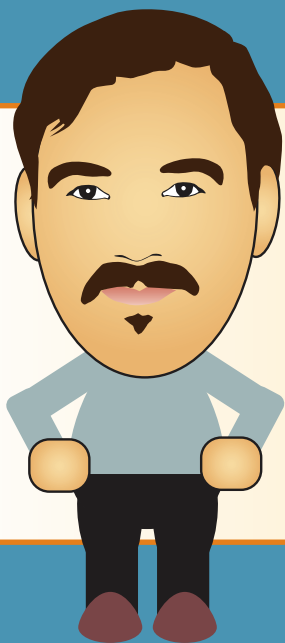
Daniel

“I’ve been having a lot of fun just focusing on what we are doing, and working hard to ensure that it is a success; it doesn’t make much sense to think beyond this until I know it is time to move on, and that time is not now. It is really challenging, but also very rewarding and fun.”

## Aaron Dykstra

Aaron and Michelle returned home from Chicago to “fulfill my dream” of opening a custom bike shop. He studied in Colorado under a high-profile bike pioneer, then opened the shop in his Raleigh Court basement. It has been a success: “To date, I have shipped bicycles to Asia, Europe, and across the U.S. and I have a wait list over eight months long.” Roanoke’s low cost of living has been important and “Roanoke’s rail and manufacturing heritage has been a great source of inspiration while helping me to create a unique identity within the cycling industry.”

Aaron has won national awards for his work and has kept a high profile. “I’m interested in expanding my current product offering to include a signature model bike that would be available in local bike shops. I also am eager to learn more about precision machining, allowing me to have more freedom to create the building components I need.” He



wants to eventually “have the entire business under one roof ... and be more involved in bicycle racing in the valley, including supporting a successful cycling team and maybe one day even building a velodrome here.”

**Name of Business:** *Six-Eleven Bicycle Company*

**Owner's Age:** 28

**Location:** Roanoke

**Founded:** 2008

**How Financed:** Personal money and family loans. Says Aaron, “We’ve had to put some expenses lately on credit card as we’re trying to expand, and we’re currently waiting to hear on a small business loan application.” (The “we” is he and his wife, Michelle, who is listed as an owner. Women owners get tax breaks.)

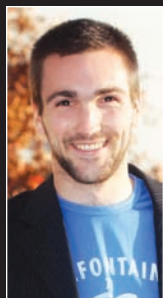
**Nature of the Business:** *High-end bicycle shop*

Aaron says passion has more to do with his business interest than a natural desire to be in business. “I didn’t start this business because I’m particularly entrepreneurial, but rather as a means to do fulfilling work.” He adds, “I am a firm believer in American manufacturing, and regardless of what happens with my business, I am confident that I will continue working with my hands and being creative. There are few things I’ve found in life that are more satisfying than taking raw materials and turning them into a beautiful product.”

## Jamie Chung, Marek Zareba

Marek and Jamie had already teamed to start one business, working with restaurants and it led to this one. The goal here is to “help restaurants deliver better customer experiences through Smartphone-friendly websites [allowing] the business to collect and follow up on feedback, recommend popular products or services, and connect with their customers.”

The Virginia Tech students “took a close look at recent trends in technology, especially Smartphones sales and uses for QR codes.” Marek went full-time with the business in July and



Frederick Cook



Nathan Latka



Christin Burdette



Bud So Townsend



Rishi Ishairzay

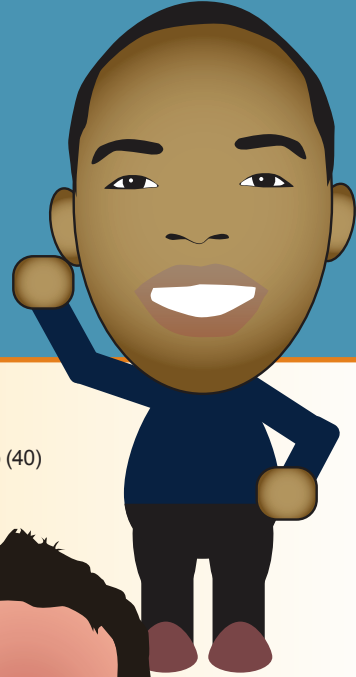


Joey Kaylor

# COVER STORY

Jamie came on three months later. Jamie joined as the third owner in August. He teaches at Tech and “provides guidance to our startup.”

Marek sees a good future for this venture. “Software is extremely scalable, and since our service can be expanded into other industries such as hotels, dealerships, physician offices, etc., the opportunities for our product are immense. Ultimately, our goal is to integrate deeper with the businesses as well as the social media outlets to collect more insightful data between businesses and customers.”



## Jamie Chung & Marek

**Name of Business:**

**Engagn LLC**

**Owner's Age:**

Jamie Chung (20), Marek Zareba (25), Jaime Camelio (40)

**Location:**

Blacksburg

**Founded:**

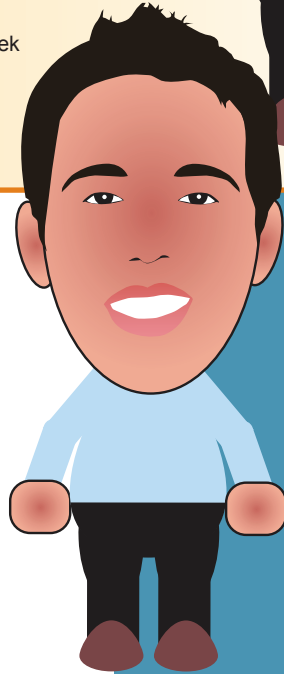
2011

**How Financed:**


“Personal savings from Jaime and Marek (mostly his dad’s).”

**Nature of the Business:**

**Smartphone QR codes**  
(for restaurants)



There’s a nagging question: “We asked ourselves whether we are solving a big enough problem, one that requires hundreds of people to solve,” says Marek. “Our unanimous answer has always been ‘yes.’ We can’t wait to look down two or three years down the road and see the new opportunities that will present themselves that we haven’t even thought about yet.”

The entrepreneurial meme has already struck, says Marek: “We have pivoted a few times already, so we learned to be adaptable when needed. Over time, we have developed a network of like-minded entrepreneurs and seeing their success and challenges tells us that with absolute commitment and execution everything is possible.” 



Rebecca Samuelson



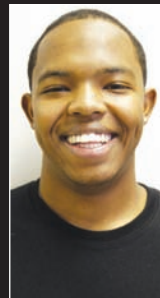
Kevin Bowen



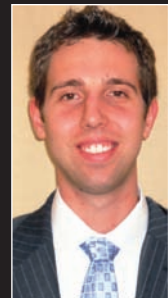
Daniel Burgess



Aaron Dykstra



Jamie Chung



Marek Zareba



## Business entertaining >

Each holiday season we are bombarded by commercials and movie specials that feature perfect families with beautiful manners, having a wonderful time. Of course, this is not reality, and some holiday gatherings end up in disaster. It occurred to me that that large extended family which I entertain during the Holidays is the prototypical American family: four generations including toddlers, children, teenagers, blended families, vegetarians, different religions, different politics and different traditions. Dare I drop a stray international business associate into this complicated mix?

Family holidays are wonderful but they can also be filled with tension. Every year some hosts work frenetically to satisfy their own and others' expectations. Each person brings memories from past holidays, the joy or pain of previous years and sometimes unrealistic expectations.

Here's where our automatic good manners should take over, because good manners pull us through the rough patches. Good manners also keep us from saying or doing things we might regret later.

### *The Hosts*

- Take a deep breath, and realize this is not a Formal State Occasion.
- Remember what makes a holiday gathering special is not "things." It's the time spent together and memories made.
- Don't think you need to do everything yourself. Accept help.
- When you encounter real or implied criticism, smile, and carry on.
- Seat potential antagonists at opposite ends of the table, or better yet, at another table.
- Have a children's table, and make it special.
- Arrange for adults (the fun adults) to take turns supervising the children.

## Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

### **Executive Summary:**


*Here's how to take the tension out of family holidays.*

Read the FRONT online **vbFRONT.com**

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

- Have activities for children after dinner.
- Remember those loved ones who are no longer with us.
- In our family, around dessert time, my husband gives a little update on each person. This is oral history being passed on to younger generations.

## The Guests

- Arrive anticipating a wonderful time.
- Try not to criticize anybody or anything.
- Participate fully.
- Be part of the solution, not the problem.
- If you have children, please keep an eye on them yourself.
- Genuinely express your appreciation. 



Each person brings memories from past holidays, the joy or pain of previous years and sometimes unrealistic expectations.



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## Adjusting to changing times >

**Dear Getting a Grip:** I left college halfway through my freshman year because of a family emergency, landed a job as an apprentice in what became my career and have excelled in that career for the past 25 years. I have won multiple awards, have the respect of my colleagues across the state, and have been an exemplary employee during that time. Recently, I was downsized and can't seem to get through the door to HR to find a job because I don't have the required college credentials. I am 43 years old, have a family (two kids in college), a mortgage and all the trappings. I haven't had to look for a job in 25 years and am at a loss. Any suggestion would be welcome.

**Dear Multiple Awards:** Bob Dylan's "times they are a changin'" is a classic lyric because it's always true. Wondering if things will change is thinking that gets many people in trouble, especially in business. Wondering when change will happen and being ready to jump on it as an opportunity is a way to grow as both an employee and as a company.

Times changed on you and now you'll be required to change. The hard truth is that, without income, your current standard of living is unsustainable. "Wishing things were different" is often cited as the cause of suffering. The more you can execute the changes needed in your life rather than lament them—sell your house, probably at a loss, move into an apartment, help the kids look for loans and jobs—the greater you will model for your children how to lead a life where times always change, not always in ways we wish.

That clears the way for where your resources must be spent. The priority has to be you. You can bail as an employee, father and husband and live on the streets. That choice does exist. I doubt it's one a guy who's had 25 years of success will take. The market is not good or bad, it just is. And what the market wants is employees—and this is not new—with college degrees. Time for you to get yours. Otherwise, you doom yourself to increasingly fewer choices about what you can provide for yourself and your family.

**Getting a Grip:** My guess is that you had hints, even "time to read the writing on the billboard" signs that your company, perhaps even your industry, might not be a part of the future in our technology-driven, global economy. Once you get your college degree, times will still be a changin'. Determined not to be burned again, I'm betting a multiple-award winning employee like you will become keenly and constantly attuned to the signs and be ready to grow. Good luck to you. 

Need to start "Getting a Grip" on a personal problem at work? E-mail your question to [grip@handshakezo.com](mailto:grip@handshakezo.com).

## Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

### Executive Summary:

If your workplace credentials are not in order—regardless of your work record—it's time to repair that.

## Career aspirations >

Most of us have a vague idea of where we hope our career will lead us. We fantasize about the corner office and the potential for being named a director, vice president, or even CEO.

Toward that end, we continually add skills and accomplishments to our resumes, in hope that we can rise a few levels, avoid stagnating, and gain higher income and prestige. Certainly, a lack of personal growth on our part would result in our being sidelined and possibly let go.


It's tempting to rest on our laurels and hope no one notices. It's hard work to grow and learn just so we can earn a new position—which inevitably requires us to learn more new things.

The same can be said about our work wardrobe. It would be easy to believe it's fine to wear jeans and casual wear to work. It has been made official with memos sent out easing the dress code standards for the summer or longer periods of time.

However, workplace attire is a subject that is underestimated as we pursue our career aspirations. Just as we add skills and accomplishments in preparation for a better job at a higher level, we need to dress for the position that we desire.

When we dress a notch or two higher than our pay grade, we show that we know how to act and dress for a higher position and we are ready to advance in our career. We can envision ourselves in that job and we help our direct report and their boss to see us as capable of handling a higher position.

Dressing as an entry-level employee dresses may unintentionally telegraph the idea to others that we don't aspire to a higher level position, don't feel capable of handling higher level work, don't have the qualifications to do the work, or are too young or too old to care about advancing at work.

Jeans and very casual clothing in the workplace are a potential pitfall we need to carefully consider. The adage "Dress for the position you desire, not the position you have," has never been truer. Avoid falling into the trap of dressing down in the office even if everyone else does. Set yourself apart from the crowd and help your boss to see your potential by dressing better than expected and showing that you are ready to advance to the next level. 



## Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

### Executive Summary:

*"When we dress a notch or two higher than our pay grade, we show that we know how to act and dress for a higher position."*

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## Financial Matters

### Bank stock futures: An unknown >

#### Executive Summary:

*Banks face a mountain of challenge these days, among them making their stocks attractive to the safe investor.*

#### By Joel S. Williams

Banks continue to make news, recently with talk about debit card fees and continued fallout from bad mortgages. For those of you making your investment decisions based on the latest talking heads on the financial news shows, you might be inclined to buy these historical stalwarts at these historically low prices.

To be a successful investor—in it for the long haul to achieve your life plans—you need to ignore this hot-stock-of-the-day mentality.

My philosophy about investment success is not to make recommendations of specific stocks or sectors because multiple research studies have shown that stock picking and market timing represent less than six percent of investment success.

Investors don't need recommendations of what stock or sector to buy; they need to begin a journey to learn how to prudently make investments that have a higher probability of success.

Here are some thoughts based on information gathered from our professional money managers:

- Banks are facing several severe issues they must overcome in order to be favorable.
- New regulations including the

Dodd Frank Act and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau will affect bank stocks.


- Banks are now told they can't do many of the things they used to do, like owning hedge funds and maintaining more money in reserves, which is less money available to make money. They now have to go back to making money the old fashion way: making loans from deposits.

There has been a lot of backlash on debit card and overdraft fees. It costs the banks money every time you use your debit card, so not being able to charge people when they use their debit card to buy a \$2 cup of coffee could be a money loser for banks.

When people aren't paying their mortgages, the bank loses money. Banks were told to stop foreclosing before that was reversed. Banks still get stuck with property that either needs to be sold at a steep discount due to deflated home prices, or they hold as property managers, for which banks have little core competency.

Overall most analysts are against bank stocks. I avoid them because banks are under so much new regulation. The future of bank stocks is an unknown at this time and to buy them now is not a prudent strategy, particularly for money that is intended to be used as income.

Look for investment strategies that serve your long-term objectives. The strategy should start with multiple cash flow needs projections. It also should include traditional stocks and additional tools such as numismatic coins. For those of you investing in individual stocks, the pertinent question to ask is not, "What about buying bank stocks now?" Or "Is gold still a good buy?"

These questions indicate to me that these are not investors—they're traders. You won't achieve your long-term success with a trader mentality. The market will make fools out of the greatest number of traders. 



# Coming Up...

**January 2012**

## Body Art @ Work

Tattoos and "body modification" (which can include piercings of all types, branding, hardware implants, and things we haven't thought of yet) are part of the growing cultural phenomenon. Modifying your appearance makes a statement to be sure (and that is no longer restricted to adventurous 18-year olds). But how does it fit in the workplace? We pull up sleeves and take a look in January's FRONT.

**February 2012**

## Wine

What about wine? Well it's everywhere. Vineyards abound throughout our region as Virginia continues to earn its place and reputation as a preferred producer. On the business FRONT, wineries are not only bottling more, but hosting events and stepping up to the business crowd in as many new creative ways as the varieties of grapes they grow on the vine. See our special report in February.

## FRONTguide

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Michael Miller

**Dr. Gerhard Schurig at the sight of expansion.**

## 'A model for regional cooperation' >

### **Executive Summary:**

*The vet school at Virginia Tech is in growth mode while many of these institutions across the country are seeing shrinking enrollments.*

**By Michael Miller**

The words "vet school" often conjure visions of taking a family pet to the local clinic for

shots, or possibly James Herriot style house-calls to treat a sick animal on grandfather's farm.

But to Gerhard Schurig, dean of the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine in Blacksburg, vet school means much more than training students to treat Spot for fleas or birthing calves. It also means curing cancer, treating heart disease, and developing safe and sustainable food supplies for people.

While the traditional mission of producing veterinary doctors for the care and treatment of small and large animals will always be a

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core focus of vet schools, there is an increasingly important role for these institutions in research.

Schurig's bio serves to illustrate the point. Prior to being appointed dean, he served as director of the Center for Molecular Medicine and Infectious Diseases and director of the Institute for Biomedical and Public Health Sciences, neither of which would automatically be associated with veterinary medicine. In addition, Schurig is credited with developing a vaccine for brucellosis, a disease that can be contracted in humans by consuming unsterilized milk or meat from infected animals.

Since it opened in 1978, the Virginia-Maryland College has grown to an incoming class size of about 95 students each year, with

50 from Virginia, 30 from Maryland and the remaining 15 from outside the region. While the entrant pool is down nationwide in recent years, it continues to grow here.

"Our 2012 class had more than 1,000 applicants, which is up about 11 percent over last year," says Schurig. "That means we're doing something pretty well."

One thing being done well is the education of students. The college has a 100 percent pass rate on the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination, which serves as the board certification for Doctors of Veterinary Medicine.

Of the 28 Vet-Med schools in the U.S., the Virginia-Maryland college is the only regional institution. Schurig believes this is a major strength of the system, and



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**The Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine**

significantly responsible for its continued growth. This partnership with the University of Maryland allows easy access to the National Institutes of Health in nearby Bethesda, and also provides a focus area in public policy and corporate veterinary medicine.


The equine center in Leesburg combined with the Virginia Tech facility provides specialty focus on both large and small animal medicine as well as research. "We have the only vet school in the country with that kind of access," says Schurig.

The success of the program has resulted in growth not only in student enrollment, but in facilities as well. A new 30,000-square-foot instructional facility will be open by next summer, and the Infectious Disease Research Facility should be in use later this year. A planned \$10.5 million, 16,000-square-foot translational medicine building is also on the drawing boards.

The translational medicine facility will be

closely associated with the hospital, and will function to help speed the process of proving out new treatments for animal and human diseases. "Having great facilities like this helps us compete for the best students," says Schurig.

He notes that a large factor in the success of the college has been the collaborations with Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, Virginia Tech Carilion Medical School, and Wake Forest University Medical School. "This degree of collaboration is not usually found between medical schools and a vet school," says Schurig. "Normally the medical school was in place first, and the vet school is set up later, with the main focus on the medical school. At Virginia Tech, the vet school was here first and that has made a tremendous difference."

Schurig's plan for the future is clear: keep the growth going and become a model of regional cooperation. "We really have an opportunity here to create something practically unique." 

## “Power To The People”

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

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## Tech Scoop

### Feeling the need for speed >

#### Executive Summary:

*A burst of speed from your high tech buddies in this region.*

#### By Michael Miller

Ten years ago, I accessed the internet via dialup modem. I used my cell phone to make phone calls. I watched "ER," "Friends" and "The West Wing" episodes on a television set. I rented VHS movies. I read books and magazines I purchased from a bookstore or checked out of the library. I purchased gifts in a retail store. I sent letters to people through the postal system. I listened to music on a radio or a CD player.

Today, I can do all these things with a much higher quality experience on a handheld computer that would make Dick Tracy jealous.

What made all this possible?

It's not the advent of the smart phone, or cable modems, or DSL. It wasn't Netflix. It wasn't Windows. It wasn't an iPhone, or an iPad or an iMac, or even anything related to Steve Jobs.

It was a tiny, hair-thin piece of glass called an optical fiber, and businesses in our region were substantially responsible for making it all happen.

See, in order to provide all those services that have made our smartphones indispensable, you need something called bandwidth.

You already know all about bandwidth. It's that thing that when you don't have enough of it, your streaming movies keep



Michael Miller


freezing and your phone calls get dropped. Bandwidth is a measure of how much information can be transmitted from one place to another in a given period of time.

In the old days, we used telephone lines to send data, but in the 1980s optical technology provided so much bandwidth that we could combine thousands of channels onto a single fiber, and each of those channels could have almost unlimited data transfer speed.

The ITT Electro-Optical Products Division was at the forefront of the development of this technology, and spawned a number of local tech companies, including Optical Cable Corporation, now headed by Neil Wilkin.

A new generation of technologists at Virginia Tech are continuing to lead the world in expanding communication capabilities. Jeff Reed and his team at the Center for Wireless Technologies are world-renown for their advancements in next generation cellular systems, including the emerging LTE system.

Gary Pickrell led a team that developed a new kind of optical fiber that can be bent around tight corners and provide fiber to your desktop computer or home entertainment center. And of course there are many others.

So, next time you see Neil Wilkin, Jeff Reed or Gary Pickrell out and about, just wave your iPhone at them and say "Thanks!" 



Randy Walker

**Tread's Phil Bortz and Bill McClane: A change in business strategy.**

## A boom! in growth, too >

### **Executive Summary:**

*A new focus on foreign markets has led to rapid growth for Botetourt County's Tread Corporation.*

### **By Randolph Walker**

At Tread Corporation in Botetourt County, a company that supplies equipment to professional blasters, growth of late has been ... well ... explosive. But Tread's neighbors need not worry about the plant going up in a colossal blast. Tread does not make or keep explosives.

Tread began in 1957, making metal treads to attach to the tracks of mobile mining drills. It has expanded to become the world's leading manufacturer of bulk explosives handling equipment for the mining, quarry and construction industries.

The recent growth spurt began with an ownership and management change in 2008. The company was acquired by private equity firms including Gladstone Investment Corporation. A new CEO was brought in—Bill McClane, previously the group president of Terex Corporation. McClane changed the business strategy to focus on international sales.

Tread ([www.treadcorp.com](http://www.treadcorp.com)) has satellite facilities in Chile, South Africa and Australia, does business in Australia, Africa, Latin America, Russia and Eastern Europe, and has recently added Western Europe, Indonesia and Mongolia. Three years ago, 30 percent of revenue came from international sales. Now it's 65 percent, according to McClane. Part of the growth is attributable to making explosives-handling trucks that are capable of complying with foreign regulations, says McClane.

More business has led to an increase in the workforce, from 123 to 241 employees, with the new positions averaging \$17.50 an hour plus benefits. Many, though not all, jobs require welding skills. Expansion is underway at the plant in the EastPark Commerce Center off U.S. 220 Alternate near Cloverdale. Truck bodies, ladders, hose reels, hoppers and tanks are fabricated there. The \$5 million expansion, which will require filling and grading of some of the property, should be finished in a couple of years, McClane says.

Most of Tread's business is making or rebuilding trucks to handle explosives. Usually, a blasting company will supply Tread with a chassis, such as Mack, Kenworth, International or Volvo. "We manufacture the body and mount it on the chassis," says Philip Bortz, vice president of worldwide sales.

The Tread Unibody truck comes in three

sizes—30,000-pound capacity for over the highway use in quarries and construction, a 40,000 pound model for most open pit mines, and a 50,000 pound model that can deliver a ton of explosive per minute.


Tread trucks contain several compartments. The bulk explosives most used in mining, quarrying and construction are ammonium nitrate fuel oil (ANFO) and a blend known in the trade as emulsion.

Ammonium nitrate is widely used as fertilizer. For explosives use, it is prepared in the form of "prills" or solid spheres. An oxidizer, it is mixed with ordinary fuel oil, usually diesel fuel.

In the truck, the ammonium nitrate, fuel oil and emulsion are kept in separate compartments. The truck is filled at the

blasting company's plant, often from a bin supplied by Tread. The blaster, under contract to the mine or quarry, drives to the work site, where control systems in the truck mix the explosives to the desired formula. A swiveling boom on top of the truck will auger, or a hose will pump the mix into a borehole. And then, take cover.

While building trucks is the main business, Tread has other revenue streams, says Bortz. These include explosive storage bins, aftermarket parts, mixing plants, repairing, maintaining and leasing equipment, and rebuilding trucks.

All contribute to a revenue line that has grown two and a half times in the past three years, according to McClane. Tread can truthfully say, despite a flat domestic market, that business is booming. 

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# Work Spaces

## Spreading the European bread message >

### Executive Summary:

*Now that Euro Bakery has two spaces, the delicacies will be even more widely available.*

### By David Perry

At Euro Bakery, Bari Sinani spins phyllo dough like he's making an Italian pizza pie.

Bari and wife Elizabeta own the small eastern European bakery located in the Lamplighter Mall, just across the city line in Roanoke County on Williamson Rd. They specialize in Greek and Turkish comfort food—bureks, kifla, tiramisù, baklava and more. Says Elizabeta, a burek is “a pastry pie. It takes a long process to make, but it's worth it once

you try it. We use local flour and a local cheese. They're filled with cheese and spinach or beef and onion.”

She says that bureks' versatility, simplicity and taste make them popular in eastern Europe. “It's like Americans eating hamburgers,” she explains. Kifla are simply crescent-shaped rolls. “We make our own baklava and tiramisù,” Elizabeta says of the Greek honey and nut-filled pastry and the Italian cake made from ladyfingers, coffee and mascarpone cheese.

Bari is the baker. His kitchen spaces on both Williamson Road and in the new Roanoke City Market building locations are modest but not small, clean and well-lit. To make a burek, he spins his homemade phyllo dough high in the air until it's see-through thin, lays it out carefully on a stainless steel countertop, folds it into a long strip, fills it with savory toppings and rolls it into a cinnamon bun shape.

Even though Euro Bakery opened its first store in November of 2010, the expansion to the market building will allow it to cater to a lunch crowd. The Williamson Road location is closed during the week, although many of Euro Bakery's items are baked there.

“The pies he makes there,” says Elizabeta



Bari goes through the process of making a pastry.




all photos: David Perry

**Bari and Elizabeta Siani at their bakery on Williamson Road.**

of the new downtown location. "They'll be able to see how he makes them. It's not good to transport them." But the pastries, kifla and other items like baguettes will still be baked at the original location.

The challenge of owning two bakeries includes long hours, says Elizabeta. "As you know, bakeries start really early:

sometimes three or four in the morning, sometimes earlier."

Bari's passion for baking caused him and Elizabeta to leave full-time jobs they'd had since arriving in the Valley 11 years ago. "He has a big passion for what he's doing," says Elizabeta. "It's not just a hobby. No matter how many hours he's going to put into here, for him, that's nothing." 





all photos: Michael Abraham

Shaena Muldoon of the Palisades.

## Eating out in God's Country >

### Executive Summary:

*"American with a twist" cuisine and the charm of Eggleston give The Palisades its niche.*

### By Michael Abraham

There is not a smidgen of boastfulness in the tone of Shaena Muldoon's voice when she says you will have an extraordinary experience at her restaurant, The Palisades in Eggleston. Eggleston is one of those hidden communities that is a ghost of its former self. Once a thriving

transportation hub for the railroads that thunder down the adjacent New River, Eggleston has become a charming hamlet and Muldoon's restaurant is the only retail establishment in it.

The Palisades is the name that local people use for the impressive limestone cliffs across the river, just downstream.

"I am originally from a couple of miles away," Shaena says. "My brother was still in the area when this building became available, and he purchased it. When I came home for a visit, I instantly realized that it was the perfect place for restaurant."

Shaena had been gone from the area for 20 years in 2004 and was living in D.C. She had

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been in the food service business and was involved with large-scale events: "The bigger the better. So I came home, did a small amount of construction within the existing building, and opened up."

The building had housed Q. M. Pyne's General Store until 2000. Between then and when Sheana's brother bought it, the building was vacant.

"I had worked in restaurants often during my career but I had never owned one. I knew immediately that I had to do it. I had no concerns about opening the restaurant. I knew it was going to work."

Shaena learned that the realities of running a restaurant would be positive and negative. "One of the first negative surprises was that I had a difficult time finding staff. Unfortunately, I think that the work ethic is not as sound as



A sign of the times in Elliston.

it once was. On a more positive note, I have been surprised at how many people have thanked me for opening and running this place. This still happens often, and it always boggles my mind. They appreciate the fact that we are doing what we can to revitalize the community and rebuild some pride."

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The restaurant's modest exterior.

Shaena is a booster of her area. "I want people to visit Giles County and Eggleston. It is unbelievably beautiful here. I offer things that nobody else offers. First of all, the charm of this building is undeniable. There was little I needed to do to make it serviceable and attractive. Second, our food is unique, much of it fresh and local. I call it, 'American with a twist.' Third, the setting of our community here on the river is unsurpassed in beauty anywhere."

The key to everything Shaena has done has resolved around the word, "comfortable." "I have always wanted someone to be comfortable regardless of whether they stepped out of a canoe on the river or came

in here in a tuxedo. I want everyone who walks in my door, regardless of their economic condition or appearance, to be comfortable.

"Many people come a long way just to have brunch. The drive out here is amazing. There is world-class scenery, unavailable everywhere except here. I come here every day and I am still surprised and delighted by the scenery. We have beauty here that most people around the world can only ever dream of. We have exceptionally good food. It is an experience that cannot be replicated.

"There are several roads that lead to Eggleston and every one of them is curvy. But that's part of what makes it worth it." 

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Dan Smith

Beckie Spaid, Chad Amrhein and Paula Amrhein at the jewelry store.

## The AmRhein's legacy >

### Executive Summary:

*No matter how you spell it, the Amrhein family has had a long run in the Roanoke Valley and it doesn't seem to be slowing down in either its wine or jewelry businesses.*

### By Kathy Surace

When Fred Amrhein opened his first jewelry store in 1921, little did he imagine it would survive for 90 years—to date—and involve four generations of his family. F.C Amrhein's was originally on Campbell Avenue in

Roanoke, providing jewelry design and repair. On Nov. 5, 2011 AmRhein's celebrated its 90th anniversary, after receiving the Legacy Award from the Roanoke Chamber of Commerce in October.

AmRhein's had a humble beginning with slow, but steady growth. By the 1950s Fred had relocated his business to Salem, while his twin sons, Russell and Oliver, moved the Roanoke store to Kirk Avenue. In 1975 the company's name was changed to Amrhein's Jewelers and Fred's grandson, Russ, joined the other family members in the business.

After years of success with jewelry, in 1992 Amrhein's expanded to include formalwear, providing bridalwear, tuxedos, prom dresses, cocktail attire and accessories. Formalwear proved to be a good fit, so to speak, and soon another location opened near Tanglewood

## How the hell do you spell 'Amrhein'? >

Kathy Surace's challenge, first, was to spell the name right and there are challenges when writing about the Amrheins' German family roots and family businesses. You'll note that in this story, there are several presentations, all right. You will also note that during his lifetime William Shakespeare spelled his name nine different ways.

Simple explanation from Kathy: "I spelled Amrhein's differently throughout. The family name is with a small 'r' and the new logo is with a capital 'R'. Also, when I listed it as it was named years ago, I spelled Amrhein's as it was spelled at that time." That clear? Probably not, but read on.

# RETAIL / SERVICE FRONT

Mall. At that time Russ's son, Chad, joined the business, becoming the fourth generation of Amrhein entrepreneurs.

Always diverse, in 1996 Amrhein's ventured in a new direction when Russ, pursuing his lifelong interest in agriculture, planted grape vines on Bent Mountain. In 1999, Amrhein Wine Cellars opened its doors and Russ shouldered responsibility for the winery, while Chad ran the retail business. The winery was the 62nd established in Virginia, out of more than 190 wineries in Virginia today.

Today Amrhein's is still led by family members. Russ focuses on the winery. Paula Amrhein, his wife, runs the Tanglewood jewelry store, along with Chad, general manager of the jewelry and formalwear divisions. Chad's wife, Beckie Spaid, is marketing manager for the Amrhein's winery and retail locations.

Chad Amrhein believes Amrhein's has not only survived for 90 years, but has thrived, because, "Treating people right is the backbone of our business. That's why we have a loyal client base. Being innovative, as in the Roanoke and Salem charm bracelets, is important. Give your customers what they want and treat them fairly."

Amrhein's employees are long-term and trained in the "Amrhein's way," says Chad. There is a jeweler on staff to design that one-of-a-kind piece and hand-engage it—a dying art.

In recent years, Amrhein's has fine-tuned its marketing efforts with Beckie's expertise. She created a company website with a link to each division, showcasing the products and services Amrhein's offers and promoting winery events. Beckie points out that



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**Russ Amrhein runs the family's winery.**

AmRhein's "can take a couple from engagement ring to wedding reception."


Recently, Beckie updated the AmRhein's brand, designing a new logo, branding ads and billboards. The 'r' in AmRhein's is now capitalized, reflecting its German roots, which means "on the Rhine." Soon changes will appear in wine bottle labels, jewelry box designs, garment bags, store signs and wine glasses.

QR codes will appear on marketing materials and AmRhein's products so Smart phone users can access the website quickly. Beckie says, "Every year we update our marketing plan to stay current with our customers."

With such a successful jewelry and formalwear

wines open the doors for everything". He has met senators and governors, and has been to Europe to other wineries and businesses, bringing a gift of wine and creating new friendships.

In the future, Russ hopes to extend the brand to neighboring states. Exporters interviewed him recently for possible opportunities exporting to China, "an exciting idea" to Russ. He loves introducing people to his wines, saying, "The only person you have to please is yourself when wine tasting. The day of the wine snob is over."

With progressive ideas, solid products and services, and a commitment to customer service, AmRhein's seems to be ensuring future growth and longevity. 

business going, one might wonder why Russ Amrhein built a new business from the ground up and now works harder than ever. "I'm an entrepreneur from way back." Russ says. He raised and sold cattle and hogs at one time, so growing grapes is a pleasure. Russ enthusiastically declares, "Running a winery is absolutely the best business I have ever run. The



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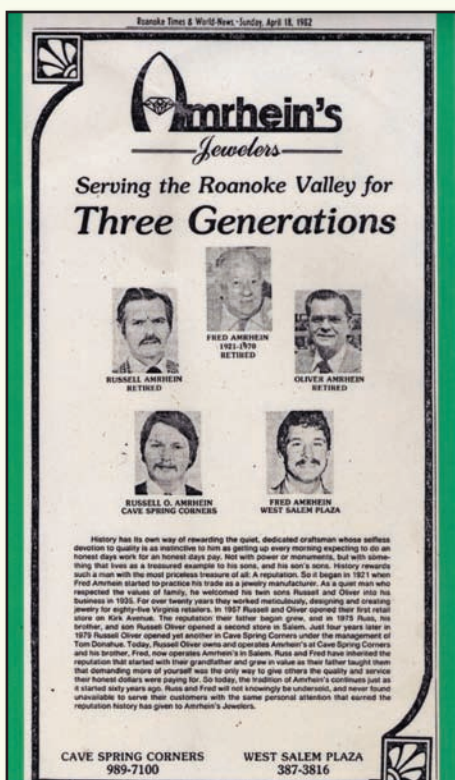
## Timeline >

- 1921—First store established by Fred Amrhein as F.C. Amrhein's on Campbell Avenue in Roanoke, providing jewelry design and repair.

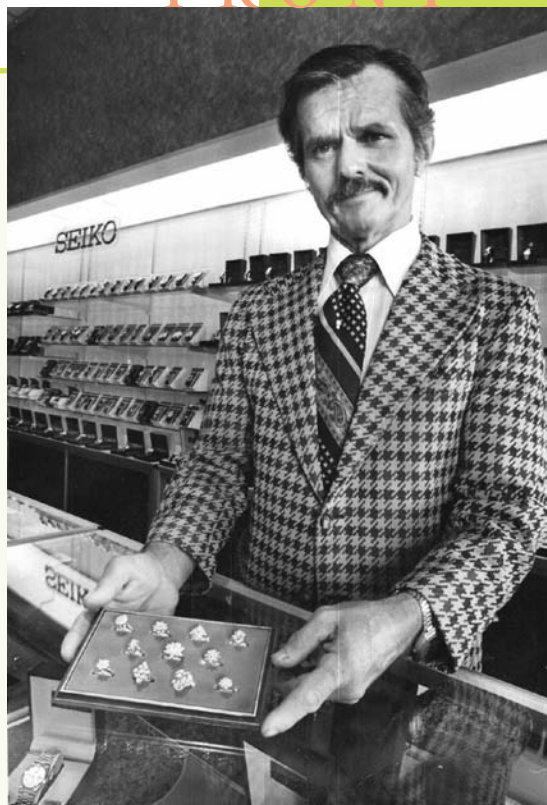


Early F.C. Amrhein & Son ad.

- 1950s—Fred relocated to Main Street in Salem and his 2 sons relocated the Roanoke store to Kirk Avenue in Roanoke.
- 1975—Store name changed to Amrhein's Jewelers. Fred's grandson, Russ, joined the company and extended service to Salem.



Amrhein's ad, 1982.



Grandfather Russell Amrhein at the West Salem Store.

- 1992—Expanded again to include formalwear and changed name to Amrhein's Brides, Formals & Fine Jewelry.
- 1995—Second location was opened on Ogden Road in Roanoke for jewelry and bridal & formal wear and Russ's son, Chad, joined the business.
- 1996—Russ planted the first grape vines on Bent Mountain.
- 1999—AmRhein Wine Cellars opened its doors. Russ ran the winery while Chad took over the retail business. The winery was the 62nd in Virginia, out of over 190 wineries in the Commonwealth today.
- 2011—AmRhein's celebrates 90th year of business with a new logo and branding. Also receive Legacy Award from the Roanoke Chamber of Commerce.



Warm Hearth Village Center under construction.

## Warm Hearth's evolving dream >

### Executive Summary:

*When a couple of Dutch immigrants looked at the idea of paying America back for its World War II contribution, Warm Hearth Village in Blacksburg was born. And it's still growing.*

### By Rachael Garrity

With the passing of Apple CEO Steve Jobs in October, Americans from all walks of life took stock of how much can change when a man of vision, imagination and persistence takes hold of an idea. Yet, many also fear that Apple without Jobs may become merely another techno-behemoth. Can the legacy outlive the leader?

Straddling the rolling hills alongside Route 460 in Blacksburg is an organization that answers that question with a resounding "yes!" When Dutch immigrants Wybe and Marietje Kroontje came to the United States in 1948 they had a mission: find a way to return something of value to the country that had given so much to and for their native Holland during World War II. Their idea was to create a community that would enrich the lives of seniors, no matter what their economic position. They named it "Warm Hearth."

Not especially different or visionary? Then add a visceral respect for nature—Wybe Kroontje was an agronomist on the faculty at Virginia Tech—and a carefully-crafted 100-year plan. Enrich the broth with what may be the most important element of all: a corporate culture that actually pays attention to the plan.

Among the tenets of that plan is the recommendation that after 30 years or so, assuming that living and care facilities for medium income and the less fortunate had been successfully installed, Warm Hearth should begin to develop both single family residences and a center for a spectrum of activities that advance the quality of life: fitness equipment rooms; space for other health-related activities (including, as it turns out, an indoor heated saltwater pool); community gatherings, musical performances, catered dinners, etc.

Grading of the land for Warm Hearth's Village Center began in the early fall, footers were dug in October and if the construction schedule holds, the center will open its doors in late 2012. From the get-go, when draft horses were used to harvest the wood, the project has incorporated sustainable practices when financially feasible. The builders will use scrap lumber for flooring and install passive solar lighting. Test pits have already been dug for geothermal heating. Large glass panels will accent the roof.



Drawing of Village Center.

Involved in this undertaking are a bevy of conscientious craftsmen, some recommended by Mark McConnell of Roanoke's Summit Studio, the lead architect; others chosen because they've had a long-time collaborative relationship with Warm Hearth.

Bob Fetzer and Daniel Hunt of Building Specialists in Roanoke are general contractors. Streamline Timberworks, headquartered in Richmond, is in charge of frame fabrication and installation; Draftwood of Copper Hill supplied both the tree cutter and the sawyer (who also acted as expert horseman); and Anderson & Associates of Blacksburg is the civil engineer. Indeed, the only firm outside the state is the Builders Design in Gaithersburg, Md., handling interior design. A cursory check of the websites of any of these firms reveals terms like LEED accredited, restorative, carbon neutral.

Tambra Meredith, director of marketing and development for Warm Hearth, remembers

working with Wybe Kroontje. "He'd stop by my office and say, 'What are we going to do today? What are we going to market?' He was all about ideas." She's certain that the prospective building, incorporating as it does the Welcome Center that he considered so vital, will be an appropriate articulation of his vision.

Warm Hearth CEO Ferne Moschella echoes that sentiment, and adds: "His idea was that we find a way to serve the full spectrum of seniors—not just the wealthy or the less fortunate, not just the able-bodied or the frail, but the entire community. That is what Warm Hearth is all about."

In the spring of 2013 when the sun gleams on rich wood floors and the various professionals add this project with pride to their portfolios and their websites, the Village Center may well become the hallmark of the community. After all, some etymologists claim that the word hearth was originally defined as "the center of activity." 

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Zane Jordan Queijo

**Kelly Queijo:** “I began to see that there is almost no consistency among college and university websites.”

## Taking a Smart College Visit >

### Executive Summary:

*Kelly Queijo saw a lot of shortcomings in the ritual of taking kids on their whirlwind college visits and she set out to fix them.*

### By Rachael Garrity

Jacques Steinberg reported in his New York Times blog “The Choice” recently that spiraling gas prices and airline fees seem to be having little, if any, effect on the number of prospective students and their parents visiting college campuses. In fact, in his informal email survey, almost three of four educational institutions were seeing an increase, some of them as much as 50 percent.

Blacksburg entrepreneur Kelly Queijo is tapping that market in a way that promises to provide a solid business model for her and at the same time an important service for those on the road to the halls of academe. A seasoned writer, she used her experience as marketing and public relations coordinator for undergraduate admissions at Virginia Tech, plus what she’d learned working for a decade with software

and marketing companies serving the higher education market, to start a blog two years ago.

“As a parent of teenagers, I began to see that there is almost no consistency among college and university websites with respect to travel information,” she remembers. “I figured if I wanted to know more, so would many parents. I started the blog to sort of test my own skills at this, and by April of last year I knew I wanted to make it a business.”

Given what’s happened since she made that decision, she has every right to feel as if she could outrun any hamster on her wheel—except this is no wheel; it’s a four-lane highway. She:

- Won the Second Annual VT KnowledgeWorks Entrepreneurship Summit’s Open Competition in 2010, and served as keynote speaker at the Third Annual VT KnowledgeWorks Entrepreneurship Summit in 2011.
- Assembled a team of advisors, contributors and collaborators.
- Established a beta-client program for colleges and universities.
- Launched the full-blown business in 2010, calling it Smart College Visit Inc., and promoting it as a “higher-ed travel marketing company with mobile and web services featuring trip planning and location-based tools.”
- Created a panoply of services, working with Colin Grant of Nomad Mobile Guides on the mobile technology front and Gail Billingsley, whose broad marketing and management experience most recently was focused on the Y at Virginia Tech, on the marketing front.

Aw, come on, panoply? Yep. The blog now features more than 500 stories. The Smart Visit Widget, easily imbedded in both university websites and other college search sites, combines five services: book a flight, rent a hotel room and a car, get directions and calculate fuel costs from home to campus.


SmartCollegeVisit.com includes a regular

audio feed called the “College Mom Minute” from Nancy Berk, humorist and author of *College Bound and Gagged: How to Help Your Kid Get Into a Great College Without Losing Your Savings, Your Relationship, or Your Mind*. CampusChat, held on Twitter every Wednesday, 9 p.m., and billed for those who understand such terms as a “flash mob of text messaging,” is pulling guest speakers that include the higher ed gurus featured on national TV networks.

There are video spots on YouTube and last spring brought the launch of the “Visit Virginia Tech” mobile app for iPhones, featuring an electronic map, driving directions, a walking tour, admissions info, restaurant and hotel tips and contact info, historical sights, and more. The latest addition to the business is a campus rep program through which the company will create a network of student contacts on participating campuses.

Smart College Visit already has 2,500 schools in its database, an appropriate launchpad for a woman whose goal is to become “the Travelocity of higher-ed,” by which she means reaching beyond admissions to include other reasons for campus visits, such as athletic and cultural events, academic conferences, etc.

Meanwhile, and not surprisingly, Kelly is becoming a bit of a celebrity in her own right. Aneesh Chopra, chief technology officer in the Obama White House, invited her to participate in a higher education “mash up” to brainstorm improving college completion rates and access to college information. And just recently she conducted a tutorial at the Higher Education Symposium of the American Marketing Association.

Maybe that’s not a four-lane highway after all. It’s at least six lanes—no stimulus money needed for construction. 

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Council of Community Services' Pam Kestner speaks at the conference.

## Community inspiration >

### Executive Summary:

*The Thriving Communities conference, held in September at the Hotel Roanoke, sought to bring governments, nonprofits and businesses together to find solutions that will work in the "new normal."*

### By Randolph Walker

Tired of dismal economic news? "We get worn down. If you turn the news on, you spend an hour crying," says Dan Merenda of the Roanoke-based Council of Community Services.

While private and public funding shrinks, social needs are greater than ever. Finding innovative ways to meet those needs was the focus of the Thriving Communities Institute, a conference in late September at the Hotel Roanoke.

The organizers sought to bring businesses, nonprofits, governments and faith-based organizations together to explore collaborative solutions to social problems.

The conference was developed by the Non-profit Resource Center of Western Virginia, a program of the Council of Community Services

(CCS). Founded in 1960, CCS focuses on long-term planning for health and human services in Southwest Virginia. It also links people who have immediate needs to community resources. A few of the many issues it addresses are housing, education, poverty, health care, domestic violence, food, and transportation. CCS also provides training and technical assistance to other nonprofits.

Pamela Kestner, CCS president, would have liked more business representatives. Of the 150 people registered, about 20 to 30 were from businesses. "Our hope is to better engage the for-profit sector," she says. "We didn't have as many from the for-profit sector as we had hoped, but we recognize that this was our first step." If the CCS board approves, there may be future Thriving Communities conferences.

For 2010-11, its \$2,682,000 budget was funded mostly by the state (52 percent) and the federal governments (36 percents).

Among the speakers was Bill Strickland, president and CEO of Manchester Bidwell Corporation. A native of inner city Pittsburgh, Strickland had his life changed by an inspiring high school art teacher who was skilled on the potter's wheel. Despite the decline of the domestic steel industry and Pittsburgh's resulting malaise, Strickland went on to develop a number of successful programs offering

educational and cultural opportunities to disadvantaged youth. Among his numerous awards is the MacArthur Fellowship "genius" grant.

"This conference brought in people who were inspirational and motivational and had achieved great results in the new normal," says Merenda, the Council of Community Services VP of planning and consultation. "That's what was so exciting. People began to say 'we can do that.'"

A local example of the type of collaboration the conference was both advocating and celebrating is Responsible Rides, a program of Freedom First Federal Credit Union, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Total Action Against Poverty (TAP) and New River Community Action (NRCA).

The program puts qualifying TAP and NRCA clients, many with poor credit records, into cars withdrawn from Enterprise's rental fleet. Participants are required to take three hours of financial education (taught by Freedom First employees) and two hours of car maintenance training. Freedom First provides financing.

Car ownership helps the working poor get better jobs, and loan defaults have been few, according to Paul Phillips, president and CEO of Freedom First. "We have a number of stories of how reliable transportation has changed their lives," Phillips says.


Freedom First is also involved in an effort to bring banking to Roanoke's low-income Hurt Park community.



Randolph Walker

**First Federal's Paul Phillips: "Credit unions have a legal mission—among that, to help people of modest means."**

Although they offer many of the same services as banks, credit unions are not-for-profit institutions. "Credit unions have a legal mission—among that, to help people of modest means," says Phillips. Designated by the U.S. Treasury as Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), Freedom First was awarded a Treasury grant to develop the Hurt Park project.

Phillips, who was at Thriving Communities, says those attending were inspired by Strickland and the other speakers. "They are examples of creative folks having success reaching across government, business and nonprofit sectors—that was encouraging," he says. 

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# Figuring out CityWorks >

## My View

By Dan Smith  
Editor

BLOG: [ [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com](http://fromtheeditr.blogspot.com) ]

**Excutive Summary:** *The CityWorks (X)po left a lot of people scratching their heads and talking. What was that cyclone that hit Roanoke?*

Some of us are still trying to figure out what to make of the recent CityWorks (X)po in downtown Roanoke. The response—international response—has been such that a lot of those who dreamed up and delivered this superb conference on small cities don't quite know what to think. It was like buying groceries and discovering at checkout that it's all free today.

I sat down with conference initiator Ed Walker (and I don't know quite what else to call him because Ed insists—with good reason—the conference had little to do with him and a lot to do with a company of talented creatives working together to do something they didn't even know they could) and chatted afterwards. The conference was presented with such panache and explosive energy that even jaded Harvard graduate students who attended were wondering afterwards how to move to Roanoke. Ernie Zulia, the theater professor at Hollins and a real genius of the theatrical, talked about the conference as show biz.

It was presented by people who said over and over, "We wanted to put on a conference we would want to go to." So the proper lighting, sound, staging and show people did what The Little Rascals would have done: "Let's put on a show!" they screamed.

The hyperbole and rhetoric concerning CityWorks are all but out of hand (PR pro Sharon Rappoport became almost poetic with: "That building turned into a rocket ship, fueled by passion and wonder, boldly going where no small city has gone before"), but fact is this was an impressive meeting of like minds that could pulsate over the next few decades the way Design '79 did 30 years ago, resulting in a huge step in a new Roanoke. Ed says that he hopes this conference—at least the first edition of it—produces a database that those trying to re-invent small cities can use for free whenever and wherever the need arises. He wants smart people to continue contributing.

The conference brought together a new edition of "movers and shakers." No longer are they deep-pocketed money men (old white guys mostly), but these initiators are the creative class. That includes artists, writers, stage managers, show people working hand in glove with techies, business types and high-energy participants who make things happen.

Since 1979, I've seen a lot of "movements" come and go, some with great promise. They began with intellectual and physical energy but broke down into peeing contests among the participants and eventually fell apart for one reason or another. None has had the potential—to my mind—that CityWorks has for a complete overhaul of the way we think, the way we look at ourselves and the way we act on the possibilities.

continued on Page 54



## From DC or NYC, look southwestward > >

By **Tom Field**  
Publisher

## On Tap from the Pub

With all the whining and complaining and protests going on—and especially from the television news coverage, which takes special delight in heaping those sordid clips on top of equally depressing negative stories in every other category they can think of—it's difficult to believe anything good is happening. But just like there are grassroots movements all over our country springing up to raise their pitchforks against this or that, if you look closely enough, you can find a pitchfork or two actually digging in the hay.

Maybe the Occupy Wall Street marchers against greedy corporations and the Tea Party marchers against excessive government can take a break for a minute—a smoke break or Starbucks latte break—turn away from the New York Stock Exchange or U.S. Capital, and look toward our neck of the woods.

There's more than a pitchfork or two digging in the hay.

And though we have our fair share of woes and disappointments here in Southwestern Virginia like every other state in the union, there is positive news aplenty. Some of it is even documented on private sector annual reports (gasp) and government sector reports (gasp, gasp). But the majority of the successes we all need to see more of, come from the little reality stories like those we show in this very FRONT magazine each and every month. Stories of people who certainly don't mind fighting against corruption and injustice ... they just have to do it after their 40-, 50-, 60-plus- hour of work each week.

This edition of FRONT is like every previous edition, with respect to its collection of positive business stories. Our FRONTcover story is particularly enlightening. The "kids" profiled are pitchfork-in-the-hay types to be sure. Older, so-called "wiser" and "experienced" readers may detect a bit of braggadocio in the "millennial" (or Gen Y or "brat pack") statements and attitudes—but there's something to be said of the self-assured. If you are tempted to see such visions as "not very realistic" then there is that possibility that you've forgotten one of two things: the mindset of other well-documented achievers—or your own worldview when you were 20-years old.

I say, bring it on, young entrepreneur.

And I don't care if you started by shoveling manure or you were handed a golden pitchfork.

# # #

We're kickin' some tail here in the foothills, ridges and valleys of southwest Virginia—and people in DC and NYC need to see how it's done. Our state is still consistently ranked in the

continued on Page 54





(X)po sign at CityWorks

## Smith / My View

from Page 52


I was happy to hear Ed repeat—several times—“this isn’t about money” because money is the most regressive power source in our society. The old monied power elite is less important in this dynamic—though money has its place, as Ed will testify, always smiling as he looks at the red ink in a worthy project—and the creativity of even the poorest Roanoker is considered and respected here. That is meaningful, inclusive and very, very smart.

“Making it up as we go” is a phrase I heard several times from those putting on the (X)po and you could easily see the spontaneity involved, but there was structure, discipline and a great deal of planning. Those running things, though, were not bound by assumptions that didn’t hold up and they would often go into a room and come out with something that worked better. My guess is that is how the database Ed so desperately wants will work. It will be there to mold constantly.

Andrea Brunais, who works at Virginia Tech and has been an editorial writer at a large

newspaper in the past, cited an example of an idea working, then said, “It made me think of the ways Roanoke’s future could be shaped just by people having radical intentions and being gutsy and determined.”

Radical, indeed. We are using smart, energetic people of vision to create a new way to look at ourselves and get our projects completed and, because of what we’ve been accustomed to doing in the past, it is considered far, far out of the ordinary.


My guess is that with this initial success, this notion of empowering people who are smart will take hold. I suspect we’ll be better for that. 

---

## Field / On Tap

from Page 53

number one or two spot of the Forbes annual list of the best states for business. The “Pollina Corporate Top 10 Pro-Business States for 2011” just listed Virginia as Number One, thank you. And just last month, we were listed as the Best State for Business by CNBC. Those three designations are real measures against real performance using real metrics. Despite the tyranny of an oppressive anti-business, over-regulating government—and despite the corruption from out-of-control corporate money changers, apparently something is working against the odds in our neck of the woods. We’re even operating on a half a billion dollar surplus, after being faced with a shortfall just two years ago.

Raise your pitchforks if you must. But spend some of that effort pitching in, so we can make hay out of this unruly field where we find ourselves. That’s how we hayseeds do it here. 

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## Letters

### Thank you

I just returned from a two week trip in L.A. where "Lake Effects" had its market debut at the American Film Market. While there, I received a few e-mails regarding your magazine and now that I am back in Virginia and playing catch up, I have had a moment to check it out.

Thank you so much for the amazing recognition and honor. I cannot express just how much it means to me and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to make some impact locally however small it may be. From day one you have made me feel welcome here in the Roanoke community.

I'm honored and humbled and thank you for thinking of me.

**Sara Elizabeth Timmins**  
**Producer/Creative Director**  
**Life Out Loud Films LLC.**

*(Sarah Elizabeth Timmins is the creator of "Lake Effects," the movie recently shot at Smith Mountain Lake and she was selected as the Culture FRONTLeader for 2011 in our November edition.)*

Send letters to [news@vbFRONT.com](mailto: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](http://www.vbFRONT.com)

“”  
Treating people right is the backbone  
of our business

— Page 43

“”  
Dress for the position  
you desire

— Page 23

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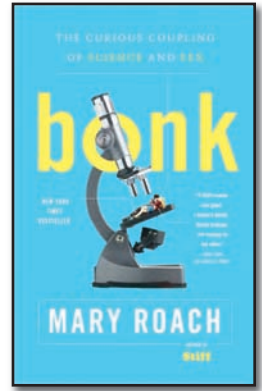


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## Books @ the FRONT >

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 150-word reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to Editor Dan Smith at [dsmith@vbfront.com](mailto:dsmith@vbfront.com)



### *Sex, hilariously*

*Bonk: The Curious Coupling of Science and Sex*, by Mary Roach (W.W. Norton & Company, \$24.95), is one very funny and informative book by a brilliant science writer for lay people. (Everything after that title becomes a double-entendre, doesn't it?)

*Bonk* is a history of the study of sexual physiology, presented in readable scientific language with a laugh packed in every paragraph. Sex, after all, is not un-funny, and when we are discussing it, that's often the best way to deal with the embarrassing stuff. Mary Roach is incomparable, but I'll attempt to compare her: Gary Larsen, Dave Barry, Bill Bryson...but not exactly. She is a drier wit, you'll learn a lot, but you'll never feel gross, and that's quite an achievement.

The readable Ms. Roach's other books in the genre non-fiction/Science and Technology/Health and Medicine include *Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife*; *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*; and *Packing for Mars: The Curious Science of Life in the Void*. I can't wait to read them all.

—Linda Pharis

### *Peaceful contemplation of war*

If you've never been to the D-Day Memorial in Bedford, pick a nice day and go. Don't make the mistake of thinking you've seen all you need to see once you've spotted the Overlord arch from Route 460. Starting with the view through the arch near the front of the park—one of the most inspired site orientations I've ever seen—four acres of thoughtfully conceived and beautifully landscaped grounds create

one of the most sublime homages to American military valor you're likely to encounter.

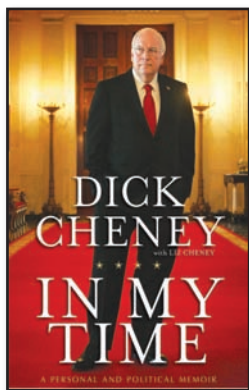
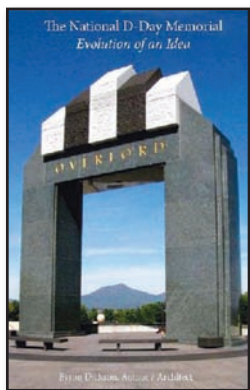
Such a design achievement takes intense planning and execution, and Byron Dickson's wonderful *The National D-Day Memorial: Evolution of an Idea* [Dickson & Associates/ Bison Printing, \$24.95] offers a rare glimpse of just what it took to pull it off. The book documents the inspiration, conceptualization and construction of the monument with succinct text and dozens of photographs and drawings, many of which don't shy away from the grittier aspects of bringing the project to fruition.

But the book is not just for architecture geeks, although you might become one after reading it. There's also plenty here to remind visitors of (and tempt everyone else with) the beauty and poignancy of what the D-Day Memorial captures—the heartbreaking depiction of the soldiers landing on the beach, the solemn tributes to the leaders and the fallen, and the peaceful contemplation that is, in a way, their gift to us.

—Christina Koomen

### *Faulty memory*

*In My Time, A Personal and Political Memoir* (Threshold Editions, \$35) opens with former Vice President Cheney's role on 9/11 when he issued orders to shoot down airplanes if they didn't immediately land. The memoir travels through 40 years of service in Washington. From being the youngest White House Chief of Staff for Gerald Ford to VP for George W. Bush, Cheney remembers how powerful and influential he was, how disappointed he was when people didn't do what he wanted, and



how he held the world together in times of stress through two wars and post-9/11.

Memoirs are a depiction of the author's memories. In Cheney's case, his memoir is full of egotistical comments about people he worked with. He expresses disdain for Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell, whom Cheney felt didn't represent Bush's position correctly. The memoir is a fascinating read about a self-centered man with a faulty memory.

—Betsy Ashton

## Scrapbook murders

My pal Mollie Cox Bryan, who lives in Waynesboro and will teach at our next Roanoke Regional Writers Conference (Jan. 27-29 at Hollins), does have a good time. You can almost see her tongue sticking firmly in her cheek with each page of the delightful *Scrapbook of Secrets* (Kensington Publishing, \$7.99). This is the first "scrapbooking mystery" I'm aware of and it will be the first of a series if Mollie has anything to do with it.

This opener introduces Annie, a respected investigative reporter who has traded in her porkpie hat for the life of a stay-at-home mother in Cumberland Creek, Va. She joins a "crop circle" of scrapbook friends and they live ordinary days until a young mom's suicide—maybe—sends them into action, looking through her scrappery for clues, leading to the conclusion that it was not at all a suicide.

Mollie much better known for her cookbooks (*Mrs. Rowe's Little Book of Southern Pies* and *Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant Cookbook* were regional

bestsellers) and this foray must be fun for her. It's certainly fun for us.

—Dan Smith

## Little Big Stories

Tom's done it again. I use his first name because when I read his book *The Little Big Things – 163 Ways to Pursue Excellence*, (John Wiley and Sons, \$24.99), Tom Peters made me feel like he was talking directly to me. Perhaps it was a one-way conversation but I quickly learned to simply stop and just absorb.

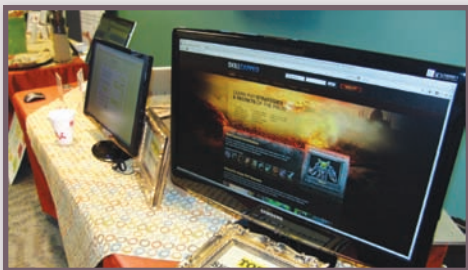
Tom Peters again provides a realistic, and what now seems obvious, perspective on business. He's the master storyteller who has the ability to tie the story to the point at hand.

We've all heard "it's the little things that matter," and this book brings those little things that are most important into focus. This book is perfect for those of us who have short attention spans: each chapter covers various topics of interest to leaders and entrepreneurs. Each could form the basis for philosophical discussions with employees so that organizations can determine what right looks like for them.

—Johna Campbell

(**The reviewers:** Linda Pharis is a writer and painter, retired from public media/museum education. Christina Koomen works for the City of Roanoke in public information. Betsy Ashton is a Smith Mountain Lake-based writer. Johna Campbell is with Cogent Management Resources in Daleville. Dan Smith is editor of FRONT.)

# FRONT 'N ABOUT



## SkillCapped wins EXPAND >

**Skill-Capped.com**, developers of instructional media for video gaming, was awarded more than \$35,000 in cash and business development services as the grand prize winner of EXPAND, a contest for small businesses (new or expanding) from the Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center. The contest concluded and was announced on Oct. 27 at Super Synergy, an annual program from the Synergy networking and educational seminar series directed by **Lynda McNutt Foster**. **Jeff Brabant, Jordan Garcia and Cel Arrington** of SkillCapped accept their award.



## Energy Expo chat >

Ride Solutions' **Jeremy Holmes** and Cool Cities Coalition's **Jim Crawford** chat during the opening day (Nov. 4) of the annual Energy Expo at the Roanoke Civic Center (left photo). Merchants of green took the opportunity to push products and tout their environmentalism. In the other photo, **Meghan McMullen** of Community Housing Partners chats with Blacksburg Middle School students, which were among a number of school groups touring.



## COX partner >

Cox Communications VP **Kim Stanley** (center right) and Del. **Onzlee Ware** discuss Cox's new partnership with Valley View Mall to provide services to tenants and surrounding properties for business customers. Cox has also announced it will build the infrastructure for a Technology Park, located on the west side of Roanoke County. The location is off of Route

460 near Salem. Construction will take approximately five to six months to complete.

*Valley Business FRONT is FRONT'n About at many events each month. Check the blog links at [www.vbFRONT.com](http://www.vbFRONT.com) for more coverage.*



## Money for ED >

U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development Matt S. Erskine announced \$500,000 in federal money over five years awarded to Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development during a New River Valley plant tour Nov. 9. The money launches the Virginia Rural Competitiveness Project, a job-creation effort. Here Erskine takes a cell phone photo of a new truck at Volvo and talks to CEO Nanci Hardwick at Aeroprobe in Blacksburg.



## Drumstick Dash >

Valley Business FRONT sponsored the first ever Turkey Leg Torch to start off the ceremony at the **Roanoke Rescue Mission's** annual **Drumstick Dash**. Over 14,000 registrants on top of an even larger crowd ran or walked the charity benefit in downtown Roanoke on Thanksgiving morning. FRONT publisher Tom Field carries the torch, lighted by StellarOne Senior Executive VP/Business Banking **Charles McGuire**, with Mission race organizer **Uneita Mathews**.

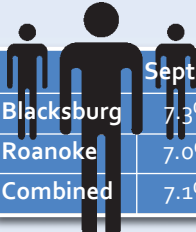


# ECONOMIC INDICATORS

The economy in the Roanoke and New River Valleys continues to improve. More people are working, more people are shopping. Unemployment is dropping at a faster pace than the state average, while taxable retail sales in August are up at a greater percentage than Virginia as a whole.

## Unemployment/Employment

**Unemployment rates** in the combined New River and Roanoke Valleys are down from both last month and last year—and down at a sharper rate than both Virginia and the United States. Virginia's unemployment rate fell 1.5 percent over the year and the US rate fell 4.3 percent, while the combined Blacksburg and Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Areas dropped 5.6 percent. Within the region, the Blacksburg MSA fell 4.2 percent August to September and Roanoke fell 1.5 percent, about the same rate Virginia's unemployment rate dropped during the same period. The region's 366 initial unemployment claims filed during the week of October 21 represent a 28.1 percent drop from the same week last year—better than the statewide drop of 18.5 percent, and a hopeful indicator for further reductions in the unemployment rates.



	UNEMPLOYMENT		
	Sept. 10	Aug. 11	Sept. 11
Blacksburg	7.3%	7.2%	6.9%
Roanoke	7.0%	6.7%	6.6%
Combined	7.1%	6.9%	6.7%

Some 6,800 more people were working in September than were employed a year ago, an increase of 3.1 percent.


### EMPLOYED

Sept. 2010	Aug. 2011	Sept. 2011
220,043	224,468	226,855

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

## Retail Sales

More people working means more people buying. Taxable retail sales in the region rose 8.8 percent in August from a year ago and 7.7 percent from July, possibly reflecting strong back-to-school sales. Statewide retail sales rose 7.0 percent over the year and 3.4 percent over the month. Within the region, the Roanoke MSA showed the strongest gains: up 12.4 percent from August 2010 and 8.2 percent from July. The Blacksburg MSA registered only a small gain from 2010 (0.7 percent), but beat the state's growth from July with a 6.5 percent increase.



	RETAIL SALES		
	Aug. 2010	July 2011	Aug. 2011
Blacksburg MSA	\$1,375,574.30	\$1,301,925.87	\$1,386,045.90
Roanoke MSA	\$3,138,073.97	\$3,260,847.92	\$3,528,061.74
Combined	\$4,513,647.95	\$4,562,773.79	\$4,914,107.64

Sources: Virginia Department of Taxation

—By Anne Piedmont,  
Piedmont Research Associates

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Also get more stories and pictures at [morefront.blogspot.com](http://morefront.blogspot.com)

## Where the boys are >

### Executive Summary:

*Roanoke is heavy on the women, but in the New River Valley men rule.*

### By Anne Piedmont

The combined Roanoke and Blacksburg Metropolitan Statistical Areas may have a slightly higher percentage of females than males (50.9 percent), but within the region, women are from Roanoke and men are from the New River Valley.

According to the 2010 US Census, there are just 93.2 males for every 100 females in the Roanoke MSA, but 102.1 males to 100 females in the Blacksburg MSA. The reasons may be both educational and economic. The Virginia Tech student population skews male—57.4 percent in the 2010-11 academic year, according to data from the State Council on Higher Education. That gives Montgomery County a higher proportion of males from birth through about age 50. Likewise, Pulaski County, with a high concentration

of manufacturing jobs (24.8 percent, compared to the state average of 6.7 percent) has a greater percentage of males. The City of Radford, on the other hand, has the highest concentration of females in the New River Valley (90.2 males for every 100 females) due in part to Radford University's 59.6 percent female student body.

Roanoke City, Roanoke County and Salem have more female residents than male. Roanoke College influences Salem's percentage with 56.2 percent female students. The higher number of females in Roanoke MSA may be a result of the dominance of the healthcare profession and the large number of "office" jobs, such as banking and insurance.

Both regions follow the national trend of more male babies and children, and more women at the other end of the spectrum. In the combined area, there were just 73.7 men for every 100 women over age 65. More than 90 percent of the population 100 years old and older was female. At the time of the census, there were two women 110 or older in Roanoke City, accounting for one-third of that demographic statewide.

## Males to Every 100 Females

	< 20	20-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Total
Botetourt County	106.6	104.2	95.9	100.9	81.9	98.1
Craig County	98.7	102.5	104.8	97.6	84.9	97.7
Franklin County	101.7	100.5	99.6	97.2	87.2	97.4
Roanoke County	103.4	94.6	93.6	92.8	70.3	91.3
Roanoke City	104.8	94.8	99.4	89.7	63.0	91.6
Salem	102.6	94.2	93.9	88.9	69.6	90.3
<b>Roanoke MSA</b>	<b>103.7</b>	<b>96.4</b>	<b>96.9</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>72.6</b>	<b>93.2</b>
Giles County	104.9	100.8	101.6	94.8	78.3	96.1
Montgomery County	108.1	126.2	101.2	93.4	78.1	107.1
Pulaski County	107.2	104.9	106.5	95.3	76.5	97.7
Radford	85.7	95.8	98.7	94.2	64.5	90.2
<b>Blacksburg MSA</b>	<b>104.8</b>	<b>117.3</b>	<b>102.5</b>	<b>94.3</b>	<b>76.6</b>	<b>102.1</b>
<b>Combined Region</b>	<b>104.1</b>	<b>105.8</b>	<b>98.6</b>	<b>93.7</b>	<b>73.7</b>	<b>96.2</b>



David Perry

Joy Sylvester-Johnson

## 'We specialize in dealing with people who hurt' >

### Executive Summary:

*At the Rescue Mission in Roanoke, it's always been a struggle, but a sudden death and the need to innovate put the challenge at another level.*

By David Perry

"I didn't think we'd start weepy," says Joy Sylvester-Johnson as she reaches for a tissue. "I thought we'd get there eventually. The tears are because it's so important."

Joy, the long-time CEO of the Rescue Mission in Roanoke, suffered a rare double tragedy this year: the death of her Director of Programs at the mission, and the loss of her husband. They were the same person, John. A fall on the ice on the couple's anniversary, two days after Christmas, led to a serious brain injury and John's eventual death in May.

Many business leaders have dealt with the death of a spouse while trying to run their companies, and many have handled the loss of a key employee. Joy has relied on her faith and inner strength to survive both.

Joy and John had been at the Rescue Mission for 25 years. While Joy came on board first to help with development when her mother (a founder of the mission) was ill, John joined the organization later to start a learning center and later a recovery program.

"He brought that to us," says Joy. "It wasn't something we went looking for. That became one of his major contributions here."

She and John saw that their recovery program, based on the 12-step method, was keeping people alive, but it wasn't keeping them on the path of recovery.

"The rescue mission seemed to be a revolving door," Joy says. "We were seeing the same people over and over again. John and I were convinced there had to be a better way to do this."

So they added a spiritual component to the program, and began to get the results they wanted. "What he's best remembered for around here is the spiritual direction," says Joy.

When Joy and John left Roanoke in January for a rehabilitation facility in Atlanta, Joy wondered how the mission would fare in her absence. "I used Skype to meet with my managers, my two directors that were here, and the president of the board a couple of times a week," she says. "I still wrote the newsletter from there and the thank-you letters."

She adds, "I think one of the tests if something is right or not is what happens when you're not there. And I was really pleasantly affirmed. I thought I had a good team, but they didn't miss a beat. They sailed right through it."

John and Joy's absence wasn't the only crisis. "Our number two position resigned at the same time that I was gone. The person you'd expect to be leading in my absence was gone." Ever the innovator, Joy saw the resignation as an opportunity for improvement, even in the midst of caring for John.

"It was an opportunity for us to do development in a different way," she says. "I saw some potential in some folks, so rather than replace that person, I took the job apart and gave pieces of it to different people. This is the first year in 10 years we've been in the black the whole year, so it's working."

It is working so well, in fact, that the Rescue Mission was selected as the Non-Profit FRONTLeader (Non-Profit of the Year) in our November issue.

John and Joy's son Anders helped with the managerial aspects of his father's job during John's stay in rehab, while what would eventually become a team of four people took on the spiritual aspects.

It's been just seven months since John's death in May, but Joy already has advice for business men and women who find themselves in a similar situation.

First, "Work on accepting the fact that things are going to be different," she says. "Things are never going to be the way they were. It will get better, but it won't be like it was."

Second, accept help. "It was extremely difficult for me to accept pastoral care because I knew too much. I knew what you're supposed to do and say and when you're supposed to do it."

Finally, recognize that grief is ever present and affects everyone in the organization. "Grief is not something you can turn on and off," says Joy. "It permeates everything. But I wasn't the only one grieving—this whole place was grieving."

## Expansion at the Mission >

The Roanoke Rescue Mission, for the first time in 2011, will go through a year without ever dipping into the red, according to Joy Sylvester-Johnson, and in 2012, it will expand substantially. Joy says that 2011 has been financially stable enough that the 10 percent pay cut the staff took last year has been fully restored.


The Mission's board of directors voted in late October to move its large Thrift Store to the old Foursquare Gospel Church on Elm Ave and call it The Station. The train motif will pervade. "We're hoping to open another version of Second Helping [the Mission's restaurant on Williamson Road] and name it The Whistle Stop," says Joy. The church is a wonderful old building that 25,000 cars pass every day and it has a large parking lot—which the current shop does not have. It was built in the 1930s by members using recycled bricks from Norfolk & Western Railway.

The Mission will invest about \$1.5 million in this project and several adjustments at the main buildings, where there will be interior moves and renovations.

—Dan Smith

Joy is also making time for herself, including swimming at the downtown YMCA and lifting weights. She's even written a musical, "Christmas Cookies," playing at the Taubman Museum of Art (Roanoke Children's Theatre) this month.

"I'm making myself go places," Joy says. "I'm making myself do it until it seems natural. I know the process. But that doesn't exempt me from experiencing the process."

In the midst of it all, Joy has found the positives in the experience for the Rescue Mission. "We specialize in dealing with people who hurt," she says. "We have an opportunity right now to show people when we hurt that we actually do believe what we preach." 

# Career FRONT

## FINANCIAL FRONT



Coulter

### Accounting

Cole & Associates CPAs in Roanoke has named **Celeste A. Coulter** an accountant.



McKinnie

### Banks

First Bank & Trust Company in Christiansburg has named **Owen McKinnie** to its mortgage team.



Weidman



Lanning

### Insurance

Chas. Lunsford Sons & Associates in Roanoke

has hired **Michael W. Weidman** as controller. **Mary W. Lanning** has joined the office as a commercial lines account executive.

Rutherford in Roanoke has hired **Jack Cunningham** in sales and client development.

## LEGAL FRONT

### Awards

**William M. "Bill" Hackworth**, City Attorney for the City of Roanoke, has been named the 2011 winner of the prestigious Edward J. Finnegan Award from the Local Government Attorneys (LGA) of Virginia Inc. The award is presented to an individual in the Commonwealth of Virginia who has made significant contributions to local government or the LGA. Hackworth recently announced he will retire at the end of the year.

**Khelin Eure** is a new associate attorney at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke.

## DEVELOPMENT FRONT

### Architects/Engineers

Obenchain, Linkous, Daniels & Sowick Consulting Engineers has two new stockholders in **Sean Mallahan** of the Roanoke office and **Chad Nixon** of the



Mallahan



Nixon



Roller

Richmond office. **Dave Roller** of the Roanoke office has increased his ownership.

**Ed Mahler** is a new mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineer at Hughes Architects & Engineers in Roanoke. **Todd Rowland** has been hired as a CADD technician.



Moseley

### Economic Development

**Catherine Mosley**, a native of Salem, has joined Virginia's

Region 2000 Partnership as its communications officer/program manager. She is responsible for communications, marketing, media relations, news and publications, public relations activities and investor relations.



Guerry

### Real Estate

**Sara Guerry** has been named by Hall Associates as the Roanoke City Market Building Director. She will focus on attracting programming in Charter Hall, increasing vibrancy on the first floor and mezzanine levels, and promotion of activities within and surrounding the building.

## RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT

### Copiers

The following have been hired in various positions by Blue Ridge Copier in Salem: **Justen Lazzaro**, **Doug Turpin**, **Jason Pierson**, **Dawnell Schofield**, **Allison Altice**, **Mike Hulliger**, **Ray Hunt** and **Jeff Waddell**.

## SENIOR FRONT

### Facilities

**Mary Beth Moore**

## Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to [news@vbFRONT.com](mailto: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.



**Moore**

has joined Salem Terrace at Harrogate, a new assisted living and memory care community in Salem, as administrator.



**Heslep**

elected president/treasurer by the board of directors of F. V. Cemetery Company, the owner and operator of Fair View Cemetery and

Cedar Lawn Memorial Park in Roanoke.



**Lewis**

*Organizations*

**Gregg Lewis**, executive director of Community Housing

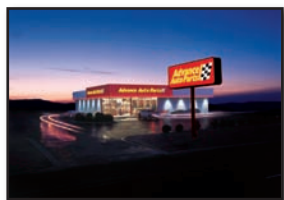
Partners' newly formed community alliance for energy efficiency, has been named to the board of directors of the Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition.

**Eugenia Lindsey** has been named family and child therapist for Catholic Charities in Roanoke.

## OTHER FRONTS

*Funeral Service*

**Myrteen Cronk Heslep** has been



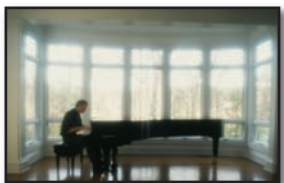
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## *River development planned*

Bern Ewert is back and this time he's heading a group that wants to create a 20-acre development near Carilion Clinic that would give Roanoke its first real planned riverfront community. Ewert is the former city manager of Roanoke and architect of Design '79, which revitalized downtown.

The site would run from the vacant area across Jefferson Street from Carilion Clinic and run under the Walnut Street Bridge. It would cost \$100 million.

Planning is underway for the project, which will require approval from the housing authority and city council. Tax credits would likely be available. Bill Rakes of Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore is a partner. The other member of **Roanoke River Associates** is Burrell Saunders of Virginia Beach, an architect. Carilion Clinic has worked with the men, according to reports.

## *Peace protesters sue*

Roanoke's small community of regular peace protesters, the Plowshare Peace Center, has sued the City of Roanoke in federal court because of a ban against protests on the sidewalk in front of Roanoke City Market Building. The new board of the building decided recently to ban demonstrations of any kind in front of the building because, the board says, they disrupt business.

## *VTK, Tech Center merge*

**VT KnowledgeWorks** and the **Virginia Tech Business Technology Center** have joined forces under the VT KnowledgeWorks umbrella to create a comprehensive entrepreneurship program serving all of Virginia.

VT KnowledgeWorks encourages and enables creative entrepreneurship world-wide, through curriculum, local business resource centers, and a global network of cooperating regions. It is a subsidiary of the Virginia Tech Foundation.

## *New Aetna office*

**Aetna**, the national insurance giant that recently entered a Medicare plan with Carilion in the region, has opened a Roanoke office and plans to expand it to 50 employees by 2012. About half that number will operate the Medicare/Medicaid program initially. Carilion expects about 7,000 people to enroll in its MajestaCare program.

## *Skill Capped wins*

**Skill Capped**, a group of three Virginia Tech students, won the \$35,000 top prize (cash and services) in the Roanoke Regional Entrepreneur Center's Expand contest. The students will be given advertising and business coaching as part of their prize.

The contest drew a surprisingly large field and was pared to 20, then five

before the selection was made at a final Super Synergy conference in Roanoke. The winning team members are Jeff Brabant, Jordan Garcia and Cel Arrington, who put together an online site that gives "World of Warcraft" players tips via video. They have 100,000 subscribers who pay a monthly fee.

## *CPA firms merger*

The Roanoke law firms of **Scearce & Crabbs** and **Anderson & Reed** will merge Jan. 1, 2012. Long-time Roanoke CPAs Jim Scearce and Richard Crabbs specialize in accounting and tax services and Anderson & Reed, founded in 1948, is a full-service CPA firm. "Both firms share the same focus on providing quality service and are excited about working together says Alex Bowman, a partner with A&R.

## *Campaign launched*

Citizens and governments in the Roanoke and New River Valleys have launched **Save a Ton**, a new campaign to help people save money on energy use. The multi-media campaign encourages people to visit, learn about energy savings and share their ideas and results on social media.

"With bigger electric bills, stubborn gas prices and higher home heating costs – and with winter around the corner – we're here to help residents in our region and beyond save hundreds or even thousands of dollars a year in energy

costs by doing just a little," says Nell Boyle, chairwoman of RC CLEAR, a Roanoke County citizen committee, and director of the local chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council.

## *Smoot to retire*

Long-time university business executive **Raymond J. Smoot Jr.** plans to retire as head of the Virginia Tech Foundation next year in July 2012. Smoot was FRONT's 2010 Most Underappreciated Executive.

John Dooley, vice president for outreach and international affairs, will become the foundation's chief operating officer April 1, 2012, and then chief executive officer upon Smoot's retirement in July. Smoot will remain for two years on a part-time non-management basis to assist the university and foundation.

## *LG-Humana link*

**LewisGale Regional Health System** has reached a new provider agreement with Humana. The agreement gives Humana's Medicare Advantage enrollees full access to all LewisGale facilities and physicians. Humana's MA product enrolls just under 6,000 lives in this region.

The new provider agreement covers inpatient, outpatient, and primary care services at all four hospitals—LewisGale Medical Center, LewisGale Hospital

Montgomery, LewisGale Hospital Pulaski, and LewisGale Hospital Alleghany as well as eight outpatient centers and 135 employed physicians.

to help organizations design, plan and implement retreats, meetings, workshops and training programs. It is based in Blacksburg.

**Office moves**

NS to hire 24

**Manpower Roanoke** has relocated its office from Salem to 4760 Valley View Boulevard in Roanoke.

**Norfolk Southern** plans to hire 500 people in eight states in the near future and 24 of those jobs for conductors and machinists will be in Roanoke. They are expected to be hired before the end of 2011.

**Strategic Studio formed**

VTKnowledgeworks and WilderWeber Leadership have teamed to form **StrategicStudio**. The business will provides consulting and facilitation

**Another tenant goes**

The collapsing three-year-old First & Main shopping

center in Blacksburg has lost yet another tenant, **Steger Creek**, a gift store. The center lost a battle to bring in Walmart a while back and has not built a movie theater, as promised. Steger Creek has a store in Roanoke. About 40 percent of the 130,000-square-foot center is vacant.

**ND&P wins 6 golds**

**ND&P Advertising** in Roanoke won six gold awards at the Blue Ridge Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America's 10th annual Summit Awards Gala in early November at the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. The

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# FRONT Notes

Summit Awards are an annual recognition of the best in public relations and communications efforts by professional public relations practitioners in Southwest Virginia.

Other multiple gold winners included Advance (3), Access (3), Roanoke County Schools (3) and tba (2).

## *Roanoke ranked digitally*

The **Center for Digital Government** has ranked the **City of Roanoke** as a leading digital city for the 11th straight year. Roanoke was ranked 8th among the cities in the 75,000 to 124,999 population category.

Conducted by the Center for Digital Government and Government Technology, the survey spotlights municipalities that best show how information and communication technology are used to enhance public

service. Cities are selected in four different population categories, and picked from hundreds of municipalities taking part in the survey.

## *Offer withdrawn*

Citing respect for the wishes of nearby residents **The Roanoke Natural Foods Co-op** withdrew its proposal to create an urban farm on a 12 acre parcel located in NW Roanoke City and adjacent to what was once the Countryside Golf Course.

## *Global opens facility*

After nearly two years of fussing and fighting with various regulatory agencies and government bodies, **Global Metalfinishing** owner Tamea Woodward has finally opened the new shop in Roanoke—without

inviting Roanoke officials to the celebration. Global Metalfinishing is an offshoot of Woodward's East West Dyecom, which anodizes metal for artists. Global Metalfinishing will have a more universal focus.

Woodward invested between \$1.2 million and \$1.3 million in the building and equipment and has added a number of employees. She started the project—which is an offshoot of her other business, East West DyeCom—with seven employees and now had 18. She hopes to have 26 in the next 24 months.

## *LG joins Carilion plan*

**LewisGale Regional Health System** has reached a new provider agreement with Carilion Clinic to be a participating provider in its Medicare

Advantage plans. The agreement gives enrollees full access to all LewisGale facilities and physicians, effective Jan. 1, 2012. The new provider agreement covers inpatient, outpatient, and primary care services at all four hospitals—LewisGale Medical Center, LewisGale Hospital Montgomery, LewisGale Hospital Pulaski, and LewisGale Hospital Alleghany as well as eight outpatient centers and 135 employed physicians.

*Compiled by Dan Smith*

**FRONT Notes posted daily online at [moreFRONT.blogspot.com](http://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](http://vbFRONT.com).*

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Tom Field

## November 2011 > Contributor of the Month

We're going to break a little from our tradition of singling out freelance contributors for attention in this space and talk about the contribution of Publisher **Tom Field**, who had nothing to do with this notice. Tom is primarily known as the guy behind our unique covers, but there's a whole lot more to his contribution than that. He is responsible for the overall design of the magazine, writes occasional stories, lifts those random quotes that appear throughout the magazine, keeps up advertising (including selling it these days), is deeply involved in the community in a wide variety of ways, looks down the road for ways we can improve our product and generally serves as our MVP. Editor Dan Smith has said on a number of occasions, "Without me, there would still be a FRONT. Without Tom, there wouldn't." So we all thank him as we enter our fourth year as a publication.

“ ”  
just put your  
s#!% out there  
and get it done

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“ ”  
The day of the wine snob is over

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