

Valley Business

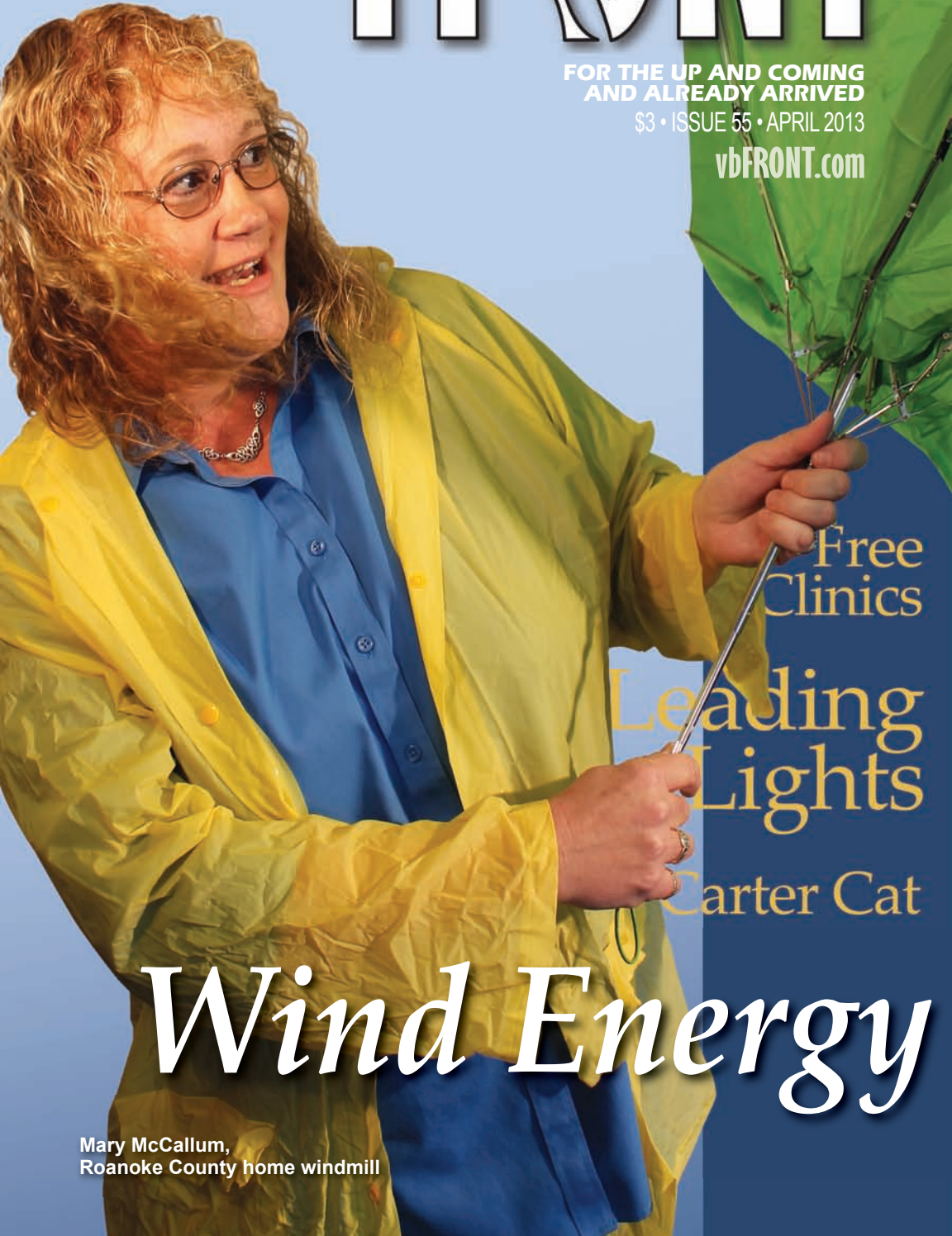
FRONT

*Is wind
picking
up or just
blowing by?*

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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Wind Energy

Mary McCallum,
Roanoke County home windmill



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Michael Miller's cover story on the development of wind energy in this region is an intentionally narrowly-focused look at the dilemma our country and our region are facing as we look to an uncertain future in the development of the resources we need.

Energy is at the center of any successful economy and for many, many years the developed world has depended almost exclusively on fossil fuels to meet the needs of billions of people. Of course, we got the transportation we wanted, but its cost has been enormous in terms of environmental destruction and a dependence on these fuels that has empowered those who would destroy us as a nation.

Wind power has been a source of energy for as long as people have been able to build windmills—and that's quite a time. But even today, there is considerable argument against the huge wind turbines that kill wildlife, make some noise, are ugly in the eyes of some people, and don't produce enough energy to justify the cost and the other considerations. Some of that could be improving as the need begins to develop and the expense drops.

This is a story of but one of many solutions, but it will give you an idea of just how complex this whole dilemma is.



Tom Field



Dan Smith

“ ”

Where ever I am, there are smart, thoughtful people who want to help and share their ideas

— Page 45

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Wind Energy

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Art direction and cover photography
of Mary McCallum by Tom Field.

Valley Business FRONT

APRIL

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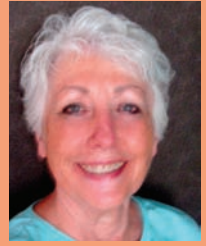
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Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 68.

Editorial Advisory Board

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

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

CONTRIBUTORS



Kathleen Harshberger



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Laura Purcell



Dan Smith



Samantha Steidle



Kathy Surace



Our patients work and are trying, often against great odds ... to keep their families intact and to stay away from welfare — Page 30

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In truth, they are anything but ordinary.

— Page 47

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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Wind Energy

Where the wind blows >

Executive Summary:

Finding alternatives to fossil fuels for the nation's energy needs is becoming increasingly urgent and in this region, wind seems to be gaining favor with individuals, institutions and businesses.

By Michael Miller

This region of Virginia has always been coal country. The rich seams of carbon running through the western mountain ranges have shaped the economies of the region since mining operations began in earnest in the 1880s, when rail transportation made shipment of the mineral feasible. Roanoke's growth as a railroad town was in large measure enabled by the shipment of coal from the western coalfields to the ports of Hampton Roads and Norfolk.

Coal-based electrical power generation costs have continued to increase, as a result of both market factors and increasing burden of regulatory compliance. As the cost of coal-derived electricity increases, alternative energy sources become increasingly viable. Significant research expenditures are being made to develop new technologies such as biofuels and fuel cells, but solar and wind generation are—at this moment—the leading contenders to augment fossil-fuel power generation.

In the Roanoke-Blacksburg region there are no substantive deployment of solar technologies, but there is wind. And soon, Roanokers may have to decide whether wind generation is both economically feasible and desirable, because a wind turbine facility is being considered for installation at a site on Bent Mountain.

A recent Roanoke College Poll revealed that those Virginians responding favored expansion of solar power (94 percent), hydroelectric power (89 percent)



Tom Field

Mary McCallum: “Ever since we moved here, we have dreamed of putting up a small wind turbine for personal use.”

and wind turbines (87 percent). Nearly half (49 percent) wanted coal mining to either be curtailed (38 percent) or banned (11 percent).

Diana Christopulos of the Cool Cities Coalition based in Roanoke, asks the rhetorical, “How would you feel if you owned a mountain of coal and had to compete with free wind and sunshine?”

A look back

Wind has long been recognized as a “free” source of power. In elementary school we learned about industrious people in the Netherlands using windmills to pump water out of lowlands to expand their arable land. And of course every western movie or television program eventually shows a

Coal: A downward trend >

While overall coal production in the US has grown steadily over the past 15 years, Virginia coal production has decreased. The thin seams make mining operations more expensive, resulting in more costly product in comparison to surface mined western coal.

To offset these costs, coal companies increasingly employ new technologies to boost productivity, resulting in further reduction of employment in the region. Over the past 10 years, coal-mining jobs in Virginia have dropped by 40 percent.



Dan Smith

Diana Christopulos:
“How would you feel if you owned a mountain of coal and had to compete with free wind and sunshine?”



In most areas, utilities are buying wind power because they want to, not because they have to.

— *Bloomberg wind analyst*
Amy Grace

lonely windmill standing guard on the plains, pumping water to the surface for the farmer. In fact, it is estimated that between 1850 and 1900 as many as six million such small windmills were installed on farms to operate irrigation pumps. As electric generators became available, it was natural to use windmills to convert wind energy to electricity, particularly in areas where electrical service had not yet been deployed.

Starting in 1974, the federal government through NASA, the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation developed large-scale wind turbine demonstration systems aimed at industrial scale power generation. A number of manufacturers began deployment of wind generators, but as oil prices dropped by a factor of three during the 1980s and early 1990s, many of them abandoned the business as uneconomical. California began to offer tax incentives for wind power, resulting in the majority of wind farm deployments during that time.

Today, wind turbines have a variety of shapes and sizes, depending on the intended use. While most large turbines have the traditional three-blade design, smaller models can take various shapes from egg-beaters to twisted blade models resembling modern sculpture.

Diana Christopulos says, “Solar power is even more popular than wind, in large part because it can be used in so many more places. Homes and businesses in Roanoke County and in the cities of Salem and Roanoke are increasingly adding solar arrays, even though Virginia lags far behind other states in providing any economic incentive for clean energy.

“With current technologies, there are a limited number of excellent sites for wind energy in Virginia, and those who want to install wind face challenging permit hurdles in Virginia. New onshore wind projects are already economically competitive with new coal and nuclear facilities. Their biggest economic competitor is cheap natural gas, which is overwhelming all

other new sources. In addition, individuals and organizations linked to the fossil fuel industry have funded a massive disinformation campaign against wind energy.”

How much wind?

According to a 2012 report by Bloomberg the U.S. currently has about 60 gigawatts (GW) of installed wind generation capacity, equivalent to six percent of total capacity. However, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory estimates that the contiguous states have the potential for 10,500 GW of onshore wind power. That means we have deployed only about a half percent of the available potential. If fully realized, the potential wind generation capacity amounts to nine times the total current electricity consumption of the entire country.

Thirty-nine states have installed some industrial wind generation capacity, while 15 have at least 1,000 megawatts (MW) of wind power production. Texas, California and Iowa are the leading producers of wind generated electricity.

2012 was a banner year for new wind turbine installations. Looming expiration of federal tax incentives that paid a premium for wind energy resulted in more than 13 gigawatts of new wind energy coming online last year alone. The price of wind power has dropped more than 21 percent since 2010, making it more competitive with traditional fossil fuel generation. Wind generated electricity from new installations now ranges from five to eight cents per kilowatt hour (kWh). In some parts of Texas, wind power is now cheaper than power from natural gas generation. Even though some states have federally-mandated renewable energy targets, “This means that in most areas, utilities are buying wind power because they want to, not because they have to,” according to Bloomberg wind analyst Amy Grace.

Billy Weitzenfeld, director of the Association of Energy Conservation Professionals in Floyd, says, “Wind energy on a utility scale could and should become an important part of the grid in this region because the wind resources are available particularly on the higher elevations and mountain ridge tops. In other words, this region could support wind energy as a successful electricity generating resource.

“Wind is clean, it is renewable, and it is basically free once the wind project comes on-line. Utility scale wind is also the emerging source of new electricity generation and has added 35 percent of

““”

The price of wind power has dropped more than 21 percent since 2010, making it more competitive with traditional fossil fuel generation.

Billy Weitzenfeld:
“Finding an effective way to provide and disseminate balanced facts and information continues to be the main obstacle.”



Dan Smith



Mark Hansen atop his wind turbine.

Wind at home: Does it really save? >

Executive Summary:

Here's how it works from families who work it.

By Dan Smith

A very few people in our region have taken the wind power turbine by the proverbial blade and jumped out in front of what many of them hope will happen in the future: convert our energy production from fossil fuels to more environmentally friendly—and endless—supplies.

Among them are Doug and Mary McCallum of Roanoke County on windy Wade Road and Mark Hansen, a Botetourt County resident whose interest in the alternatives borders on the obsessive.

Says Mary McCallum, "Ever since we moved here, we have dreamed of putting up a small wind turbine for personal use [in their 2,000 square foot house]. We wanted to let our neighbors know that we would like to move forward and install a small residential wind energy system on our property. This modern, non-polluting system would generate electricity solely for our own use, reducing our dependence on the local utility. Any excess generation will be supplied to the utility system, but we will not receive any income from this exchange."

all new generating capacity to the U.S grid since 2007 – twice what coal and nuclear added combined. It is the future. Not by choice but by necessity."

The solution involves more than just wind, says Weitzenfeld: "The combination of wind, solar, energy conservation and energy efficiency are the required mix of resources that will lead us into a sustainable energy future. We do not have the luxury of continuing to burn fossil fuels to generate electricity when these fuels are finite, non-renewable and devastating to our environment and our personal health. Common sense should prevail—right? [It is a case of] cheap, clean fuel that is everywhere for the taking vs. a limited supply of dirty, environmentally unsound and non-sustainable fuel."

How it works

While the details of wind turbines can be quite complex, incorporating state-of-the-art aerodynamics, generation and electronic control systems, their use generally falls into two categories: stand-alone and grid-connected.

Stand-alone generators are used to provide electrical power to a limited area, such as a single installation or farm, for example. Typically these turbines are smaller, being scaled proportionally to the projected power consumption of the



The DOE has established a goal of having 20 percent of U.S. electrical generation come from wind by 2030. To this end they have made available significant resources to progress toward the goal.

They mounted an American-made Bergey 10kW (kilowatt) wind turbine on a 100 foot lattice tower, set back from the street and the property lines. It uses a three-bladed propeller, 23 feet in diameter, and has but two moving parts. It does not turn until the wind speed reaches at least eight mph.

"On calm, quiet days the wind turbine will not rotate," says Mary. "When the rotor is turning, the sound of the wind passing over the blades [is not] audible above the noise of the wind in the leaves of the trees."

Mary says, "The installation might be considered the same as planting a tree, installing a new phone/electric pole, or installing a flag pole." It's on the expensive side, but there's a payback:

- Cost \$78,000
- Virginia rebate: \$15,000,
- 25 percent Federal Tax Credit \$19,500,
- Net Cost \$43,500.00
- Savings so far \$600 off the electric bill.

Mark Hanson has both solar and wind power alternatives (and a converted electric Karmann Ghia). He has taught a wind turbine class at Dabney Lancaster Community College in Alleghany County, so he knows what he's doing.

Initially, he bought his Bergey turbine "for emergency loads. [It] charges 24 volt batteries and runs the lights, fridge, well-pump and wood stove blower, so when the power goes out at least you've got heat, light and cold beer."

Cost: \$5,000, which included turbine, 60-foot tower and inverter. He got help from his alt energy club (REEVA) in installing the turbine. He says, "The grid tie solar zeroes out my meter averaging, 1,200 kWh per month. For residential, solar ... is cheaper than wind, except for [the commercial] utility (economies of scale)." He says that "unless you live above 2,300 feet and have [more than] 10mph average annual wind speed you won't see a payback. It's best for back-up power. My solar has an eight-year payback [and] I'm net zero except for about 200 kWh in January."

installations they serve. Like solar panels, smaller turbines are normally used to augment rather than replace normal electrical power supplies, unless the installation is isolated from normal electrical service. Example installations locally are the turbine at Volvo in Pulaski County, which is used to provide power to light the company's staging/parking lot visible from Interstate 81, turbines atop the football field light poles at William Fleming High School in Roanoke, Mary and Doug McCallum's home wind turbine in Roanoke County, the small turbine installed at the Blacksburg YMCA by a consortium of local benefactors and Virginia Tech as an ongoing experimental facility.

Grid-connected wind turbines are designed to generate large amounts of power and feed it directly into the grid just like any other power plant. These turbines are the largest of all, with tower heights of a few hundred feet and blade lengths of 150 feet or more. Each turbine can generate perhaps 2.5 megawatts, and several turbines are often tied together electrically and connected to the grid through

Small wind turbine installed at the Volvo New River Valley plant in Pulaski County. The turbine, similar to some installed by local residents on their own land, is used to power lighting for the staging/parking lot, reducing overall power consumption at the plant.



Michael Miller



Doug and Mary McCallum at the base of their turbine as workers finish it.



Up to 37,000 birds are killed each year in the U.S. by collisions with turbine blades. That sounds like a lot of birds, but in reality approximately 90 million birds die annually by flying into buildings.

a substation. The collection of turbines is referred to as a wind farm. Some wind farms in California, for example, consist of hundreds of turbines aligned in rows similar to the way crops are planted, but aligned to take advantage of prevailing wind patterns. And while stand-alone turbines are often found near the dwellings or other buildings they serve, wind farms are typically located in more remote locations due to the amount of land needed for the installation.

Of course, wind turbines can't generate any electricity unless the wind blows, so appropriate placement of the installations is critical to maximizing power generation. While a turbine may have the capacity to generate 2.5 MW, the realized generation based on wind speed and duration may reduce the actual power generation by 50-70 percent. This is called the capacity factor.

To aid in properly locating new installations, the Department of Energy (DOE) has produced wind maps for every state. Wind generation is generally considered a possibility when the average annual wind speed at 80 meters height is at least 6.5 meters/second (about 14.5 mph). In Virginia, as would be expected, the potential wind sites lie along the edge of the Blue Ridge escarpment, with major fields south and west of Roanoke toward Floyd County, as well as northeastward along the ridges east of the Shenandoah Valley. These regions also lie along the path of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive.

Pros and cons

While the idea of capturing wind energy to produce essentially "free" electricity is enticing, as with most things in life there is no free lunch here. Wind turbines are certainly less expensive than coal fired power plants, but they produce less electricity as well, and the power they generate is subject to the wind variability and is less reliable. But given appropriate placement, wind is a feasible alternative generation means if other economic factors are also positive. Of course, the production of additional electricity without the associated production of greenhouse gases is attractive.

The cost of wind generation continues to drop as new technologies are developed. The DOE has established a goal of having 20 percent of U.S. electrical generation come from wind by 2030. To this end they have made available significant resources to progress toward the goal. The DOE recently awarded seven teams \$4 million in matching funds to perform initial engineering, design and permitting for an offshore wind turbine demonstration project. A Dominion Virginia Power team that included Virginia Tech received one of the contracts. DOE will later select three of the seven teams to award an additional \$47 million each to actually build the facilities. The Virginia site is expected to be located about 22 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach.

In addition, the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) recently awarded General Electric a \$3.7 million contract to develop new, lightweight turbine blades consisting



Virginia Tech

of fabric stretched over a metal framework. Virginia Tech's William Devenport will work with GE and the VT stability wind tunnel to help design the new blades.

Although new technology development may reduce the cost of wind generation significantly, placing it in a more competitive position in comparison with other generation methods, there are other costs. For example, large wind farms, especially in mountainous regions such as Virginia, require significant excavation and site preparation including building of roads to transport the large turbine components to the installation.

Potentially more troubling are the oft-stated environmental impacts of large turbines. Noise is certainly a potential problem. The rotating blades produce a constant swoosh-swoosh sound that is loud enough to disturb any households located too near the turbine. The sonic disturbance is not just unpleasant to the ear – it also contains very low frequency components that may be harmful to human and animal life in ways not yet understood. Anecdotal reports abound, but as yet no unequivocal scientific conclusions as to potential harm have been produced. The noise factor itself may be reduced in the long term by technology advances, and in the short term by requiring large setbacks from populated areas.

Bird kills have also been cited as a downside to wind turbines. According to a recent study by the National Academy of Sciences, up to 37,000 birds are killed each year in the U.S. by collisions with turbine blades. That sounds like a lot of birds, but in reality approximately 90 million birds die annually by flying into buildings, and more than 130 million die in collisions with power lines. While the death of a few pigeons or starlings would probably not bother Roanokers, the loss of a

Virginia Tech Stability Wind Tunnel, which is being used to help GE develop more economical and efficient turbine blades.



The rotating blades produce a constant swoosh-swoosh sound that is loud enough to disturb any households located too near the turbine. The sonic disturbance is not just unpleasant to the ear – it also contains very low frequency components that may be harmful to human and animal life in ways not yet understood.



Typical wind turbine cluster project owned and operated by Invenergy LLC, showing usual layout near a farm in the Midwest.



While the idea of capturing wind energy to produce essentially “free” electricity is enticing, as with most things in life there is no free lunch here.

couple of eagles would no doubt be more significant.

Probably the most often heard objection to wind farms concerns their effect on the view shed. Significant wind generation potential exists along the line of the Blue Ridge Parkway, one of the primary tourist draws in the region—for its beauty. Installation of large wind turbines along stretches of mountaintop is not likely to be popular in this region, although that is not a foregone conclusion. For example, in Scotland, a country whose economy is significantly tied to tourism, a number of wind farms have been installed. Opinion polls of nearby residents indicated a desire for additional electricity far outweighed any view shed issues, and in fact many of the wind farms have become tourist attractions themselves. Noise problems were nonexistent in these installations, contrary to local expectations. However, some localities have tightened up on the placement regulations to prevent irresponsible installations in the future. In some cases, a limited installation designed to provide more local, off-grid power with reduced impact is seen as the appropriate way forward.

Money and politics

Wind energy in the Roanoke region became a potential issue in 2011 when a well-known energy company, Invenergy, became interested in Bent Mountain as a potential site for an installation. Invenergy bills itself as a clean energy solution provider, and it has 56 facilities in the U.S. and Europe, comprising wind, solar and natural gas generation. Its business model includes both installation and operation of a facility, so it doesn't just build and run, leaving problems to a third party. “As the country's largest independent wind power generation company,” says the company line (through a spokesperson, who asked not to be identified), “we're proud that our wind projects nationwide contribute

COVER STORY

to the economic development of our host communities, and help diversify America's power supply with clean, renewable energy."

This expressed interest immediately triggered a reaction from local elected officials. According to Roanoke County Board of Supervisors members Ed Elswick and Charlotte Moore, the board immediately instructed the planning commission to perform a study and make recommendations. As it turned out, Invenergy had built the Beech Ridge wind farm in West Virginia, so it was possible to get a first-hand look at what might be coming to Bent Mountain.

As is typical with any politically sensitive issue, opinions about wind farming were divided on the board. However, the planning commission made its recommendations and the board passed an ordinance addressing the conditions that would have to be met for any wind project. "We were advised to do this so we would be ready when the time came," says Elswick. "We thought it was important to let people know our position and what the requirements would be."

But Invenergy has yet to make a formal proposal. According to the same unidentified company spokesperson, "With regard to Roanoke County specifically, we continue to evaluate our proposed plans based on changing power market conditions. We look forward to announcing further developments in the near future."

Still, there has been significant informal discussion among some potentially affected residents. Opinions range widely, with some locals who have installed their own personal wind turbines on one side, and others who would rather not have large propeller blades whistling overhead on the other.

The so-far informal debate also covers more solid issues dealing with economics and environment. Local architect Eldon Karr, himself familiar with alternative energy installations on a residential scale, has converted from being mildly supportive to significantly opposed to the Bent Mountain project. His personal research into the issues has, he says, convinced him that the appropriate use of wind generation should be for small scale, off-the-grid power, which is seemingly in alignment with the emerging Scottish attitude.

Says Karr, "The real problem is that we are stuck in the idea of pursuing these resources within the outmoded paradigm of mass production utilizing the power grid. Surprisingly, it is analogous to trying to make LEDs look and perform

One of the GE SLE turbines from the Beech Ridge wind farm in Greenbrier County, WV. Each of the proposed 119 turbines is 400 feet tall and generates 1.5 megawatts of electricity at capacity.





Dan Smith

Architect Eldon Karr: "Wind and solar generated electricity are far more efficient in smaller installations."

The case against big wind >

By Eldon L. Karr

Architect Eldon Karr of Bent Mountain was one of the people behind Roanoke's Design '79. He lives within sight of the proposed wind farm and has been among the primary opposition to large, industrial wind turbines for the past two years or so. Here is some of his reasoning.

While our technological developments continue at a dizzying pace, we seem to try to apply them in the framework of obsolete perspectives. A good example is trying to mass produce electrical energy for

transmission and distribution over a severely outmoded and deteriorating electrical grid while our demand continues to increase. Continuing on this same road to resolve our energy demands is using too much energy just chasing our tails. Electricity itself is an extremely difficult commodity to contain.

A high percentage of the electricity we produce is lost through transmission and distribution conductors. Even more energy is lost through heat generation in outmoded lighting technologies.

First, since containment is such a drain on the resources we have the capability of producing, we would be much better advised to supplement our growing demands for electricity by generating it at points of utilization instead of transmitting over the same long distances.

The second point that is obvious: We must do all we can to curb our demand by using electricity more efficiently. We can start by purchasing low cost strings of LEDs and use them in more indirect lighting applications. This is the only kind of "all of the above" solution that will lead to progress.

The third leg of our solution: We have already sacrificed far too much of our natural environment to cater to our lust for convenience. We don't need to continue sacrificing more. We need to restore more CO₂ absorbing flora to absorb our atmospheric imbalance.

like antiquated light bulbs. Both wind and solar generated electricity are far more efficient in smaller installations where we do not have to contend with the 'convenience' costs of mega-scale transmission and distribution."

Where the wind blows

The subject of wind energy is potentially as divisive as the subject of global warming. Many questions remain to be answered. Do the economics work? Can wind energy be competitive without the subsidies? Are there real health effects? Does the desire or need for additional electricity outweigh the desire for natural undisturbed beauty that is a hallmark and draw for our region?

The same questions are being asked in many areas of the


COVER STORY

country, and, at least for the present, the issues are being worked out locally, community by community. In Roanoke County, the process is just beginning, and a long road lies ahead.

"There are lots of players involved," says Supervisor Moore. "We have to have a lot of community involvement in the process. We have to consider the needs of everybody. The process will be long, involved, and detailed."

Does wind energy makes sense for Roanoke County? The answer is a resounding "maybe."

The Association of Wind Energy Professionals' Weitzenfeld says not all the problems facing wind energy are openly apparent: "I believe the biggest obstacle we face is that we live in an age of misinformation fueled by the internet, blog sites and selfish private and political agendas. [There is also] our inability as a society to leave our baggage at the door, come to the table, find common ground and pragmatically solve the immense problems that we face in our region and in our world.

"The urgency and necessity to move towards renewable energy as our primary electricity generator is in my opinion not arguable but finding an effective way to provide and disseminate balanced facts and information continues to be the main obstacle." 

Small turbine installation and associated control room in the YMCA in Blacksburg. The installation was provided as a joint project between patrons of the Y and the Virginia Tech engineering department, and is used as a test/experimental station, collecting data on wind factors in the area. Power generated is fed back to the grid, slightly reducing power costs at the Y. The small size of the turbine allows non-standard blade configurations to be used.





Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

Our clothing makes a statement about who we are. It's up to us to determine if that message is positive or negative.

Our clothing speaks >

Over the past 10 years I've been puzzled by the way Americans choose to dress. Why do so many of us neglect our appearance, dressing shabbily? Why do others shop obsessively, but feel they have nothing to wear?

Recently I discovered a book entitled *Stuff* by Daniel Miller, professor of anthropology at University College London. It examines the stuff that we use and accumulate—and what it all means.

His findings were intriguing. In one chapter Miller compares different cultures and how they use clothing to express their self-perceptions.

According to Miller, in Madrid people dress elegantly and formally in public, believing that they represent the Spanish Empire and the center of the Spanish economy. At home, however, they dress rather shabbily. Their public image represents something bigger than themselves and their personal lives.

In Trinidad people use their dress, hairstyle, accessories and way of moving to show their style, self-confidence, sex appeal and individualism. Expressing oneself in a unique and overt way is applauded—literally. They believe the image they create is more meaningful than their profession or their social status at birth.

Conversely, Londoners are accustomed to the fashion industry dictating fashion trends, telling them what to wear this season. However, Miller writes, "London is striving today to be the capital of cool, partly in refutation of a previous time when it was a capital of Empire—now seen as extremely uncool."

In the last decade the fashion industry has encouraged Londoners to find their authentic selves through their clothing, which Miller notes "is a hell of a lot harder than it sounds."

Some in their culture are so unsure of themselves, they can't decide what to wear out of a closet full of clothes, and so they resort to a default set of clothing that they know is acceptable. All that freedom is paralyzing.

Miller didn't include Americans in his study but some common reasons we cite for dressing down are:

- To avoid looking as if we feel superior to others.
- Confusion as to the cool, appropriate way to dress.
- Belief that our public image should be the "real" us and not a fake image.

Whatever the reasons, other cultures still judge us by our appearance. If we look sloppy, shabby, or confused, that's how they'll perceive us—and we'll get no respect. 📺

Mea culpa! >

The phenomena of public apologies gained much of its traction in 1952, with the first nationally publicized television mea culpa by the late President Nixon, then the vice presidential running mate of President Eisenhower. Nixon, with his wife Pat watching pensively, denied charges that he gave special treatment to his donors. He did, however, apologize for accepting a little cocker spaniel dog named Checkers, saying, "We're gonna keep it."

This speech was seen by about 60 million Americans, resulting in a landslide of support. Nixon retained his spot as the vice presidential candidate, and his ticket won the election.

The public apology is commonplace now. Politicians, sports figures and entertainers, usually with their spouses (but not always, these days) standing stoically beside them, offer public apologies for their errant behavior. To save a career or an election, they've had armies of public relations experts coaching them on dress, body language, and how to deliver a timely, sincere public apology.

Please note the word "sincere" here. As any person in sales can tell you, clients spot insincerity very quickly. While we're at it, let's remind ourselves that children can spot insincerity even faster.

Most of us will never have to apologize publicly. Being merely human, we all make mistakes and blunders that could cost us our reputation and/or our company's money. I was asked recently to help a client write a note of apology. This person really didn't want to write the note nor accept responsibility for the error. Well, that feeling certainly shone through. The note was full of "I'm sorry if I offended you ..." and "I apologize if I caused any trouble with your customer ..." And then there were excuses.

This approach will never do if one wants to repair a relationship. My unhappy client was forgetting good customer service, and the old adage that the client is always right. In a situation like this, promptly accepting responsibility is the best course. If you have made a mistake causing damaged relationships, consternation, and/or loss of profit, it's best to:

- Handwrite an apology immediately.
- Keep your letter short.
- Keep your tone honest and respectful.
- Sincerely acknowledge whatever harm your action caused.
- Sincerely apologize – no ifs, buts or excuses here.
- Sincerely offer to remedy the situation

The apology letter is hard to write, and no one likes admitting to being less than perfect. Write it anyway. You'll feel better and so will the person receiving it. 🖋️



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:

If you're writing a letter of apology, it's best to mean it.



Generating new business >

So you've established your own small business and are eager to get new clients. Your next step is finding new business beyond traditional advertising. Here are some non-traditional marketing ideas for lead generation.

Get in front of influencers: What opportunities do you have to connect with influencers, decision makers, and customers? "Imagine your ideal customer," says Adrienne Capollupo, president of Salesforce Outsourced, which makes sales calls on behalf of clients.

Ask yourself, "Where do my clients look for solutions? Who are they listening to?" Then, attend the association meetings and trade shows that are relevant to those influencers. This way, you are marketing to the influencer.

Be a Google master: When people look for business information online, they want high-quality messages. The best way to be the top result on Google is to provide "content with context," says Brian Duvall, president of Duvall Consulting LLC.

"When consulting with your clients, find out what their real goals are," says Duvall. "They may say they want a website, but what they really mean is they want new customers."

The best way to get new customers is to provide expert-level content, preferably with some videos to supplement the copywriting. Google's algorithm is adept at identifying rich content, says Brian. It pays to put a lot of effort into the content you provide for potential customers. You will be rewarded with high rankings on Google.

According to Brian, the No. 1 link on Google gets 48 percent of the clicks, while the No. 2 and No. 3 links get 20 and 10 percent, respectively.

Brand, brand, brand: Make sure your branding is "fluid" across multiple Internet platforms, advises Bonnie Cranmer, marketing director of Blue Ridge Green Media. The Internet is always changing, and your business should keep up with it.

Read the FRONT online
vbFRONT.com

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


That's not to say traditional advertising outlets do not have a place. You can repurpose television, radio and print ads online and in seminars and workshops. Any TV commercial, for example, can be easily posted to YouTube.

"The more often you upload fresh content to multiple platforms, the higher your level of perceived influence," says Bonnie. "Search engines will pick up your content, and you will look great to your professional peers."

Be sure to capture your space on Google Places, YouTube, Facebook business pages, Yahoo, Bing. Find where your target audience spends the most time and be there. Consider Pinterest and Instagram to add visual appeal.

Focus on helping people: Always look for opportunities to provide solutions to your target audience. "Help first, sell later," is the motto of Leslie Coty, president of Coty Connections.

"You can gain fans on Facebook by offering them something of value, such as a white paper," says Leslie. "Many people will trade their email address on your web site to receive valuable information."

Once you've received qualified leads, you can market to them through e-mail. Just remember, "Help first, sell later." 

Small Business

By Samantha Steidle

Executive Summary:
Some tips for taking the next step with your new small business.

Joy Sutton



- Former WDBJ TV Anchor/Reporter
- TV Host, "The Hour of Joy"
- Howard University and Virginia Tech graduate
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Dan Smith

Brandon Bell: "They want more money out there than will flow in stocks."

Bull vs. bear: Proceed with caution >

Executive Summary:

Trying to figure out the market these days is not an easy task.

By Gene Marrano

The Dow hit 14,000 recently for the first time in several years—but don't rush out and put all your money in the stock market just yet. That's the opinion of several

financial advisors in the Roanoke area. Use caution: what goes up will come down, at least in the short term.

Former State Senator Brandon Bell looks at stock market variations and investments through a political lens at times. "It's riskier then it was 10 years ago," says the president of Bell Wealth Management.

"There are a lot of things going on with the Federal Reserve and government—[even] manipulation indirectly. They want more money out there than will flow in stocks, [which are] generally the capital that banks use to loan money."

Most investors are probably too heavily invested in stocks relative to the amount of risk they should be taking, says Bell.

"What's the least risky thing we can get equity-type returns from?" Bell likes to ask. That's better

than trying to "knock one out of the park." Most of Bell's clients are happy with an eight percent return and less exposure.

With little return on CDs or money markets these days some investors are willing to take a bit of extra risk, but Bell wonders what would happen if the stock market took another 40 percent dip. Safer stocks might include utilities, health care, agricultural, manufacturing—things that people must have—but all stocks can have their ups and downs. For the more timid, U.S. Treasury bills or bonds are safer.

Lee Brooks of Ameriprise usually steers clients to mutual funds or exchange-traded



Dan Smith

Lee Brooks: “How much volatility makes them really uncomfortable?”

funds. The key to investing he notes is understanding several variables: how long do clients want to be in a particular market, what is their age and their tolerance for investment risk? “How much volatility makes them really uncomfortable?” asks Brooks. He advises that dividend-producing stocks typically are better long-term investments.

A broader range of strategies can soften the blow. Long term trends in either direction—up or down—“bothers,” many investors

adds Brooks, but is necessary at times to correct the market.

Investing in down times—and in the right stock—can lead to some bargains. Balancing a portfolio also allows investors to ride out a slumping stock market. Brooks reminds clients that the Dow Jones Industrial Average only tracks 30 companies.

In “really good times,” more aggressive investors may want to have as much as 60

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and whole-heartedly recommend it! ”

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Dan Smith

Whitney Brown: "It's always about finding that balance, because there will be ups and downs."


percent of their investment portfolios in the stock market, according to Whitney Brown of Dixon Hubbard Fineour & Brown, with the balance in bonds and cash. In poor market conditions they may drop to the 40-50 percent range.

Now is a good time to be aggressive says Brown: "The market is in good shape from all of our research." He also believes there should be stability in the way a client invests. "It's always about finding that balance, because there will be ups and downs."

Look for quality companies with strong balance sheets and a steady track record of earnings growth. Stocks that regularly pay dividends, while not a necessity, are

a good sign. Brown has been in the business for about 15 years; the essentials are the same but there is more regulation and newer investment vehicles to consider.

Better to get in when the market when it is low, cashing out when it's high. That's counterintuitive to the way most people think says Bell, who urges clients "not to get crazy," and throw long-term plans out the window.

Without "true growth in the economy," and the government "playing games," it's hard for Bell to figure out what a company—or its stock—is truly worth these days. A lot of investors are having the same problem. 

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Liv Kiser

John Loeschen: "I've eliminated all of that intermediate stuff that people hate about law firms."

'A different sort of cat' >

Executive Summary:

John Loeschen is one lawyer who doesn't fit the mold.

By Randolph Walker

How is John Loeschen different from most lawyers? Let us count the ways: Doesn't have the big office with a receptionist. Doesn't wear a suit, except in court. Doesn't attend Roanoke Bar Association meetings. Website URL (www.lawyersinroanoke.com) doesn't include his name. Has a Yahoo email. Answers the phone himself.

"I'm a different sort of cat when it comes to how I do my law practice," he says.

For this profile, Loeschen met the interviewer in a conference room at the Roanoke Business Lounge, where he pays \$200 a month for shared office space. "You get all the things you need in an office without all the cost of an office," he says. "I'm getting everything except a dedicated office. I don't think I ever met in an office with a client. We always met

in the conference room. So it works out really well. The only downside is parking."

There's no relaying of messages. "Nobody wants to talk to the secretary, they want to talk to lawyers. My clients can call me anytime," says John. "It's actually more efficient for me to take the call. The old model doesn't really work. I've eliminated all of that intermediate stuff that people hate about law firms. My clients think it's great. They say, 'you don't operate like a regular office does.'"

There's little need for storage because he's almost completely paperless. There's no paralegal because research and office support is outsourced. "While I lay asleep at night I've got people in India typing," smiles John.

He may be unconventional, but you can't say law doesn't run in his blood. His father, Terry, is a retired lawyer. After earning his J.D. at Southern Illinois University, John returned to his native Iowa to practice with his father.

When the elder Loeschen retired, John and his then-wife decided to escape from the snow. "I looked all over the country and this was the spot," he says. "We wanted a change of climate, good weather, all the things we have here. I got out of the plane [at Roanoke Regional

Airport] and thought, this was it. I stood out on the tarmac and I saw all those mountains and all those trees in full color. It was the height of the fall season.”

John rented an office from Ferris & Eakin, for whom he has nothing but praise. “Excellent people; helped me get my practice up and running, introduced me around, told me how things work in Virginia.”


Courts function differently in different states. In Virginia, John discovered, “it’s very conservative and very proper. Ray Ferris and Lenden Eakin were saying, ‘no, you can’t say it this way.’”

John travels a lot in his practice, which is 40 percent personal injury, 30 percent labor and employment law, 20 percent family law, and 10 percent aviation cases, such as plane crashes, planes colliding on the runway and mechanical failures.

He’s a member of the bar in Virginia and Iowa. In other state courts, “I will pair up with an attorney in the local district—you have to have a local counsel to sponsor you—and I’ll try the case.”

When not traveling, John works out of the Business Lounge or his home office in Salem.

He’s 50 and has four kids. His wife, Jill Loeschen, a CPA, has three. John’s parents are nearby, too, having left Arizona for the quality of life in the Roanoke Valley. “My parents said, ‘Wow, this is a great place.’ They fell in love with it.”

Although he’s put down roots, John Loeschen still doesn’t fit the mold of the Virginia lawyer: “A lot of lawyers think I’m a maverick and I’m way out there, which works to my advantage because they underestimate me.” 

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Liv Kiser

Estelle Avner directs the Bradley Free Clinic in Roanoke.

those lacking benefits are from working families whose income is less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Limit (FPL).

A number of professionals from the medical community are donating their time and talent to Free Clinics in and around the Valley to assure a brighter, healthier future for the uninsured.

Estelle Avner, Roanoke's Bradley Free Clinic executive director, says "We do not have trouble attracting and retaining new and long-term volunteers. In addition to providing free critical health care that includes medical exams, diagnoses, specialty referrals, dental care, and pharmacy, one of the main themes coming from the volunteers is the idea that after doing the real work here, it is also fun."

The Bradley Free Clinic is primarily funded through donations from individual residents in the Roanoke Valley. In the Free Clinic's 38 year history patients

have benefited from health care services valued at 55 million dollars.

"Many of our patients would tell you," says Avner, "that this clinic has kept them alive either through providing medications, appropriate imaging services, surgery, and access to health care professionals including specialists."

The Bradley clinic operates on the premise: "To keep people healthy enough to remain working, off of welfare, and away from bankruptcy." Patients are not required to pay for services but donations are accepted. Avner, who has dedicated 39 years as an director, says: "Our patients work and are

Filling a hole in medical care >

Executive Summary:

Region's free clinics provided a vital service to the poor.

By Melanie Huber

A recent study done by the Virginia Health Care Foundation shows that 14.6 percent of the total population in Roanoke County lacks medical insurance. The majority of



Liv Kiser

Nurse Nancy Ferris of the Bradley Free Clinic takes the blood pressure of a patient.

trying, often against great odds, to remain in the workforce to keep their families intact and to stay away from welfare. Their hopefulness, courage, and appreciation of this care are addictive to those of us who are privileged enough to be partnering with them."

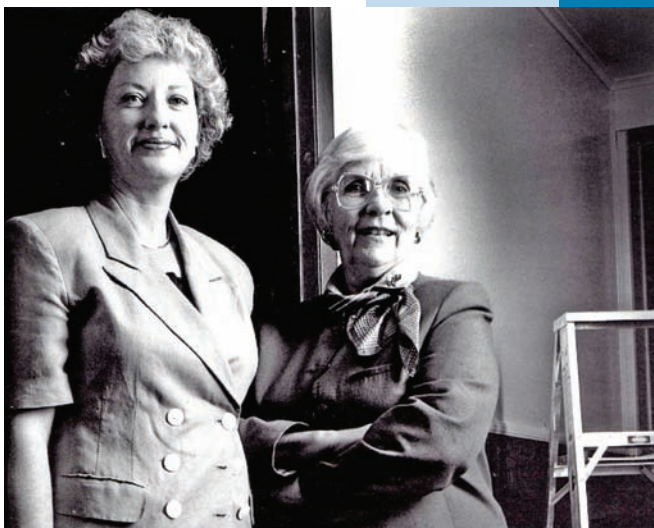
According to Interim Franklin County Free Clinic Director Ellen Holland, her county

has one of Virginia's highest populations of uninsured people (18.5 percent—more than 10,800 people.) In 2012 the clinic had 1,200 active patients, with an outreach program to provide sick calls to Franklin County Jail and The Women's Shelter.

"Operating funds come from several grant sources: Virginia Association of Free Clinics, Virginia Health Care Foundation, United



Dr. Tiffany Powell at the Franklin Free Clinic.



Jeanne Bernard and Neva Hart at the founding of the Franklin Clinic in 1992.

Way, Franklin County/Rocky Mount, Amistead Foundation, Foundation for Roanoke Valley, and others," says Holland. "Donations from local individuals, businesses, and churches also play a major role in funding. One or two fundraising events, such as the annual Clinic Classic Horse Show, supplement our income."

FCFC has one dental clinic visit each month, sponsored by the Franklin County Health Department and staffed by a volunteer dentist. It only provides extractions. The registration fee is \$25 and the waiting list is several months long.

In majority, the patients seen at FCFC are middle aged and have one or more chronic health issues such as diabetes or high blood pressure. Providers daily deal with sore throats, rashes and other typical ailments.

The New River Valley Free Clinic covers a large area with a population of 180,000 and 18 percent uninsured. With 450 volunteer physicians, nurse practitioners, specialists, dentists and local citizens volunteering, Michelle Brauns, executive director, says "Demand has steadily increased the past three years.

"In 2011, we saw a 25 percent increase in the number of new patients enrolling at

Contact information >

Bradley Free Clinic


www.bradleyfreeclinic.com
1240 3rd St SW Roanoke, VA 24016
(540) 344-5156

Free Clinic of Franklin County

www.fcfreeclinic.org
490 South Main Street
Rocky Mount, VA 24151
(540) 489-7502

Free Clinic of the New River Valley

www.nrv.freeclinic.org
215 Roanoke St, Christiansburg, VA 24073
(540) 381-0820

the Clinic. These individuals are not simply seeking check-ups and flu shots. These are folks who have lost their jobs, and with their jobs also have lost their health insurance. They find themselves desperately looking for work, often barely scraping by and in need of a true medical home for chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiac and respiratory illnesses." 



Doing lab work at New River Clinic.



Taking blood pressure at the New River Clinic.

Tech Scoop

Additive manufacturing: It's next >

Executive Summary:

Another toy for the boys, this time one that actually makes something from nothing.

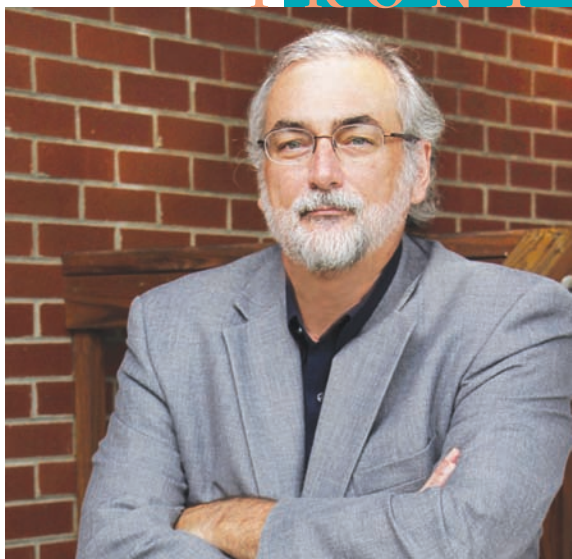
By Michael Miller

Growing up in the 1960s in a small town in West Virginia, I had a lot of opportunity to exercise my creativity. That's because we didn't have a lot of expensive toys to play with, so we generally had to make our own fun. I recall the summer day when one of the neighborhood kids figured out that you could tie a handkerchief into a parachute with a little common twine, and attached it to a suitably weighted plastic soldier and, voila! A paratrooper.

Now we have a new technology that suggests a revolution in do-it-yourself everything, including toys. The process is called 3D printing, and it's quickly displacing many older manufacturing techniques, especially machining and molding.

The process begins with a 3D computer model of an object. The model is input to a special machine called a 3D printer that exactly duplicates the program, forming a finished version within a few minutes or a few hours, depending on the complexity and materials used.

Additive manufacturing, as this process is called, has been around for at least 20 years, but early versions were very expensive, requiring perhaps \$10,000 to make a plastic copy of a 3D drawing package. Technology improvements have now led to desktop machines that cost only a few thousand dollars, but which are capable of cranking out complex widgets or trinkets at the push of a button, and for pennies worth of material.




Michael Miller

The Virginia Tech engineering department has even set up a student-accessible 3D printer called the DreamVendor, in which students can input their project drawing package via a thumb drive, and out pops a prototype of their senior project. Although DreamVendor looks more like a carnival attraction than a serious manufacturing tool, the quality of student projects, if not their grades, will no doubt be significantly higher.

There are a number of makers of 3D printers now, but the newest entry on the stage is 3Doodler. 3Doodler is a pen that lets you "draw" an object using the same plastic found in the MakerBot desktop replicators. You just push a button on the side of the pen, and draw in plastic "ink" that sets immediately. You want a model of the Eiffel Tower? Just draw one in space on your desk with a 3Doodler pen.

The 3Doodler team ran a Kickstarter project to raise \$30,000 to set up manufacturing of the product, but ended up with nearly \$2 million in pledges. I have no doubt that you will see these things everywhere next holiday season. I hope somebody gets me one.

In the meantime, I am ruminating on all the fun/trouble my 10-year-old childhood friends and I would have had/gotten into if we had had one of these. No doubt we would all have spent most of our lives grounded, and deservedly so.

But oh, it would have been so worth it. 

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Growing internationally >

Executive Summary:

The state of Virginia is eager to help companies like Carter Machinery in Salem seeking to expand international sales.

By Randolph Walker

Somebody out there needs a 785B off-road truck. Sam Hampton's got plenty for sale.

They're big. They hold 500 gallons of diesel (cost close to \$2,000 to gas up) and haul 150 tons of dirt and rock. The 3,158-cubic inch, 12-cylinder engine puts out 1,290 horsepower. The tires are 10 feet tall.

Expertly rebuilt by the mechanics at Carter Machinery in Salem, these Cat heavy trucks go for \$1.6- \$1.7 million.

The buyers won't necessarily be in the United States. They might be mine equipment managers in the growing economies of South America, South Africa or Australia.

Hoping to expand international sales, Carter enrolled in VALET, a program of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. VALET stands for Virginia Leaders in Export Trade.

"It's a wonderful program that assists Virginia



Randolph Walker

This Cat 785B truck isn't the world's largest, says Sam Hampton, director of marketing at Carter Machinery. In fact, it's only "medium."

companies with their desires to grow internationally," says Sam Hampton, director of marketing at Carter, "and it's flexible enough that regardless of what your industry is, they've designed it in such a way that it can be tailored to your specific needs."



Northside High School

Smart administrators have warmed to geothermal systems.

Geothermal energy has become a hot topic for schools and public spaces. That's because schools can reduce costs, achieve greater budget stability, and demonstrate the value of alternative technologies by harnessing naturally occurring energy sources.



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Spectrum Design has completed 10 geothermal systems projects to date. The most recent are:

- Northside High School
Roanoke County
- Cave Spring Middle School
Roanoke County
- Maury River Middle School
Rockbridge County
- Alleghany High School
Alleghany County



What we do day in and day out is help Virginia companies sell overseas.

—Paul Grossman, VED

At any one time, there are 50 companies in VALET. Carter enrolled in January, 2013. “Graduates” of the two-year program include John C. Nordt Company, Foot Levelers, Ply Gem, TMEIC Corporation, Virginia Transformer and PESCO-BEAM.

A recent ownership change has spurred Carter's interest. “We've been doing business internationally but it's never been part of our strategic goals to grow that base,” Sam says.

At the introductory meeting in Richmond, the VEDP helped Carter analyze bills of lading in certain foreign markets to get a handle on the competition. Carter plans to use this and other data, plus the VEDP's expertise, “to help us scope and refine the marketplace to narrow down and focus on areas that give us the best opportunity to win,” Sam says.

The cost to Carter? Nothing. In fact, participants receive \$15,000 to offset certain expenses. Sam plans to put grant money toward converting Carter's website into a virtual showroom. “It's important for us to put our best foot forward on this website. That money's going to help us jump start this process,” he says.

The VALET program started in 2002. Funded by the General Assembly, its budget is “about \$500,000 plus, including company reimbursements and administrative salaries for two managers,” according to Paul Grossman,



Carter Machinery

vice president of international trade for VEDP.

Acceptance is competitive. Companies must have at least 20 employees, \$2 million in sales and be profitable in the U.S. market, and must have spent at least \$20,000 in international marketing prior to joining the program. Those are the minimums. The average participant has \$34 million in sales, 130 employees, and has been in business more than 30 years.

There are four required meetings annually, with additional webinars. Participants must




Marketing team at Carter: Brent Whitlow, Kelly McAteer, Amy Looney, Sam Hampton, Matt Johnson, James Richardson, Keith Harrison, Hollie Wingate, Mary Minnix.

complete an international business plan before receiving any grant money. "They have to engage. If they don't engage, we kick 'em out of the program," says Grossman.

Companies get a limited amount of free service from legal, accounting, and banking experts, as well as free advice from VEDP staff. "What we do day in and day out is help Virginia companies sell overseas," Grossman says. "That's knowledge we bring to them as they execute their business plan."

The average participant increases

international sales 44 percent over two years. "At the end of the program, what we hear is that they appreciate the discipline we brought to their international business program," says Grossman. "They learn how to be proactively methodical in the pursuit of international business." 

Companies interested in finding out whether they qualify for VALET should see exportvirginia.org or contact Paul Ehrich, international trade manager for VEDP's South Central region, at (540) 772-3905 or pehrich@yesvirginia.org.



Dan Smith

Owner Tom Anderton (right) with President Jeffrey Goldstein inside the store.

Big changes at Sam's! (Kinda) >

Executive Summary:

At Sam's on the Market in Roanoke not much changes and even when it does, it doesn't.

By Dan Smith

You want change? Here's change, old school style:

Jeffrey Goldstein was recently named president of Sam's on the Market, a retail clothing store in Roanoke. His new duties? None. Same job, but "we're not real big on titles," he admits. Meanwhile, owner Tom Anderton retires. The difference for him? Not so much. He's still the go-to guy for schmoozing customers and he's in the building three days a week, watching

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Jeffrey run things, talking about what needs to be done face-to-face.

Not much changes at Sam's. Hasn't since it was founded by Sam Shapiro in 1922 and was passed among his three sons after that until Tom bought it in 1979. Sam's was on Salem Avenue then and was moved to Market Street.

Sam and his boys lived to ripe old age and many of the employees over the years have lived long lives, mostly within the confines of the City Market walls of Sam's. Tom's 63 and Jeff's 57 and they are not exactly old-timers on the staff.

Tom bought the Army-Navy Sales Company on Campbell Avenue after a year of owning Sam's and merged the two in 1984. Jeffrey came with the deal.

Not a lot has changed at Sam's over the years, regardless of who owned it or who ran it. Clothing fads have come and gone (remember the colorful Dickie's pants a few decades ago or the Carhart craze?), but Sam's has specialized in providing uniforms, primarily to emergency personnel, as the core of its business. That would represent 75-80 percent of sales, Tom says. The store does alterations and embroidery and it still sells overalls, wool socks, stocking caps and the like, but it no longer sells underwear. "We can't compete with Walmart and the big boxes on things like that," says Tom. The window displays are not exactly straight from Paris.

Sam's is the very definition of the niche market retailer and Sam's knows its niche well. "We could survive away from the Market," says Jeffrey, "but it wouldn't



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Dan Smith

Sam's on the Market from the outside.


be Sam's on the Market. Sam's at Valley View Mall doesn't have the same ring."

"All we need is a loading dock and we can take care of the bulk of our business," says Tom. What they're saying here is that Sam's is a rare destination store. People go to the Market to shop Sam's. Young people used to go there, but they've been replaced by the tourists from the Hotel Roanoke. Those customers are older these days, like just about everything at Sam's.

Tom is still the front man for sales to police and fire departments and word of mouth remains the best recommendation. "Alderson, W.Va., buys uniforms from us because it talked to the emergency people at White Sulphur Springs, who knew we did the uniforms for the Greenbrier,"

says says Jeffrey. The bigger emergency departments bid for their uniforms and Sam's is often the low bid because, says Tom, "We don't make money when we sell. We make it on the front end when we buy. You buy it right, price it right and you don't have to mark it down."

This also leads to the conclusion, insists Tom, that "we're happy with what we are. We've had opportunities to expand, but that comes with headaches we don't need. We can assure service and I don't to do business any other way."

So what's all the title change about? Not much. Just making what's apparent official. That would be for other people. Those at Sam's know who they are and what they're doing. 



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Dan Smith

John Williamson: “I have never had a job I did not enjoy.”

The disappearing executive desk >

Executive Summary:

John Williamson has anticipated his retirement from RGC Resources for some time. Now it's time to get serious.

By Dan Smith

Now, the real work begins for John Williamson.

John recently retired after 21 profitable years with RGC Resources—the gas company—in Roanoke and he has a plan. A developing plan, let's call it.

John's just 58, a bit younger than the normal retirement age, but he's been planning for this for quite some time. The stock market rumblings of late delayed his decision for a year and he will continue with RGC (he's president and CEO) for a while to make the transition smooth,

but the real work of retirement awaits.

John S. D'Orazio was appointed president and CEO of Roanoke Gas Company in October, and John will continue as chairman of the gas company and chairman, president and CEO of RGC Resources on a part-time basis until early 2014. So there's still some time to make adjustments, while having a direct effect on his long-time business calling, which earned him a spot in Junior Achievement's Business Hall of Fame in 2011.

John's a native of Montvale and lives on a farm in Botetourt County, which will provide the base for his new life. He was a reluctant student early on, but wound up getting an associate's degree at Virginia Western Community College, from which grew a thirst for knowledge. He got a bachelor's from VCU and an MBA from William & Mary.

His business and government resume—outside the gas company—is extensive: county administrator for Botetourt County and Nelson County; assistant county administrator for Bedford County; manager of corporate books Bell Atlantic (now Verizon) of West Virginia; manager of financial studies Bell

Atlantic of West Virginia; and supervisor of financial studies of Bell Atlantic of Virginia (Bell Atlantic is the old name for what is now Verizon).

He has been on a number of boards of directors in the region and still serves on five. He will continue in those roles in the near future.

John says his continuing presence with RGC will continue "for roughly a year, with availability as an advisor for some period beyond that. My replacement has been my chief operating officer for 10 years." Training has been underway for some time and will continue during the next year. He says he will "dabble with a little farming [on a 12-acre farm in Botetourt County], assist a few not-for-profit organizations with fundraising or similar activities [and] I still serve on an industry association board of directors."

The boards have been meaningful for his profession and he expects "to continue significant corporate board service. I may

get a little more serious about farming [and I] anticipate doing some consulting. I may try writing." He wants to do "some adventure/excursion travel (hunting, hiking, etc.), but I don't want to over commit, so I can stay open to opportunity or development of new interests."

The planning for this retirement has been going on for quite a while, but he "did not want or seek help. It is tracking about as planned" though it is "very early in the process, so clearly too early to declare success. The stock market crash in 2008 has some affect, perhaps delaying by a year."

Over the years, John has developed a vast network of friends and business associates and "that network was significant in being asked to serve on various corporate boards, which is something I enjoy and does provide a smoother path to 'retirement,' while staying engaged with business and interesting people [and] while receiving some compensation for doing so. I have



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Dan Smith

John Williamson at the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference in February.

never asked to serve on a board; I was always recruited to serve. Being in the right place at the right time coupled with relevant experience might be" the reason behind all the requests to serve.

John's married with two daughters. Wife Marilee is a retired teacher who co-owns and co-operates a knitting and needlepoint shop in Roanoke called Yarn Explosion. Meghan is a consultant on economic development and for small businesses and Corrie, who's

in the master's program at the University of Arkansas, is a poet and college instructor.

The retirement comes at the right time for one of Roanoke's busiest and most appreciated executives. He has "always enjoyed life" he says. "However, the reason for 'retiring early' is to enjoy it more. I have never had a job I did not enjoy (some more than others of course), but I confess I would prefer being on a mountain top, in a canoe or in a garden, to sitting behind a desk." 

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University of Georgia

Robert Sumichrast: "I look forward to re-engaging with the programs that come out of Virginia Tech. It is an institution that is really well run."

When Richard Sorensen, retires as dean of the Pamplin College of Business June 30, he will have served Virginia Tech for 31 years. Under his leadership, Pamplin has become one of the premier business schools in the nation.

When Robert Sumichrast starts as dean at Pamplin July 1, he will have large shoes to fill. Despite being new to this particular position, Sumichrast has a distinguished academic career as a business school leader and as a professor at Virginia Tech.

"Dean Sorensen will be a tough act to follow," Sumichrast said. "He

'A tough act to follow' >

Executive Summary:

Robert Sumichrast, incoming dean of the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech, brings expertise and Hokie ties. He'll need it to replace Richard Sorensen.

has been an outstanding leader for over three decades. He leaves Pamplin in a very strong position, and we can build on those successes." Sumichrast earned his doctorate in management science from Clemson in 1984 and began as an assistant professor at Virginia Tech that same year. He went on to earn a full professorship and was appointed associate dean in 1996.

By **Laura Purcell**

"I look forward to coming back to a place

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where I have made great memories," Sumichrast said. He met his wife at Virginia Tech and they were married in the War Memorial Chapel. "From a professional perspective, I look forward to re-engaging with the programs that come out of Virginia Tech. It is an institution that is really well run."

Sumichrast left Blacksburg in 2003 to serve as dean of Ourso College of Business at Louisiana State University, and in 2007 moved to Athens, Ga., to become dean of the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business.

"I come in with some distance between me and Virginia Tech," he says. That allows him some perspective. "Having worked at other state flagship land-grant institutions provides me a different way of looking for opportunities."


For Sumichrast, leadership begins with listening. "I have found that where ever I am, there are smart, thoughtful people who want to help and share their ideas. I plan to spend some time listening, to assess the environment, and then use that information to create a strategic plan for the college."

He also takes into account voices from outside the university. "I feel it is important to have a close relationship with the business community, and to listen to them about

where business education should be headed. Pamplin also has a strong advisory board, and working with that group will be an important step in articulating where we want to go."

For example, he modernized the marketing curriculum at the Terry College of Business based on feedback from alumni. "We had a pretty traditional marketing program," he said, "and there was a cry for a greater focus in digital marketing from the alumni advisory council. We reacted to that by hiring faculty with more of that expertise and brought in an outside speaker series. We were able to update the program in a relatively short period of time," Sumichrast said.

The most important role for Pamplin, according to Sumichrast, is educating students, especially undergraduates. "Students are paying a lot more for education, more than they were ten years ago. They feel that they should be given a higher level of service than what might have been expected when I was a student."

"We're giving an education to students who will spend their time in careers that don't exist today. They need to come out of their degree program with the specialized skills to get that first job, but we need to be sure we are educating students who can adapt to the future. We want Pamplin alumni to be able to think critically, do research, survive and thrive as the world around them changes." 



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Rachael Garrity

Dick Arnold: "In truth, they are anything but ordinary, and that's the point."

Leading Lights: 'The only thing to do' >

Executive Summary:
What businesses can do when tragedy strikes.

By Rachael Garrity

Volunteering is an act of heroism on a grand scale. And it matters profoundly.

It does more than help people beat the odds; it changes the odds.

—Former President Bill Clinton

For local business leaders who wish to do their part when tragedy strikes a community, be it from senseless acts of violence like those in Blacksburg, Aurora, and Newtown, or natural disasters like Katrina or Sandy, it's not always easy to identify the most effective avenue. Creative leadership changes that.

In Blacksburg after the 2007 tragedy, the Virginia Tech German Club Alumni Foundation

(GCAF) put together a four-person committee to recommend appropriate ways to respond. Dick Arnold, one of those four, was 70 at the time, and had retired from Union Carbide Corporation, where in his capacity as director of community affairs he had put together a nationwide recognition program for employee volunteers. As he remembers it: "Several of the committee members had similar experiences, and it seemed to us appropriate to find a way to recognize the volunteers, since so many had been involved the day of and days, weeks and months after the terrible event on campus."

At the committee's recommendation, the GCAF founded the New River Valley Leading Lights, which is now entering its fifth year of operation, and Arnold serves as chairman of the steering committee.


A collaborative effort involving not only the German Club, but a number of other not-for-profit organizations—community groups, schools and universities, governmental bodies and churches—as well as individual citizens, the group recognizes efforts that it describes as "neighbors helping neighbors" in an area that includes Montgomery, Floyd, Giles and Pulaski counties, as well as Radford City.

Each April at an awards ceremony, five people receive \$1,000 each to donate to the charity of their choice. One award is for lifetime achievement, one is awarded to a college student and one to a young person.

In addition, the organization pays tribute to the work of other individuals who were nominated, usually 50 or more.

"Our materials say that we are recognizing 'ordinary citizens,'" says Arnold. "In truth, they are anything but ordinary, and that's the point. We solicit nominations from throughout the area, and our mission is to create a vital, interactive process that will go beyond the initial recognition to hoisting the idea of providing service into the spotlight for individuals and organizations alike. And, of course, none of this would be possible without the incredible support of the business community."

The collaborative element of the enterprise is obvious, when the list of corporate supporters is compiled. In addition to a variety of small business owners, funding has come from banks—First Bank and Trust, SunTrust, and National, to name the three leading ones; realtors such as Mike Eggleston of Coldwell Banker of Blacksburg; local firms such as BCR Property Management; and national companies such as Moog, Kroger and Courtyard Marriott.

Perhaps one recipient of the Leading Lights awards says it best. Among a host of other volunteer activities, Gerard "Jerry" Higgins has spent decades serving a president of the Radford/Fairlawn Daily Bread and Meals on Wheels programs. "Helping others isn't just the right thing to do," he insists, "it's the only thing. 

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Solving the downtown problem >

My View

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

Excutive Summary: *Downtown Roanoke has been such a mess for so long that we appear to be frozen about finding solutions to the huge problem. Here's a suggestion.*

We keep hearing that "it won't be long now" and maybe it won't, but try to convince the merchants on Roanoke City Market that all this disruption has been worth the trouble. Maybe you'll need to talk to them this time next year when the effect of nearly two years of constant big construction has at least slowed.

I'm not sure how the large number of renovations in a key part of Roanoke could have been averted, but my guess is that they could have been planned better by both the private and the public sectors. The center of town has looked like the reconstruction of a war zone for far too long and it has been costly. I don't think anybody has done a cost analysis and I'm not sure they will, but if you ask people trying hard to make a go of it in the center of the noise, dust, construction traffic and impossible parking, you'll get a load of anecdotal information.

We hear—and understand—of course, that the city will be better for the work, but the question right now is, "How many businesses will survive it?" That should not be a question that is asked in concert with projects to improve the city, but it necessarily is these days because there often seems to be less thought about the ripple effects of "improvements" than there should be.

This ain't new, boys and girls.

Look back to the 1970s at the ill-considered and ill-gotten destruction of an entire neighborhood and all it meant to the people in it. That's when a bottling company wiped out most of Gainesboro, an African-American neighborhood that was poor, but solid and important in the way neighborhoods should be. People watched out for each other and for their kids. They helped each other, shared meals and tall tales, made the quality of life for all of them better. The white people who thought Gainsboro was dispensable didn't understand that "poor" doesn't mean "useless."

I'm thinking that those who have disrupted downtown with the latest round of civic improvement have thought little about the process, concentrating only on the projected result. We've all paid for that oversight, none more than the merchants who have lost their stores, moved out of downtown, become disgusted with the process and lost faith in both the private and public sectors to deliver on a promise.

I would love to see Roanoke City Manager Chris Morrill call a summit of those involved in these big projects following their completion to help determine how this mess could be avoided in the future, how these types of projects could be scheduled to

continued on Page 50



Confessions from Mic >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap
from the Pub

I would say it's been a busy week, but actually it's just typical. When you work for a hotel conference room, you might think the job would be dynamic. After all, I'm meeting speakers from all over, representing all kinds of organizations, with missions and agendas from one end of the spectrum to the other. And then there is the novice presenter (usually some mid-level manager asked to address an intercompany department) versus the high-dollar professional or celebrated industry expert.

I've been here a lot of years; so maybe the speakers were more dynamic in the past. I can only speak about the last few days, because my battery runs dead in a week with all the meetings, and I simply can't remember anything before Monday.

But as far as this week—let's just say I expected more.

First up was John. I really didn't like facing him the entire time. Being up in the very front, I don't get to see the reactions from the people sitting behind me in the room. But I don't think it mattered, because they could have been sleeping. John was B-O-R-I-N-G. I have to stay awake; it's my job. But it would have been courteous of John if he at least acted like he was awake. John read notes. John didn't even bother with a visual presentation. John spoke in monotone. The only way I could get through this meeting was by using my imagination. I pictured John's boss forcing poor John to give this presentation at the hotel. I imagined the same cold, dead body, flat face, and glazed eyes of John, looking back at his boss, despising his job even as he reluctantly accepts his fate. At least there's some drama in my imaginations. I'm not happy with John's boss. You have to know the guy knew better than to ask John to do this. If I was allowed to speak here, instead of just taking in the words, I would tell John to do one of two things: Don't give a presentation. Or just quit your job and move on to something else. You do no one any good with your lack of enthusiasm, passion, caring... life.

The next speaker I listened to was Sabrina. I perked up when Sabrina approached the lectern. Attractive. Sharp dresser. She must be a pro. Nope. I immediately sensed her fear. Not only was she obviously nervous, she projected that anxiety, filling the whole room with stress. Being nervous would not have been a problem; displaying it in every possible way is what ruined this meeting. Apologizing and admitting her incompetency? Shuffling papers? Trembling voice? At least fake it, dear woman. And the worst? I got to breathe in the hefty alcohol-infused air right from Sabrina's lips. A little wine, cocktail, or small libation before a speech isn't a big deal. But methinks this lady depended on a bottle to fortify her presentation. If you're already nervous, anxious, unprepared, inexperienced, or just aren't sure about what you're doing, I'm pretty sure alcohol isn't going to make it better in this case. Not only is Sabrina's audience unsettled, embarrassed and annoyed—but now I need a bath.

The third speaker was no better. And that's odd. Jack was the

continued on Page 50




Smith / My View

from Page 48

cause less damage to those who operate businesses and those who frequent those businesses.

I have been a downtown rat since I moved to Roanoke in the early 1970s. I love it down there. I've most often had an office in the center of the city and an unofficial office in the restaurants on City Market, where I ran into more stories than you can possibly imagine. At its best, it is a lively, inviting, lovely part of our city, bustling with activity. At its worst in recent months and years, it has been a hazard, a nuisance, a hassle, a traffic headache, a threat to all the businesses in the area.

I simply can't imagine why those running the projects didn't see this coming or, if they did, didn't react to it in a positive way, massaging schedules and creating alternatives for those working or shopping downtown. Solutions must be a consideration for the long term. And the summit could emphasize that and furnish some answers to the easily-identifiable problems. 

Field / On Tap

from Page 49

professional. Flown in from Chicago. Paid the big bucks. The audience sitting behind me this evening was the upper crust from this entire side of the state. Of course Jack doesn't wear a name tag, because everyone in the world knows him—but I'm guessing his last name must be Ass. That's how he acted. He may have impressed some in the crowd, but a total lack of humility doesn't mean you have to have a total lack of manners and decency. Jack insulted this very place he was invited to address, by making it very clear who he is and where he comes from is much more important and relevant. Not cool. But the worst infraction was when Jack was asked to take questions from the audience. He sneered at the few people brave enough to raise their hands. He made a point to demonstrate everyone else's lack of knowledge on the subject. And he acted like one of those professional athletes who struts too much after scoring a goal (which is in fact, what they are supposed to be doing).

Like Sabrina and her alcohol, a little bravado is acceptable on select occasions; we can even applaud exceptional performance. But acting like a Jack A. does not create an experience others want to carry away. Jack A. forgot that he is actually supposed to be serving the very people who have given him their time to listen. I found myself wanting Mr. A to step away.

Okay, I'm getting a bit run down... here's what happened with the remaining presenters this week:

Murray. OMG, he actually READ the exact words right off every PowerPoint slide! This is the worst. Murray didn't even need to be there. We can read the damn slides if that's all you're going to do. And a lot faster than you can speak them. So, GO AWAY Murray.


Charlene. What state is she from? Speed-reading is okay, but not speed-speaking. SLOW DOWN Charlene! People are missing half your words, and I'm not a fan of your spit all over me.

Blake. Did Blake even know he was supposed to speak? Talk about unprepared. But I have to say, he wasn't nervous. Mild-mannered, he even smiled and laughed a lot. But he gave us absolutely NOTHING of value. I'm not even part of that industry, and I didn't learn a thing.

Susan. A dynamo for sure. It's far worse to not connect with your audience, I know; but I now think it's possible to over-engage. First of all, Susan grabs me. Hard. I'm whisked around the room, while she's jumping and screaming and singing and crying. Holy roller, Batman, where am I? Is this a hotel conference room or a canvass tent by a bonfire? As dramatic (and downright scary) as this is, methinks the people here will forget the whole purpose within just a few short days due to the lack of any real substance.

And that's my week from the past few days. Seven speakers. A lot of time. A lot of effort. Another typical working week for me, but not really a lot to show for it.

Maybe what we actually need is a little less effort. And more attention. GIVE something of value. And DON'T waste people's time.

I'm going to get charged up again, now; that's my job. I hope next week is better. 

Letters

On the Hard Ship

Powerful issue! They're all good, but this one ["Working through Hardships;" March 2013 cover story], right now, really resonates with me. Thanks for all you do to enlighten.

Heidi Kettler
Roanoke

I thought your cover story this month was terrific and inspiring, just as the story's subtitle says.

Mark Young
Blue Ridge

Good lord that piece is great. Read this, not because I'm blessed to be included, but because it's superb and real and encouraging, not matter who or where you are.

Pam Rickard
Roanoke

Fabulous article!

Karen Dillon
Roanoke

Your words are such a gift to this community!

Gloria Swann
Lynchburg

Clarification

Virginia's Blue Ridge is a branding initiative of The Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau, and not the newly-named organization as asserted in the February FRONT story on Meeting Places ("Mastering the Meeting").

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“”
Clients spot insincerity very quickly.

— Page 21

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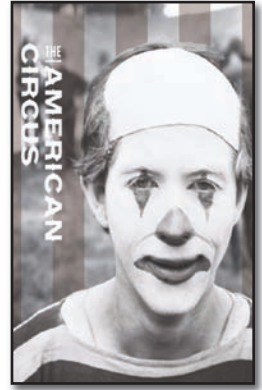
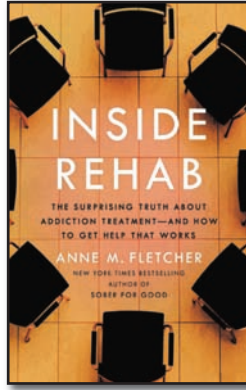
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Books @ the FRONT >

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 editrdan@msn.com



Rehab reappraisal

Anne Fletcher's *Inside Rehab: The Surprising Truth about Addiction Treatment—and How To get Help that Works* (Viking) probably can't be classified as a groundbreaking work, but it most certainly is an important one. In this work, she takes a close look at the rehab industry, from the celebrity facilities to those dealing with the garden variety drunk and finds most of them seriously lacking in focus, staff, philosophy and effectiveness.

There have been grumblings within AA (of which I have been a member for nearly 20 years) and elsewhere for some time now about a more holistic approach to treatment than simply group therapy of a disease that baffles the medical profession, when that profession takes the time to pay any attention at all. *Inside Rehab* examines what's wrong and how it can be repaired in simple and direct prose that gets to the heart of the matter. It's a book well worth reading if you or a loved one is in the grip of one addiction or another.

—Dan Smith

Looking at the pictures

Yale Press has a couple of spectacular new books that will captivate those of you with a historic interest in two of our most popular topics: the circus and the Civil War. *The American Circus*, edited by Susan Weber, Kenneth Ames and Matthew Whitmann, is an exhaustive look—in words and many, many pictures—of that fascinating topic. And *The Civil War and American Art* by Eleanor Jones Harvey, senior curator the Smithsonian American Art Museum, is one of many dozens of Civil War picture books, but it's the first I've seen dealing with the art of the era from a scholarly perspective.

These are big, bulky, expensively printed (and expensive) books meant for your coffee table, but they are far more than that. Each is absorbing and written with a high level of expertise.

The American Circus is a collection of 17 longish essays, richly illustrated that examine a variety of circus issues, ranging from elephants, posters, music and clowns to parades, health of the performers and the Americanization of the institution.

The Civil War art collection doesn't offer any surprises, but it puts into perspective both the state of interpretation on canvas and the developing new art form of the photograph, which was often used simply as a guide for drawings—as in Harper's, for example. The book is based upon an exhibition of the same name, one that deeply examines the depth and breadth of the work on and around the way, reflective of both the reality of the war and the hope that better days lay ahead.

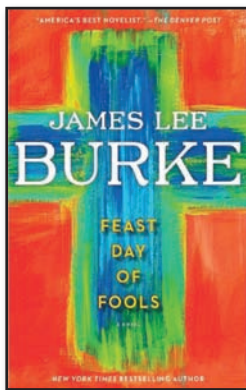
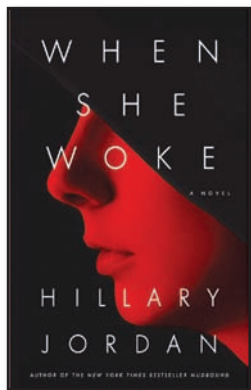
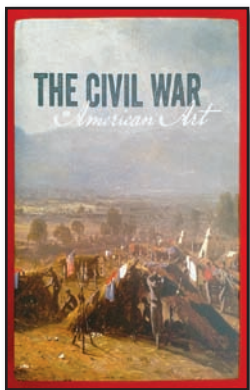
Together or separately, these are impressive works that deserve attention.

—Dan Smith

A look at the future

Hillary Jordan's *When She Woke* (Algonquin Books) takes place in a post-apocalyptic American that has suffered The Second Great Depression and the Great Scourge, a STD that has made human propagation so tenuous that the Sanctity of Life Amendment has been added to the Constitution and vetted by the Supreme Court, and abortion is murder.

It is also a place where the government is so broke it no longer imprisons criminals, but



"Chromes" them, genetically alters them so that their skin is either bright red, blue, yellow, orange, to indicate their crime, and then sets them free among the population. Hannah Payne wakes up red, after having been convicted of having an abortion.

While Jordan is riffing off *The Scarlet Letter*, and there's plenty of discussion of faith and sin and the nature of religion, it's just as much about prejudice and how we treat people who look and act different from us.

—Becky Hepler

Another winner

James Lee Burke's 30th novel, like the 29 before it, is a wonder of American writing. Burke—to my mind—is the best of all living American novelists and I've always thought it a shame that he dwells in the crime genre and doesn't really get into hefty stuff. With *Feast Day of Fools* (Simon & Schuster), he breaks out of that to a degree. This is a crime novel; it does contain some of his previous characters; it is full of some of the worst nightmares you'll ever imagine and some of the best sidekicks (Pam Tibbs is a woman's woman's woman) and it takes on some meaty issues (like immigration). Burke will also make you laugh.

The hero here is one Hackberry Holland, a South Texas sheriff and former ACLU lawyer who is—as my old pal Jimmy Gladden used to call himself—"a liberal with a gun." He knows about guns, but Holland also knows about people's rights, about tolerance, understanding and giving marginal lawbreakers a break.

In *Feast Day*, though, Holland's feet are held to the fire by several bad, bad boys, including the can't-be-killed psycho Preacher Jack Collins and

the Russian crazyman Sholokov, and he winds up having to work closely with the very worst of them. Fast-paced and luminously written. Nobody in our country in the past 50 years could turn a sentence like James Lee Burke.

—Dan Smith

Artist v. Cog

Seth Godin is easy to read. Easy to follow. That's why he has gobs of followers. The man talks to everyone. *Linchpin: Are You Indispensable?* (Portfolio/Penguin; 2010) is no exception. The book gets right to it: there's one idea where Karl Marx and Adam Smith agreed—our society is comprised of two divisions, management and labor. Godin proposes a third: the linchpin. This new classification is the result of economic evolution. Many of us see the linchpin as the independent contractor. Godin prefers to call him an artist with a gift. In fact, two of Godin's bibliographies used for this book (by Lewis Hyde and Marcel Mauss) have the same title: *The Gift*. In any case, *Linchpin* is a protest against what we were all trained to become: a cog. But you can break from the machinery if "your art is important enough to overcome the resistance you face."

Another smart-sassy-success-seminar-type contribution from Mr. Godin. Filled with snappy headers and jazzy illustrations on every page. Preachy over practical—but a good one at that.

—Tom Field

(The reviewers: Becky Hepler is a librarian and a freelance writer who lives in Newport. Tom Field is FRONT publisher. Dan Smith is editor of FRONT.)

GKAD Year 1 >

Gwyn Gilliam and **Lora Katz** take a moment out of their first anniversary party at their office on Campbell Avenue in Roanoke March 1 to pose for a photo. They opened Gilliam-Katz Architecture and Design a year ago and report that things are going swimmingly.



Dan Smith



Richfield

Richfield Rehab >

Representatives from **Richfield** and the community cut ribbon on new Rehab Center at Richfield on March 5 in Roanoke. From left to right: Pete Larkin from the office of Congressman Bob Goodlatte, Roanoke County Supervisor Joe 'Butch' Church, Richfield Retirement Community CEO Ray Fisher, Richfield Chairman of the Board Stewart Bruce, Roanoke County Vice Chairman Charlotte Moore, Angie Hall from the office of Congressman Morgan Griffith, and Salem Mayor Randy Foley.

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



Scrabble for literacy >

A full house of 50 teams (150 players) crowded Fitzpatrick Hall at the Jefferson Center on the Ides of March to play Scrabble for the benefit of Blue Ridge Literacy. It was a record turnout for a single playing.



Penelope in Daleville >

Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce helped Penelope celebrate its new store opening on March 5 at Botetourt Commons in Daleville. Also recognizing its 25th anniversary, Penelope, offers ladies clothing, jewelry and accessories in eight locations across the state. Photo: Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce



Coming Up...



May 2013 Real Estate

In May, we'll see if real estate is on a distinct comeback trail. And to what extent it's being led by consumer need, a strengthening economy, and banks, builders, architects and others throughout the industry who are driving it.



June 2013 Weddings

There seems to be more magazines and special publications devoted to WEDDINGS than ever before—but the FRONT will bring you people who depend on weddings for their livelihood. A business perspective in June: the perfect month for it.



FRONTguide

The FRONTguide is now available at vbFRONT.com. Not just a book-of-lists or directory. In classic and progressive FRONTstyle, we're presenting the businesses, products and services you need most at your fingertips. Compact and easy to use. It's like having your own little black book! An evergreen 24/7/365 online directory, we continue to build lists and add sponsors. To be a part, contact FRONTadvertising today!



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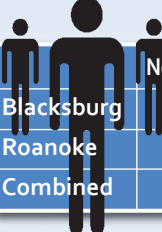
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The economic recovery in the Roanoke and New River Valleys rolls on. Home prices are up. Individuals and institutions are buying. And fewer people are filing initial unemployment claims.

Unemployment/Employment

January 2013 **unemployment rates** for the Roanoke and Blacksburg Metropolitan Statistical Areas were unavailable at the time this column was written, but December rates were down from a year ago. The New River Valley's unemployment rate in December was identical to Virginia's and the rate for the combined region fell at a faster pace (down 9.6 percent) than the state's (down 8.5 percent) over the year.



UNEMPLOYMENT RATES			
	Nov. 2011	Nov. 2012	Dec. 2012
Blacksburg	5.9%	5.4%	5.4%
Roanoke	6.3%	5.6%	5.7%
Combined	6.2%	5.5%	5.6%

Initial unemployment claims – perhaps an indicator of future unemployment rates – also are down for the region. For Week 8 of 2013 (February 15-21), new claims fell by 23.0 percent, besting the state's 20.1 percent drop. The Roanoke MSA's initial claims fell by 28.0 percent, while the Blacksburg MSA dropped by 7.3 percent.

INITIAL UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS	
Week 8 2012	Week 8 2013
339	261

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Real Estate

Home prices in the region in January were up (by 2.2 percent) from a year ago, though down from December. Nationally, home prices rose over the year 10.1 percent from \$200,900 to \$221,200. The local 2012 annual average price of \$180,302 was 6.2 percent

higher than 2011's average of \$176,197. The number of homes sold in January was down from the previous month, but up by 14.4 percent from a year ago.




HOME PRICES		
Jan. 2012	Dec. 2012	Jan. 2013
\$155,955	\$174,440	\$159,461

HOMES SOLD		
Jan. 2012	Dec. 2012	Jan. 2013
208	266	238

Sources: Roanoke Valley Association of REALTORS & National Association of REALTORS

Retail Sales

Houses aren't the only thing we're buying in the Roanoke and New River Valleys. **Taxable retail sales** in the combined region were up 7.3 percent from November 2011 to November 2012, outpacing the statewide increase of 4.7 percent over the same period. Growth in the Blacksburg MSA was 13.6 percent, while retail sales in the Roanoke MSA grew at a more modest 4.9 percent. Why the big difference? Charlie Jewell, project manager for the Montgomery County Department of Economic Development, attributes the growth to the burgeoning retail hub in the Blacksburg-Christiansburg area; the construction boom on the Virginia Tech campus and in the town of Blacksburg, and the fact that more people working means more people buying.



TAXABLE RETAIL SALES		
	Nov. 2011	Nov. 2012
Blacksburg	\$1,334,007	\$1,515,792
Roanoke	\$3,479,079	\$3,649,717
Combined	\$4,813,086	\$5,165,509

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation

—By Anne Piedmont,
Piedmont Research Associates



Dan Smith

Dr. George Koumaras

Chasing dental fraud >

Executive Summary:

Delta Dental's George Koumaras saw his dentistry practice ended by a drunk driver, and for the past few years he's been in the business of catching dentists who cheat.

By Dan Smith

In 1992, George Koumaras was sailing along as an oral surgeon in his native Pennsylvania, working in maxillofacial and oral surgery—reconstructing people's faces—when a drunk driver hit his car from behind. His neck was fused and he had to have discs removed. His surgery career was ended.

"I didn't know what to do," he says. Soon, however, he went to work for Aetna Insurance as a consultant, and found his background was a distinct advantage. He understood dentistry and dentists. He became national director of oral and maxillofacial care and he developed an interest elsewhere, as well. He knew how

some dentists could fall into cheating and fraud. "They know it's not right, but they do it anyway," he recalls understanding.

Fraud interested him. He studied it and became an expert. He discovered that medical fraud is a \$100 billion industry and if dentists can rake 5 percent of that off the top, then they're \$5 billion richer. He's seen enough of it today that "I only see it getting worse" in the future.

George heads the fraud division at Delta Dental, an insurance company headquartered in Roanoke. He's been there seven years and the program is still in relative infancy. He has studied plans and "seen what behaviors trend out to be the norm." When you go outside the norm on claims—especially on a consistent basis—red flags begin to fly and you have George's attention.

He actually started the fraud unit and was given two support positions. He hired dental hygienists because "they have some expertise in how dental offices work" and that's where the fraud is most often found. "There wasn't really any training available" so they winged it.

He wrote the company's fraud manual and became a member of an association of those who work in fraud. He found himself presenting papers at meetings. Then, "We started to create software for the analytics." It took 18 months, but in the end he had a system that "was flexible and easy for people without computer skills." The program helped to determine "abnormal" billing behavior.


He finally nailed a big case, brought in the FBI and proved fraud. That first big case, he says, alerted dentists that the insurance industry was getting serious about dental fraud. He calls it "the sentinel effect." Then there was a woman who saw 80 dentists in a year in an effort to buy prescription drugs. "It would have been hard for us to find without a tip," but the tip came because people knew of his unit. He has found the FBI to be a "very willing" partner in the prosecutions.

His software and the complete investigations help "establish patterns of intent to deceive," he says. "It doesn't take long to figure out."

The types of fraud attempts are broad and range from amateurish to sophisticated, he says. Money is being saved for Delta Dental, but he's not sure how much because his attention has been elsewhere. Measuring savings "is one of the tools I'd like to develop." He says that the National Healthcare Anti-Fraud Association estimates fraudulent claims to range between 5 and 15 percent of all claims.

In Brief

Name: Dr. George M. Koumaras
Age: 59
Company: Delta Dental
Title: Dental Director
Location: Roanoke
Background: Native of Reading, Pa. Bachelors in biology from Villanova University; DDS Temple University Dental School. Was in private practice of oral and maxillofacial surgery and became dental consultant, dental director for specialty services, and national director of oral and maxillofacial surgery patient management at Aetna Inc. Member of National Healthcare Anti-fraud Association (which named him Medical Director of the Year in 2012); American Dental Association; American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons; Virginia Dental Association; Piedmont Dental Association. Married 22 years with 4 children.

He's run into dentists who actually blame the insurance company for the frauds they commit. "They say, 'If you paid, it's your mistake.'" But it doesn't work that way and George Koumaras is determined to see to that. 

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FINANCIAL FRONT

Banks

StellarOne Bank has appointed **Karen Turner** market executive for Roanoke Valley Region and **Jamie M. Radford** as vice president - retail manager for the New River Valley.

SunTrust Bank, Western Virginia commercial division has named **James Porter** assistant vice president and business banking relationship manager.

Credit Unions

Member One Federal Credit Union in Roanoke has named **Sonja Chapman** vice president of its member call center. Other promotions include: **James Fazio**, assistant VP of property administration; **Leigh Ingram**, assistant VP of human resources; **Angie Austin**, VP and branch manager in Vinton;

Mark Mabry, VP and branch manager in Fairlawn; and **Steve Crowder**, VP of information technology. **James Scott** is vice president of insurance products and services and **Diane Spilberg** is vice president and branch manager of the southwest Roanoke branch.

Insurance

Aetna has named **Burman Clark** small group premier producer for 2013.

LEGAL FRONT

Awards

G. Michael Pace Jr. of the Roanoke law firm of Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore has been recognized by The Virginia Bar Association with the Gerald L. Baliles Distinguished Service Award. Pace, a former VBA president, is recognized for "exceptional service and contributions to

the bar and public at large."

Law Firms

Glenn Feldmann Darby & Goodlatte attorney **Amanda Shaw** has been named to the board of the Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley.

Organizations

Jay Inge is the new chairman of the Ferrum College estate planning council.



Pyle



Werner



Sheils

WELLNESS FRONT

Chiropractic

Tuck Chiropractic Clinic has named **Craig Camidge** and **Logan Brooke** partners.

Dental

Delta Dental of Virginia has named **Chris Pyle** director of marketing and community relations. It has also named **Dave Werner** vice president of

sales and **Duncan Sheils** was director of sales and account management.

Dr. Hui Yang has joined the Family Dental Clinic of the New River Valley as a full-time dentist.

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Muelenaer

Education

Dr. Andre A. Muelenaer Jr. has joined the board

of directors of CMR Institute in Roanoke, an educational organization for biopharmaceutical representatives and managers. He has held leadership positions as division chief of pediatric pulmonology/ gastroenterology at Duke University, and division chief of

pediatric pulmonology/ allergy at Carilion Clinic Children's Hospital.

Physician Services

Stephen B. McCandless has joined Eggleston & Eggleston in Roanoke as a practice manager.



McCandless

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Architects/Engineers

James Breakell, late of Breakell Inc., has been named director of business development and marketing for CSE Inc., a Roanoke steel erection company.

Roanoke's Gay & Neel Inc.'s **Matthew Tomlinson** has passed the engineering examination, becoming a professional engineer.



Meredith

Real Estate

Tammy Meredith, Knollwood Condominium Site Manager for CMG Leasing Inc. in Blacksburg, has been recognized as the Industry Excellence Award winner for Property Manager

of the Year by the New River Valley Apartment Council.

Lake & Land Realty at Smith Mountain Lake has hired **Don Ferguson**.

Christina Definbaugh of Welchert Realtors Bridges & Company, is a new associate real estate broker.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT



Ramey

Arbiculture

Nathan Ramey and **Josh Brown** of Valley Grounds in Roanoke and the New River Valley have achieved certification from the International Society of Arbiculture. Valley Grounds, a



Brown

subsidiary of Valley Landscaping, is a licensed, full-service tree and stump removal and tree maintenance company. *Automotive*

Advance Auto Parts, an auto parts retailer headquartered in Roanoke, has named **Richard Robbins** to vice president for rewards and human resource services.

Child Care

HoneyTree Early Learning Center in Roanoke has named **Chad McGhee** chief revenue officer.

Groceries

Kroger in Blacksburg has named **Gordon**

Cox as its South Main Street store manager.

Human Resources

DePaul Community Resources Board of Directors is pleased to announce that **Amanda Stanley** has been named the organization's executive director. DePaul is a human resources provider.

Moving

Dave Baker is a new national accounts manager with Dunmar Moving Systems in Roanoke.

Organizations

Deli-Matic general manager **Shane Spikes** has been elected president of the Virginia Automatic Merchandising Association.

NRV Bike Kitchen has appointed **James Glass** as the new director, along with new regular hours at its location in Habitat

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for Humanity's ReStore in Christiansburg.

EDUCATION FRONT



Mullen

Colleges/Universities

Carol A. Mullen has been named the director of the School of Education at Virginia Tech and associate dean for professional education in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences.

Hollins University in Roanoke has named **Luke Vilelle** university librarian.

PR/Advertising

Neathawk Dubuque & Packett in Roanoke has added **Michelle Antolini Ward** as controller and **Todd**



Ward



Foutz



Caldwell

Foutz, executive vice president in the Roanoke office, is assuming the title of director of account services. Access Advertising & Public Relations in Roanoke has added **Susan Caldwell** as

public relations account manager.

OTHER FRONTS

Culture

The Science Museum of Western Virginia has named **Betsy Hale** as its volunteer coordinator and **Hannah Weiss** its animal coordinator.



Shriner

Organizations

Linda Shriner, a community volunteer, has been named to the board of directors of the Roanoke Women's Foundation, a component fund of Foundation for Roanoke Valley.

Timothy Fortuna of Carilion Clinic and

Krista Crawford-Mathis of Virginia Tech have been elected to the Project Access of the Roanoke Valley board of directors.

Laura Neff-Henderson has been named a delegate to the 2013 Public Relations Society of America National Leadership Assembly. **Douglas Canon** has been named to the accreditation board and **Don Engle** is a national professional advisor to the Publication relations Student Society of America.

Non-Profits

Krystal Thompson has been named executive director of Brain Injury Services of SWVA.

Jackson Green is the new COO of Goodwill of the Valleys and **Deb Saunders** is the new chief compliance officer.

Compiled by Dan Smith

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Dino Rossi, CEO of New York-based Balchem Corporation, at the press conference.

55 new Alleghany jobs

Balchem Corporation, which specializes in choline chloride and precision release nutrient technologies for animal nutrition and health, has opened its newest manufacturing facility to meet growing demand. The company is investing approximately \$10 million and creating 55 new jobs within two to three years in a 68,000-square-foot building at Alleghany Regional Commerce Center.

The facility will more than double the company's output capacity for the animal nutrition and health sector with its new encapsulation technology. "This world-class manufacturing facility gives us the ability to better meet our customers' needs for our products and technology," Balchem president and CEO Dino Rossi said at a ribbon-

cutting event with area business leaders, customers and elected officials.

Luna sells group

Luna Innovations in Roanoke, which develops and manufactures new-generation products for the healthcare, telecommunications, energy and defense markets, has sold of its Secure Computing and Communications (SCC) group to MacAulay-Brown Inc. (MacB). The sale of SCC will enable Luna to focus on fiber optic sensing, while reducing exposure to reductions in government spending.

"The sale of SCC allows us to increase liquidity and focus on the growth potential of our core fiber-optic technology," says My Chung, Luna's CEO. "MacB has a strategic focus in

areas where our SCC technology is already being applied as well as the infrastructure to advance this technology for military and intelligence customers. This is truly an ideal home for this unique technology and the talented people of SCC."

NS cuts jobs

Norfolk Southern Corporation, one of the most important employers in the region, plans to cut 140 jobs in Roanoke, ending what it calls "regional railcar classification operations." The company has 1,870 workers in the area. The Roanoke Terminal has lost 30 percent of its general merchandise cars business in the last seven years.

VP of Transportation Terry Evans was quoted as saying, "The employees who work at Roanoke are

dedicated and efficient, but the geographical location and layout of the hump yard make it not only expensive but redundant within our network."

Officials say most of those losing their jobs are carmen—who inspect and repair cars—and train crews. In addition, a few track maintenance positions are affected. According to published reports, Norfolk Southern anticipates hiring between 850 and 1,150 employees in 2013 to keep up with attrition. These positions will first be offered to employees affected by the Roanoke change and employees furloughed at other locations.

National changes name

National College in Salem, founded in 1886, has changed the name of its flagship Roanoke

Valley facility to **American National University**.

"Since our founding in 1886, National College has continually been in a process of evolution," says National College President Frank Longaker. "The transition of our Roanoke Valley Campus to university status recognizes not only the significant transformation of the college over the past 126 years, but our continued evolution through the 21st century. It is neither a beginning nor an end, but a waypoint."

Locking down the cell

Roanoke company, **ORIGO**, has introduced a technology that can end hand-held cell phone use while driving, addressing a leading national public safety problem. ORIGO Safe is a new ignition interlock system that requires drivers to secure

their phone in a docking station before their vehicle can start. This prevents motorists from holding their phones to talk or text while behind the wheel.

Says Clay Skelton, ORIGO's founder, "By taking the phone out of the driver's hands – but not preventing making and receiving calls – ORIGO can reduce accidents, increase safety and improve the performance of drivers, particularly young drivers. It takes away the temptation to reach for the phone while driving."

The statistics tell of a tragic problem:

Teen driving deaths are up 19 percent in the first half of 2012; texting while driving causes 11 teen deaths every day; 16 percent of all drivers under 20 involved in fatal crashes were reported to have been distracted

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while driving; motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among teens in the United States' 97 percent of teens in a survey say texting while driving is highly dangerous, yet 75 percent of them say it's common among their peers; more than 25 percent of teens say they read or send at least one text every time they drive.

And it's not just a young driver problem. Many adults are involved, as well.

A study conducted by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute

found that "Talking or listening on a cell phone ... did not statistically increase crash risk. Dialing, reaching, and other intensive visual-manual cell phone sub-tasks did." That's why ORIGO allows drivers to stay connected hands-free through Bluetooth and other technologies, yet takes the phone completely out of the driver's hands.

ORIGOSafe is easily installed in any type of vehicle, and is a fully integrated device that supports the top-selling smart phone models. There's no software to



Samsung Galaxy docked ORIGO.

FRONT Notes

buy or maintain, and no need to wonder if it's working.

ORIGO also comes in a version to improve safety among commercial drivers. The ORIGOSafe Commercial has a module called ORIGOCommand, an iPad-based fleet management package with a central database for administrators to manage multiple fleets at multiple locations and restrict truck usage to an easily manageable list of authorized drivers.

Attendance up

The **Virginia Museum of Transportation** in Roanoke, the official transportation museum of the Commonwealth of Virginia, has announced that attendance for 2012 increased by 32.6 percent. The VMT had visitors not only from every state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico and 49 other countries.

"Our collections, especially the Class J 611 and the Class A 1218 locomotives, are known throughout the world," says Beverly T. Fitzpatrick, Jr., executive director of the VMT. "They come to Roanoke to see the powerful locomotives, rolling rail stock and other exhibits up close. Our locomotive exhibits cannot be seen anywhere else in the world."

In the past, the transportation industry has been the major driver of Roanoke's economic success. Today, the iconic collections at the Museum are contributing to modern-day economic

success for the city and the region.

Life-Guard 12 base

Carilion Stonewall Jackson Hospital in Lexington has built new helicopter hangar, crew quarters and offices. The new facility, located on .411 acres behind the hospital, will be the permanent location for Carilion Clinic's Life-Guard 12 helicopter. The new hangar will allow the EC135 aircraft to be hangared during inclement weather and extreme temperatures. Additionally, the hangar space will permit routine maintenance to be performed on-site, decreasing the need to relocate the helicopter to Roanoke and remain in its primary service area.

Tech climbing the charts

Virginia Tech ranks in the top 20 colleges and universities being talked about most frequently in print, broadcast, and Internet media, and in blogs and tweets, according to the latest ranking by an Austin, Texas-based company that specializes in media analytics. Global Language Monitor said that its "brand equity measurements" of 2012 mentions ranked Virginia Tech No. 17. Last year, the university was rated 19th. This year's measurement puts it higher on the list than Johns Hopkins, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke. The University of Virginia fell from

number 25 to 32 on the Buzz list.

The company rated MIT as the number one school followed by Harvard. The University of California at Berkeley was the top public university in the 10 highest ranked schools. The University of Minnesota jumped 15 spots into the top 20 while the University of Michigan dropped 12 places from 13 to 25. Public universities held 13 of the top 25 rankings.

"Virginia Tech has long been in the forefront of new technology applications, and we suspect that this latest ranking reflects the technical expertise of many young people wanting to become Hokies," said Larry Hincker, associate vice president of University Relations. "It also might reflect [Virginia] Tech's highly respected reputation. Either way, it's nice to be noticed."

For 2012, Virginia Tech's homepage had 16.7 million page views and 11.4 million unique views. In addition, there were 3.3 unique visitors, while the university's Facebook page grew from 93,571 likes in January 2012 to 118,063 likes in December 2012.

Tech ranks again

Virginia Tech's College of Engineering for the third consecutive year ranks 24th among the nation's best engineering schools for graduate studies, according to U.S. News and World

Report's America's Best Graduate Schools 2014 survey released today. Additionally, the **Pamplin College of Business** jumped to 34th from 37th among top part-time master's of business administration programs.

More standout rankings: Virginia Tech's public affairs program in the School of Public and International Affairs, part of the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, again ranks 37th in the nation for the fourth year in a row, tying with Cornell University in New York, University of Arizona, University of Delaware, and the University of Illinois-Chicago, a feat repeated from the 2013 Best Graduate Schools survey released spring of last year.

Hotel Bookings Up

Virginia's Blue Ridge (Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau) reported a 5.8% upsurge in hotel demand in 2012 over the previous year. Also in 2012, the region reports a 4.4% increase in total room revenue; and the City of Roanoke collected \$3,113,553 in lodging tax revenue.

2013 ADDY Awards

American Advertising Federation Roanoke (AAF Roanoke) hosted the Western Virginia ADDY® Awards on Saturday, February 23 at the Market Building's Charter Hall in downtown Roanoke. Of the

professional ADDY® winners, Best in Interactive was awarded to Venveo for Companion Animal Parasite Council's Pets and Parasites website; Best in Broadcast was awarded to Neathawk Dubuque & Packett for Friendship Retirement Community's Better Than Babysitter commercial; Best In Print was awarded to Member One Federal Credit Union for their Vampire Survival Guide ad.; and Best In Show was awarded to Neathawk Dubuque & Packett for Friendship

Retirement Community's Better Than Babysitter commercial. The ceremony featured winners of 119 awards from a field of more than 460 entries from 131 area agencies, businesses, individuals, and students. Greg Brock of Firefli Media was recognized for Advertising Person of the Year.

Hans on Label

Chateau Morrisette Winery in Floyd introduced a new corporate identity and new brand labels for

its wines, featuring "Hans," the corporate mascot. The winery is known for its dog-themed wines including The Black Dog and Our Dog Blue.

Certified

Plastics One in Roanoke has achieved Quality Management System ISO 13485 certification for medical device manufacturers, as well as the recertification of the ISO 9001. Plastics One is a contract manufacturer

specializing in injection and insert molded components for the medical device industry. The ESOP Company employs 325 and its facility is 85,000 square feet and boasts an in-house design department that utilizes three-dimensional software, a fully equipped mold making shop, prototyping, ISO 7 & 8 cleanrooms and the latest injection molding technology.

Compiled by Dan Smith

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

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 - > **Breakell Inc., 'Green' Roanoke Builder, Closes**
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 - > **Seven Montgomery Winners Among Gap 50**
 - > Sarah Beth Jones Cited as FRONT's Top Contributor for 2012
 - > **Preservation Foundation Issues 2012 Awards**
- and much more (of course; hence, the name)**

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Now is a good time to be aggressive.

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All the freedom is paralyzing

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“ ”
The tires are ten feet tall

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