

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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Botetourt's
Brewery

Virginia Bar
President

Outdoor
Recruiting

The Prospect on
Real Estate

Bill Poe,
Poe & Cronk

NEW FACE AT VALLEY BANK

Brad Harris



Throughout my career in banking, despite living in different localities from Tennessee to NC, I have always considered the Roanoke Valley home. Home is about strong friendships and deep relationships.

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Valley Bank's fundamental approach of keeping our community first,

coupled with the commitment to client relationships in good times as well as challenging times, has led me "home" to Valley Bank. I look forward to deepening the relationships Valley

Bank has established with its clients and coming home to a bank which defines relationship banking....local people making local decisions.

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Brad Harris
*Senior Vice President
Business Banker*

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WELCOME to the FRONT

The New York Times was jumping up and down in late March about housing starts, which had bumped up dramatically in recent months. The report was that starts were up 7.3 percent over last year's numbers and there were pockets—like in Phoenix—where they had leapt 23 percent. They're up here, too, and if you'll read our cover story, you'll see by how much and why.

Housing and commercial building are essential elements of a thriving economy. A depression in real estate means there is a depression everywhere because the industry has such an enormous ripple effect. We did not get a strong sense that there is consensus about that strength among those in the profession in this region, but we did detect a good bit of optimism.

So much of that optimism hinges on our government getting its stuff in one bag and governing. National and state governments that won't make decisions—like the ones we have—confuse business people and make them hesitant to decide anything of importance (like hiring and expansion, for example) because they are afraid of the "other shoe." It appears there is consensus on that account: government should get its act together so that business can function. It's elementary.



Tom Field



Dan Smith

“
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Exposure to Roanoke's outdoor charms
will lead to start-ups and relocations

— Page 49

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Outdoors!

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DRAPER MERCANTILE

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New Brew

Art direction and cover photography
of Bill Poe and horse by Tom Field.

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Rachael Garrity



Michael Miller



Anne Piedmont



Randolph Walker

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 58.

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



Liv Kiser



Pete Krull



Gene Marrano



Dan Smith



Samantha Steidle



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen



Pass a budget and set a long term direction on taxes and regulation so businesses have something they can count on — Page 18

2013 Members

Nancy Agee Carilion (Wellness)
Laura Bradford ClaireV (Retail)
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Nancy May LewisGale Regional Health System (Wellness)
Stuart Mease Virginia Tech (Education)
Mary Miller IDD (Tech/Industry)
Ed Walker Regeneration Partners (Development)



We're movie friendly

— Page 61

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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PROSPECT — ON — REAL ESTATE

COMING BACK?

Executive Summary:
The building trades and all that surrounds them have been in a serious slump for years now, but there seems to be some sign of movement in the region's market. Will it continue? Can it continue?

By Dan Smith

"Based on historical comparisons, the home building industry is still in a very poor position, but it is poised to rebound modestly because Americans are being offered low mortgage rates, and excess inventory has now dwindled to a palatable level."

That's Robert Fralin of The Fralin Companies in Roanoke and his is a relatively optimistic, though guarded, voice in a sea of uncertainty about the near-term future in the construction and real estate segments of our economy. This is one of our most important segments, one that often gives us an indication that we're headed into or out of a bad economy, something this region traditionally does later (both in and out) than the rest of the nation.

Real estate construction and sales affects so many businesses and disciplines that it can't be ignored: construction of homes and businesses, sales of both of those, engineering and design, building supplies, banking. They're all hooked in hard together and they share success and failure.

There has been some good news afoot, especially in home sales and prices, with prices in the region rising 2.2 percent over the past year and sales increasing from 208 in January 2012 to 238 in January 2013. Last year's home price rose 6.2 percent, as well, after years of decline in property values.



David Linden

It's been a struggle, though, at least partly because banks are loath to let go of money.

David Linden, managing broker at Roanoke's RealStar, says it's been difficult to stay afloat in a sagging economy. "In 2006 there were 1,716 members of the Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors," he says. "At the end of 2012, that number was down to 1,070; a decrease of more than 37 percent. Realtors, just like nearly everyone else in this economy, had to make sacrifices and changes in their spending habits." Linden says he's coming back strong, nearly doubling his sales last year over 2011.

PICKING UP

Laura Benjamin of the Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors paints a more positive picture of what's coming: "The state of the residential real estate market in the greater Roanoke Valley is on the upswing. 2012 ended with 3,666 homes sold—the highest number of 'solds' since December, 2009. 2012 also ended with 2,742 homes listed for sale—the lowest

“”

The most popular price range is in the \$140,000 to \$160,000 range. That is a good sign, because those selling in that price range will most likely be purchasing in a higher price bracket.

— David Linden,
RealStar





Dan Smith

Laura Benjamin

number since December of 2006. These statistics ... reflect a return to a more balanced market."

“”

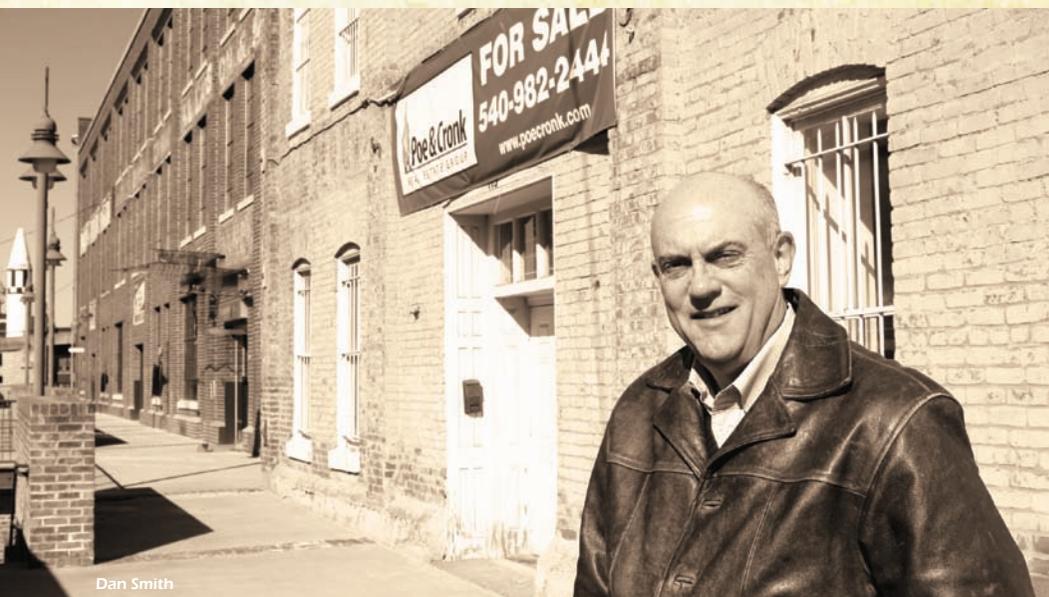
The National Association of Realtors estimates a 15 percent decline in the value of homes across the nation should the mortgage interest deduction be eliminated.

— *Laura Benjamin,
Roanoke Valley
Association of Realtors*

Jason Bialek of Atlantic Bay Mortgage sees a light beginning to come on: "I really don't think we have missed a beat lately. People are buying houses. I get calls every day for people trying to prequalify and buy."

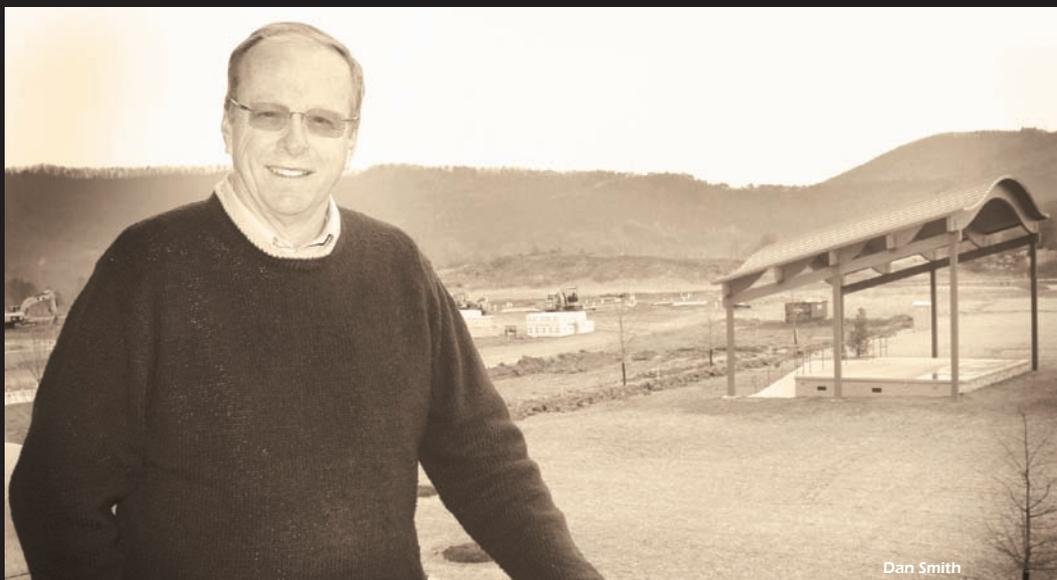
However, says Bialek, "The problem with our industry is that the government has put in a set of regulations called the Dodd-Frank Act and its keeping us from operating as efficiently as we could. There are way too many rules. It changes so fast that it's hard to keep up with even if you are in the industry."

Complaints about the government's role remain at a high level. Says John Garland of the new Garland Properties (he recently retired as CEO of Spectrum Design), "Time allows the fallout of the financial markets to heal. Confidence



Dan Smith

John Garland



Dan Smith

Andy Kelderhouse on the deck at his Daleville Town Center office.

THE VIEW FROM ANDY KELDERHOUSE'S WINDOW

Executive Summary:

Andy Kelderhouse, president of Fralin & Waldron Inc., has been in the industry for more than three decades and has seen waxes and wanes. Here are his thoughts on the current state of affairs.

By Andy Kelderhouse

The home building and general construction industries continue to struggle economically in most regions of the country. While there are reasons for optimism, I think this will be a slow climb for [this region of Virginia].

Our current job creation and overall population growth is not substantial enough to see any real pressure on the needs for new housing. New home construction will always have a piece of the market share, but it is faced with stiff competition in the resale values.

In recent months I have seen some increase in the new home market. This is in part due to the reduced overall inventory and less desirable existing home inventory (the real bargains are gone). Some builders have continued to be busy in our area, but I suspect at very low or no margins of profit.

Fralin & Waldron has seen an increase in sales, but I typically stay away from misleading percentages of change—new home sales are expected to increase nearly 30 percent nationally in 2013—which would still be about half of what is considered normal, and one third of the 2006 levels. Roanoke has historically been slow to feel the effects of the national economy, in either direction. I think the overall outlook is positive; it may be a bit slower getting to our region.

The most intriguing part of the market conditions we are seeing is the consumer decision process. This housing crisis is like no other and we will see a much different

continued on Page 13

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In recent months I have seen some increase in the new home market. This is in part due to the reduced overall inventory and less desirable existing home inventory (the real bargains are gone).

— *Andy Kelderhouse,*
Fralin & Waldron

“”

While there are certain elements of the new underwriting that allow no leeway for common sense, most of the revised guidelines appear to be addressing the underwriting issues that led to the mortgage bubble burst leading up to our most recent recession.

— *Susan Still,*
HomeTown Bank

building in the economy has taken years. New government regulation was needed, but as is typical, the regulatory response was over the top. It severely hurt lenders' ability to lend. If you cannot borrow money, then construction typically does not happen. Financial institutions having the assets to lend and borrowers that have a project and a financial statement that can meet the regulatory requirements is what it takes. More of both are beginning to surface."

Andy Kelderhouse of Fralin & Waldron says, "One positive action that the government could participate in is a closer look at the lending requirements. Everyone knows that the lending practices of the 2000s were too relaxed, but the pendulum has swung too far in the expectations of the borrower, lenders and endorsement agencies.

"Potential qualified buyers are finding it difficult to meet credit and down payment requirements. I am not in favor of subsidy or entitlement programs for homeownership. What the government can do is take a harder look at the over-regulation of the building and development processes. Much of the regulation we see is necessary and serves the consumer well. But, there is overregulation in place in many parts of our business.

"While the industry has been nearly inactive, the regulatory side has been quite busy. The localities and the state create more paperwork and processes on what seems like a daily basis. They are more dependent on regulation than common sense at times. The permitting process alone has gone from a day or two to nearly 30 days in some localities.

"The cost comes in the form of fees and time, both of which ultimately get passed along to the consumer. Unnecessary regulations for new construction add to the difficulty in competing with the existing home inventory."

BANKER'S VIEW

Susan Still, president of HomeTown Bank in Roanoke, sees movement—though slowly. "The threat of rising interest rates has encouraged some borrowers off the fence [and into making] housing decisions. In past recessions, first-time buyers have started the ball rolling but this time the attitude from younger buyers is to not step up and invest as readily—probably due to more stringent borrowing criteria.

"Instead, we are seeing the following trends among existing homeowners:

- "There appears to be an interest in all price categories for existing home purchases. For new construction projects, clients vary from middle-America homes up to dream homes, with upgrades [being] the norm for the finishes (granite, custom cabinetry, etc.).

continued from Page 11

consumer reaction and market going forward.

There does not seem to be any single answer to what the consumer is looking for—the consumers we are seeing are quite diverse and most come with a keen knowledge of what is out there. It is not uncommon for potential purchasers to look at 30 or 40 products before making an offer or retreating.

Certainly lower prices are where the majority of the buyers are looking, which is difficult to compete with in the new home market. Some will take on major renovations or sacrifice good design for size or location. Others are looking specifically for new homes to meet their lifestyles. With interest rates at historic lows and depressed housing prices, it has been the perfect storm for a buyer's market.

Recent reports have indicated that the market is now closer to neutral—with sellers staying firmer on their price. Some have taken advantage of the conditions to get a lot of house for the money. Others have stayed on the sidelines, I think, contemplating their investment, their lifestyle and future.

The value of home ownership and the American Dream that many of us grew up with has been fractured. The Boomer

generation's values and lifestyles are significantly different from the younger consumer's. Smaller and smarter is a good bet. Today's challenges of transportation will put more emphasis on convenience and walk-ability. This is proven in part by the success of downtown living in the past several years.

I think the rental market will remain strong for quite a while. The stereotypes associated with renting are disappearing (that happened long ago in large metropolitan areas). I think that renting will become a preference to many who could afford to do whatever they wish.

The bottom has hit. It may even be behind us a bit. The industry needs to see a substantial increase in real estate values for there to be a significant recovery. While I think nearly everyone in this business is accepting smaller margins, costs have continued to rise. New will almost always sell for more than used, but for only so much.

The next big question for builders/developers is: When will we see adequate absorption rates to justify the capital expense of land acquisition and development? 2014 may be the real turning year and by 2016, perhaps we will be back to normal—whatever that should be.



Dan Smith

Susan Still



Dan Smith

Aaron Ewert

- “Builders are seeing strong demand for single-family detached houses in the \$150,000 to \$200,000 range. In fact, they are searching for lots on which to build these homes. Higher end lots are available, but \$30,000 to \$40,000 lots are scarce.
- “In the past year, there has been a solid interest in fixer-uppers where people can get a great deal.

“There seems to be a huge pent up demand from self-employed borrowers that we hope will be satisfied when rates and margins get a little higher, and the incentive for risk in the secondary market comes back.”

“”

A common thread is the growing sentiment of business and residential customers rejecting cookie cutter, suburban-style products, which dominated the market place until really the mid-1990s.

— Aaron Ewert,
Riverside Development

COMMERCIALLY SPEAKING

Aaron Ewert, the construction manager for VWS Companies’ planned Riverside Development in Roanoke, is part of an ambitious and optimistic commercial project. VWS of Richmond has a good track record—regardless of the economy—with major projects like this and Ewert talks with guarded optimism.

Speaking after consulting owner Jason Vickers-Smith and planner Anne Wilkes, Ewert (son of former Roanoke City Manager Bern Ewert, one of the major investors in Riverside), he says, “We don’t expect strong years for the foreseeable near future. We expect the credit markets to be tight, and capital placement is very dependent on the market, making third tier area growth a bit more difficult without great initiative shown in the immediate community.

“Roanoke is showing great initiative and progress. Increased banking regulation and the fresh memories of being burned by not only buyers, but banks, funds, and private investors, will limit the amount of capital available for real estate development.

“The short term is difficult to make a solid call on. Again,

location is a big part. Markets need to be tight, banks need to be able to lend, fears of instability and uncertainty need to lessen, steady income and opportunity need to exist in order to add stability to the market, and incentives for the private sector need to grow. A demographic most are not taking into consideration for the long term is Gen-Y. You're seeing recent college graduates having issues paying off their student loans, which could cause issues in the for-sale market in the longer term, say 10 years."

HomeTown Bank's Still says the developers need to come and get the money that is out there. "Money is available for credit-worthy borrowers for commercial construction and renovation projects, especially for owner-occupied properties of virtually all types: multi-family projects, single-store credit tenant deals and single-family investment property. The demand for such commercial construction loans remains low."

However, Still says, "Land acquisition and development loans are still difficult to obtain, except for very strong borrowers who are finishing existing projects. Loans for retail & office investment properties are also more difficult to obtain as vacancy rates remain high and rental rates low due to excess availability."

Says Jason Bialek, "Money is definitely available to loan. What a lender looks at is: does the loan make sense? Can we sell it? If it doesn't fit both of those molds it makes it tough to do."

“”

We need to be able to do a loan with common sense ... but now we are in an environment [that says] if it doesn't fit in this box exactly, forget it, due to everything that has been instituted.

— Jason Bialek,
Atlantic Bay Mortgage

THE UPTICK AND THE LAG

Stuart Meredith of Hall Associates in Roanoke sees some movement in commercial real estate. "Sales have increased moderately in the last 18 months but are still not where we'd like to see them" he says. "Sales of owner-occupied properties



Dan Smith

Jason Bialek



Dan Smith

Pete McKnight at his Thornhill subdivision.

PETE MCKNIGHT'S DOUBLE VISION

Executive Summary:

Pete McKnight is president of the Roanoke Regional Homebuilders Association and the principal in McKnight & Company in Blue Ridge, so he sees a lot of what's going on from two perspectives.

As RRHBA 2013 president I felt my contribution would be to help transition our association's members from the bad times we've all experienced into the brighter days ahead, which I believe lie in 2014. Some time around mid-year 2012, we began to feel that change coming on.

By Pete McKnight

My theme for this year is appropriately "Good

“”

I've been in the business for 28 years and it's the worst I've ever seen especially for people relatively new to the business.

— Stuart Meredith,
Hall Associates

have been the first to strengthen. Financing for those properties has been available, interest rates are low, and the opportunity for business owners to buy their own building is excellent.

"Investor sales are still lagging but we are seeing more interest and activity. Speculative building is almost nonexistent but with leasing activity and shortening of supply in some types of space, we should start seeing some build-to-suit with speculative space in them.

"Lease activity has increased particularly since the second half of last year. The demand over that time has been strongest for office space followed by retail and industrial space being the slowest. Overall activity is probably up 30 to 40 percent."

Michael Waldvogel of Waldvogel Commercial Properties and Bill Poe of Poe & Cronk, are seeing a comeback, as well. Says Waldvogel, "not only are we seeing these early signs of a

Vibrations" because that's what I believe most of the folks in our industry are feeling. Nothing major but rather a convergence of positive indicators, which combine to signal a fairly significant turnaround maybe as soon as next year.

This year, U.S. home prices rose 9.7 percent in January compared to the same time last year, the biggest increase since April 2006 marking the 11th consecutive monthly increase in home prices nationally. Mortgage rates, while up slightly from November's historic low, were still near record lows at the end of February and down from 3.90 percent at the same time last year.

Markets like California, which were the first to hit bottom, are now booming. Ours was among the last to go down, so we'll be among the last to rebound.

That's already happening in neighboring Northern Virginia. Steven Alloy, president of Reston-based Stanley Martin projects a 36 percent increase in sales this year over last. He says, "We were successful during the downturn because we recognized early that the market had shifted from what we call a pre-built market where people order and then we start construction to a finished or under construction market. ... We recognize what we need to do is have plenty of move-in ready houses, and so we went from being

a 5 to 6 percent move-in ready builder to a 70 to 80 percent and our sales exploded."

From my developer's prospective, it's pretty simple. At my Thornblade subdivision in Blue Ridge, with combined lot and house pricing starting around \$350,000, our prospective buyer is moving up from an existing home. Initially, sales were brisk. But the downturn hit us like everyone else. Then about halfway through last year we began to experience an up-tick in activity which has carried over into this year. As housing inventories decrease and existing home values rise, folks will be more inclined to put their homes on the market to generate the equity needed to build or buy that new home. Realtors tell me that there's already a shortage of available quality used houses.

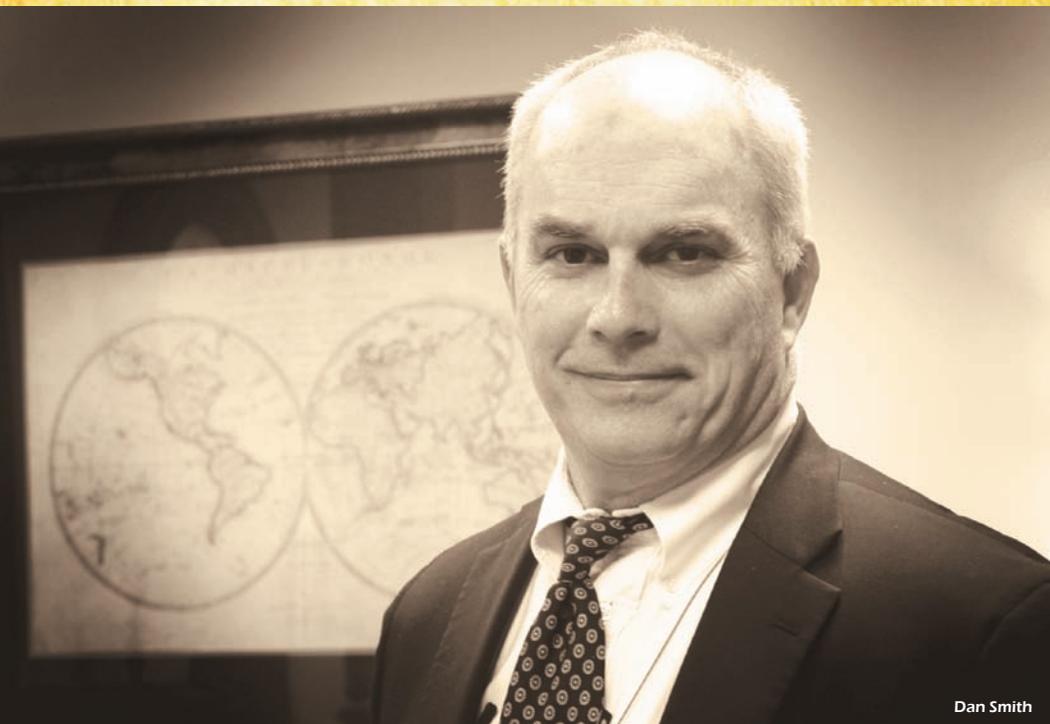
The government could certainly facilitate a speedier turnaround by easing credit and reforming the residential appraisal process. Conversely, it could put the brakes on by tampering with the home mortgage interest deduction.

As the market turns around, we developers who have projects up and running will enjoy the advantage of having an availability of building lots. Going forward, there'll be more demand for single-family homes and townhomes than there are building lots to match that demand.



Stuart Meredith

Dan Smith



Dan Smith

Bill Poe

“”

Pass a budget and set a long term direction on taxes and regulation so businesses have something they can count on.

— *Bill Poe,*
Poe & Cronk

recovering industry [but they are] these are translating into an increased number contracts and closings. Our property management revenues are up over 45 percent while leasing is up 39 percent.”

Poe reflects the same experience: “Investment property has had strong sales. Low interest rates and lower value have resulted in that strength. If a purchaser has the financial strength and holding power, it is a good time to buy. Values are across the board.”

DESIGNING HOMES

“”

Workload for us really seems to be picking up steam. We are a young firm of only one year, but currently we have a nice backlog that consists of mainly residential projects.

— *Lora Katz,*
Gilliam Katz Architecture

Lora Katz of Gilliam Katz Architecture in Roanoke, which recently celebrated a year in business, says there’s value right now in the commercial, but her heart is in homes. “We see our commercial and institutional work starting to pick up, but we still enjoy designing residences, so we don’t ever see stopping that part of our business,” she says. “You really make a connection with people when you design their home. It is much more personal than designing their business. Some of our closest friends have started as design clients.

“Folks don’t want to miss out on the current low initial building cost, low construction cost and low interest rate market. That beneficial combination does not come around that often.”

John Garland is even more specific about homes: “Just as new cars sales decrease with a poor economy, so do new home sales. Renovation is the most popular and feasible and purchasing of depressed properties, either foreclosures

or underwater properties is way up. There is a steady supply of depressed properties and plenty of people that are looking to take advantage of a deal.

“Good for buyers, not so good for sellers. Low to medium end homes sell better than high end. For downtown apartments those less than \$1,000 a month move quickly. Above that the pace and it slows. Everyone has gotten used to looking for and obtaining a deal. Those that have to give the deals are getting weary.”

SHAKEOUT STAKEOUT

Robert Fralin thinks an industry shakeout is here. “Today’s home buyers expect more square footage and more amenities and most sellers must capitulate in order to make sales. In recent years, a greater number of would-be first time home buyers are renting, which has pushed lower dollar home values down by a slightly higher percentage than more expensive homes. Part of the reason for this is that we are still paying a price for the tax credits of 2009 which artificially inflated prices in that market segment.

“Although I anticipate a gradual increase in demand for new and existing homes, there will be far fewer players in the industry than there were in the bubble. Most of those who remain should do fine.”

Michael Waldvogel’s crystal ball reveals the following: “Real estate is generally considered a cyclical industry. It has been my experience, confirmed by numerous studies, that real estate tends to follow a fairly consistent 10 year pattern.

“For us, the low point was 2009. Since then we have experienced annual double digit increases in revenues. From an historical viewpoint, we see seven strong years ahead and we are planning for that today as we have been for the last two years. We are adding staff, looking to add client-centric sales and leasing agents and improving systems in order to leverage people productivity.” 

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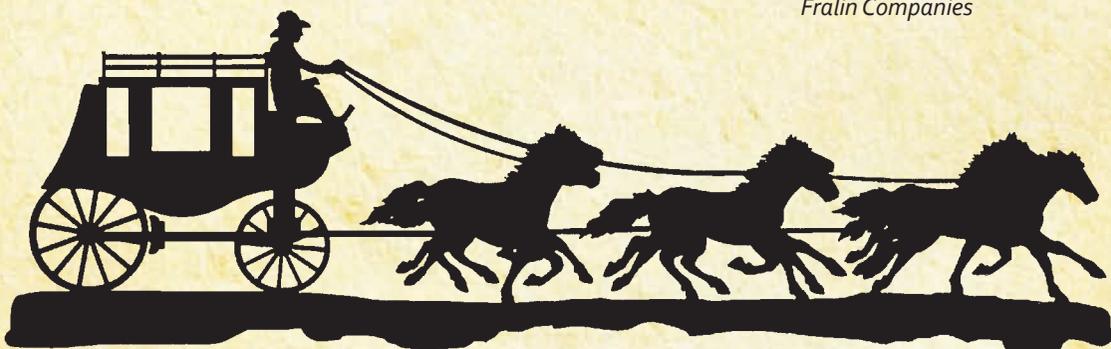
It has been my experience, confirmed by numerous studies, that real estate tends to follow a fairly consistent 10 year pattern. For us, the low point was 2009. Since then we have experienced annual double digit increases in revenues.

— *Michael Waldvogel,*
Waldvogel Commercial
Properties

“”

To put this in perspective, it would take a 33.5 percent increase in Roanoke area home sales to elevate total sales to the volume ascertained in 2002, and it would take a 62 percent increase to reach the total sales volume reported in 2006.

— *Robert Fralin,*
Fralin Companies





The Chanel jacket >

The last few decades brought a sea change in fashion towards the casual. It would be easy to think our generation created that change but the history of the Chanel jacket may have been one of the initial influences away from formality.

In 1954, wardrobes were formal and costume-like. As noted on Chanel.com, women's dresses of that time were fussy and fancy, with accentuated waistlines. Girdles or corsets were used to achieve the preferred female silhouette. However, post-war the world was eager for a more modern, natural look.

Gabrielle Chanel seized the moment and reopened her Maison du Couture, where she unveiled her new design, the Chanel suit.

Using Scottish tweeds, she crafted a suit offering ease of motion, functionality, minimalism, and fluidity. To Chanel the most difficult aspect of the process was to give women what they needed, "Enabling them to move with ease, to not feel like they're in costume, not changing attitude, or manner, depending on their dress. It's difficult. And the human body is always moving."

Her new design was a raging success adopted by high profile figures around the world and landing front-page on countless magazines.

The Chanel jacket is menswear-inspired, featuring straight lines, and has no interfacing, giving it a natural, fluid fit. When first introduced it was collarless, had four real pockets with functional buttonholes, and braid trim at front edges, hemline and cuffs. The Chanel jacket's hallmark, though, was a delicate chain tacked inside the hemline to ensure that it lies flat. The skirt echoed the straight lines, minimalism and functionality of the jacket.

In 1983, fashion took a turn toward the excessive. Karl Lagerfeld assumed control of the House of Chanel, bringing new changes to the Chanel jacket. He paired the jacket with shorter skirts and mismatched with jeans, and introduced it in embroidered fabrics, bright colors and pastel colors. He proved the icon adapts to all seasons and never goes out of style. Even today we see new versions of the Chanel jacket almost every year.

So don't worry that your Chanel-style jacket might look dated. It is a 60-year-old institution and a renegade all rolled up into one good-looking jacket. Wear it proudly and try pairing it with the unusual. As long as it meets your daily wardrobe needs as she intended it to do, Gabrielle Chanel would be proud. 

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

This is a classic that adjusts to tastes and ranges from conservative to challenging.

The concept of time >

Long before I went to The Protocol School of Washington and began my training in international business protocol, I visited a Middle Eastern country with my husband on a business trip that included appointments with the heads of universities, businesses and industries. We found that, although promptness was expected of us, we should be prepared to wait several minutes or even several hours to conduct our business. What?

I recall on one occasion being ushered into an enormous office where our host proved gracious and genial, offering refreshments, coffee, tea and fruit juice (it is rude to refuse such things in that culture), all the time making small talk. Others were in the room, and our host carried on several conversations at once, none of them relating to our agenda, although we were introduced and included. He talked on the telephone—even to his mother at one point. Although at the outset we were baffled and quite disturbed, we soon found that this was typical of the way business was conducted in Middle Eastern cultures.

Let's face it though – protocol training or not – had we done just a little homework, we would have been prepared for what we encountered. You see, we were moving in a culture that views time differently than we view it. We were in a polychronic culture, where it is normal for several things to be happening at once. You get to the bottom line eventually, but a lot goes on between the greeting and signing on the contract.

Americans operate on what is called monochronic time. We are fast, we do everything hurriedly, we value promptness, we are linear in our thinking, and we want to get to the bottom line quickly. In many international settings, this attitude can be counterproductive to our success. In fact, most of the rest of the world doesn't operate on our time lines.

A large percentage of newly-launched American businesses fail abroad because American business people don't study and learn the important subtleties and nuances of the host culture. Inflexible insistence on monochronic time frames at the very outset of new business dealings can determine whether or not relationships have a future

So, do your homework ahead of time. With a minimal knowledge of a different culture, you can come across as a savvy international professional. Believe me, you will find that wonderful, serendipitous things can and do happen, if you are flexible and patient in your approach to doing business. 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
We Americans are always in a hurry. Not so much elsewhere.



Small Business

By Samantha Steidle

Executive Summary:

There are a lot of resources for the aspiring entrepreneur; here are eight solid ones to get you started.

Generating new business >

Do you want to become an entrepreneur? If so, you are in luck, because our area offers many opportunities to learn the art of entrepreneurship. Everyone from first-time startup owners to long-time business executives can benefit from continued professional growth.

Entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as an avenue to full-time employment. For many, it is an alternative to the traditional nine-to-five work world. We are becoming a nation of business owners.

The same thing happened during the Great Depression, by the way. Sometimes, the best path to success is to strike out on your own. Why wait for corporate America to give you a job when you can create one? Here are some opportunities for you to polish your entrepreneurial skills.

Entry-level entrepreneurship

The Small Business Development Center (www.rrsbdc.org) in downtown Roanoke offers short seminars on entrepreneurship. Most are free, although some carry a small charge. One of the instructors is Leslie Coty, president of Coty Connections, who teaches social media classes. Tom Tanner, an advisor with the SBDC, teaches a Business Basics class.

The Virginia Department of Business Assistance offers free half-day Entrepreneur Express workshops at various locations around the Commonwealth. Check the listings at vdba.virginia.gov/bis_entexp.shtml to take advantage of Sandy Ratliff's "boot camps" for new businesses.

Roanoke's Startup Meetups host a number of opportunities for startup companies, consultants, and freelancers. These free get-togethers offer continuing education and networking opportunities. To find out about upcoming meetups, check out: www.meetup.com/RoanokeStartUp.

Virginia Western Community College is preparing to launch a new course of study for entrepreneurs this fall. The details are still being worked out, but the program will involve the development of a business concept or product. Keep an eye on the VWCC website at www.virginiawestern.edu.

Intermediate entrepreneurship

Startup Weekend Roanoke (roanoke.startupweekend.org) runs from May 3-5 at Meridium in downtown Roanoke. This event, organized by Advanced Auto, Rackspace, Business Lounge, Meridium, and RBTC fosters spontaneous collaboration among entrepreneurially minded technologists, who brainstorm and validate startup ideas, then pitch them during this 54-hour startup event. Prizes will be awarded to the most promising innovators. It costs less than \$100 to participate.

Advanced entrepreneurship

VT KnowledgeWorks, a subsidiary of the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, offers a variety of services to help businesses plan, launch, and grow. Its offices are in Blacksburg, Va. Learn more about their global consulting courses and services at: vtnknowledgeworks.com.

Virginia Tech offers a seven-week for-credit program based on Stanford University's Lean LaunchPad, which helps entrepreneurs develop business concepts to the point of being ready to launch. Funded by the National Science Foundation, the program is called Innovation Corps or "I-Corps" for short. Jack Lesco will be teaching and is the Co-Pi for the grant which funds the program. Derrick Maggard, Executive Director of The Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, is the regional instructor at I-Corps.

Roanoke College, meanwhile, is offering a for-credit, capstone course called "Business Policy" for prospective entrepreneurs through its Center for Leadership and Entrepreneurial Innovation. This course helps entrepreneurs prepare to start a new business or to develop recommendations for an existing one. They also hosting an "Innovation Challenge" from June 3 to July 26. The event is a partnership between the college and local businesses. Sixteen students hone their skills of product innovation while researching topics such as intellectual property, marketing, and finance.

Go forth and start up!

As the saying goes: "Give a man a fish, and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime." Perhaps the tips in this article will spur you to consider entrepreneurship as a "doable" and worthwhile option. The support you need to start is out there.

Samantha Steidle is a consultant building entrepreneurial ecosystems and coworking spaces. Visit RoanokeBusinessLounge.com to learn more. 



Entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as an avenue to full-time employment. For many, it is an alternative to the traditional nine-to-five work world. We are becoming a nation of business owners.

More aware than Ever

I took this course.
Unlike others, the principles "stuck"
and I am aware of my own power
to change — and inspire change
in others. And yes, I can make fire.
I am woman. I am strong.
I will survive. — Kyle Edgell
Entrepreneur / Development, Roanoke Rescue Mission







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Financial Matters

The divestment campaign >

Executive Summary:

The most recent stock divestment campaign is aimed at fossil fuels. Will it be as successful as earlier campaigns?

By Pete Krull

Does it matter what you invest in? Bill McKibben thinks it does. McKibben, labeled by Time Magazine as “The Planet’s Best Green Journalist,” and the author of the highly-acclaimed book, *The End of Nature*, is heading a campaign to get people and organizations to sell their investments in fossil fuel companies.

Through his grassroots organization, 350.org, McKibben hopes to convince a broad audience that investing in fossil fuel companies is not only a bad idea, but an unethical one as well. He says, “We are not the radicals—the radicals are the ones who are changing the chemical composition of the atmosphere for money.”

Divestment campaigns have a history of success. The most widely known campaign was focused on South African Apartheid. During the 1980s, many colleges, governments and individuals pulled their investments from South Africa, and it is widely believed that the campaign was the catalyst that led to the fall of the Apartheid government.

What McKibben and 350.org is asking for is colleges, pension funds and individuals to stop making new investments in fossil fuel companies, and sell any currently held stocks and

bonds within the next five years. They’re also asking these companies to:

- Stop exploring for new reserves.
- Stop lobbying governments to preserve any tax breaks they have.
- Pledge to keep 80 percent of their current reserves underground forever.

These are lofty ambitions, and ones that the fossil-fuel companies will likely do everything they can to avoid.

What’s at stake though, is much more important than just a few companies’ profits—it’s the future of life on this planet. Scientists say that we need to keep the ratio of carbon dioxide in the air to less than 350 parts per million (hence the name of the organization) to maintain a stable climate. The number is over 390 and rising, putting us at risk for more intense storms, sea level rise and other negative effects. Holding fossil fuel companies accountable only makes sense.

Divestment from fossil fuel companies also opens up capital to support more progressive investment opportunities, such as alternative energy including wind, solar and geothermal. There’s also opportunities in energy efficiency, advanced batteries and even water technologies. Why not invest for the future instead of in dinosaurs.

The campaign continues to gain momentum as a number of colleges boards of trustees have voted to divest, including College of the Atlantic, Unity College and Sterling College. In addition, there are now several investment managers offering fossil-fuel-free portfolios for clients in support of the campaign.

Talk with your financial advisor, do the research and ask the question that McKibben asks: is it wrong to profit from wrecking the planet? 



all photos: Rachael Garrity

Diana Francis: “I feel as if I’ve been given the opportunity to not only have a job I like, but to be creative.”

Art: A legal definition >

Executive Summary:

The Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg has moved into the art sphere with a vengeance, showing and supporting artists and their work.

By Rachael Garrity

Lawyer jokes are a lot like espresso drinks—everywhere, (or if you prefer legalese-type words, ubiquitous)—but fun to share and rarely as memorable as you thought they’d be. Lawyers themselves, though, defy accurate generalization just like every other group does, but most often share some basic characteristics. Then there is The Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg.

The firm’s focus is on business litigation and business counseling, which often also

includes issues of intellectual property. All pretty pinstriped, right? Not so.

Creative minds are at work. If intellectual property were central to your work and you wished to build some name recognition and at the same time distinguish your firm from your competitors, how better to do it than to link yourself with those who have intellectual property to protect—like art.

Enter The Artful Lawyer, a not-for-profit subsidiary [Section 501C(4) of the tax code], that is part client-finder, part community service, part interior decoration and all excitement builder.

Diana Francis, marketing manager at Creekmore, joined the firm in 2011 just as the offices were moving into a new space facing Blacksburg’s North Main Street. When partner James Creekmore (opportunity for another big word here—eponymous) mentioned that he had too little art to cover the wall space in the new offices, Diana offered to help find local pieces based on the contacts she had made working at Main and



Paintings line the wall of the law firm

Lee, the Blacksburg gallery operated by her brother-in-law, Peter Sforza.

That was August 2011. By December, Diana had moved from her position as paralegal to the marketing slot, and began working on a Christmas party featuring five local artists. Blacksburg turned out—150 people to be exact.

Today there is not only an eclectic array of pieces throughout the offices, but a full schedule of shows. The current one, entitled “Whet Your Palette,” focuses on recycled art in honor of Earth Day April 22. Artists featured in the show work in a wide range of media: jewelry, recycled paper, recycled wire, and satellite art, to name a few. Also included is art from elementary school students and a fundraiser for the Police Unity Tour Fund from an artist who makes bicycle bags.

Not your garden-variety stuffed shirt operation, right? There’s more. The contract between the firm and the artists is simple,

a one-pager. The firm takes no commission from art that is sold. And Diana shares her skill and contacts with community organizations. Last December, for example, she managed a silent auction that netted \$1,000 for the Montgomery County Museum.

Plus, the space that the firm once inhabited is now being rented out as studios for local artists. “Our mission,” insists Diana, “is to support local artists and artisans, and we define ‘local’ to include not only the New River Valley, but Floyd County and the Roanoke Valley.”

Her enthusiasm is infectious, and fed by an obvious passion. “I feel as if I’ve been given the opportunity to not only have a job I like, but to be creative.”

Four attorneys, an equal number of support staff, countless local artists, and large groups of Blacksburg citizens who look forward to the opening of the shows at The Artful Lawyer no doubt hope she continues to harness that zeal. 

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ENTRE



Liv Kiser

Acupuncturist Alexander Davis: “The beauty of not having insurance is, people are paying their own money and they’re going to try to do most of what I say.”

‘Fixing the root of the problem’ >

Executive Summary:

Acupuncture of Roanoke’s Alexander Davis found Roanoke a congenial setting for his lifelong dream of opening a healthcare practice, and he was right about the move. He’s thriving.

By Randolph Walker

Alexander Davis always wanted to be a doctor. “My dad’s a doctor, my brother’s a doctor.” But after college, adventuring around the world proved more alluring than medical school. He climbed in the Himalayas

and taught skiing in Europe. Eventually he settled into a job teaching science in an alternative school. But he kept coming back to health care.

Travel to India, Thailand and Burma, plus exposure to Taoism, an ancient Chinese philosophy, influenced his choice of profession. The core text of Taoism is the Tao Te Ching, variously translated as The Way and Its Power or The Classic of the Way and Virtue. Its brief, poetic chapters offer advice for living a life of balance and harmony.

“I came across acupuncture and I realized it was based on the Tao Te Ching philosophy that I really appreciated. Just suddenly it made sense to me. You can approach anything in the world with that philosophy.”

Davis, 52, finds that symptoms of pain or insomnia are directly related to either physical trauma or life circumstances. “I actually feel like I’m fixing the root of the problem, not minimizing superficial symptoms, and I feel like it’s very safe.”

Alexander searched high and higher for a place to start his acupuncture practice. “I grew up in the mountains [of Colorado] and wanted to go somewhere different,” he says. “A friend of mine told me about Roanoke. Here you have mountains, wonderful places to walk to.”

Roanoke turned out to be fertile ground. “I looked at Charlottesville but there’s a bunch of acupuncturists there. Roanoke had hardly any. I had a full practice in six months.”

That was in 2004. Today, Davis’s Acupuncture of Roanoke practice on Grandin Road (www.acupunctureofroanoke.com) is still going strong, despite lack of insurance coverage for acupuncture in Virginia.

Alexander says there are about six licensed Oriental medicine practitioners in the Roanoke Valley, plus some chiropractors and physicians who perform acupuncture.

Acupuncturists are licensed by the Board of Medicine, part of Virginia’s Department of Health Professions. “In the last 10 years a lot of states have increased the scope of practice and requirements,” he says.

Alexander's qualifications include a master's degree in Oriental medicine from Southwest Acupuncture College in Santa Fe, N.M.

In New Mexico and California, insurance carriers are required to cover acupuncture. In states where it isn't covered, patients can pay for treatments with funds from flexible spending and health savings accounts. The practice charges \$65 per hour.

"The beauty of not having insurance is, people are paying their own money and they're going to try to do most of what I say," Alexander says.

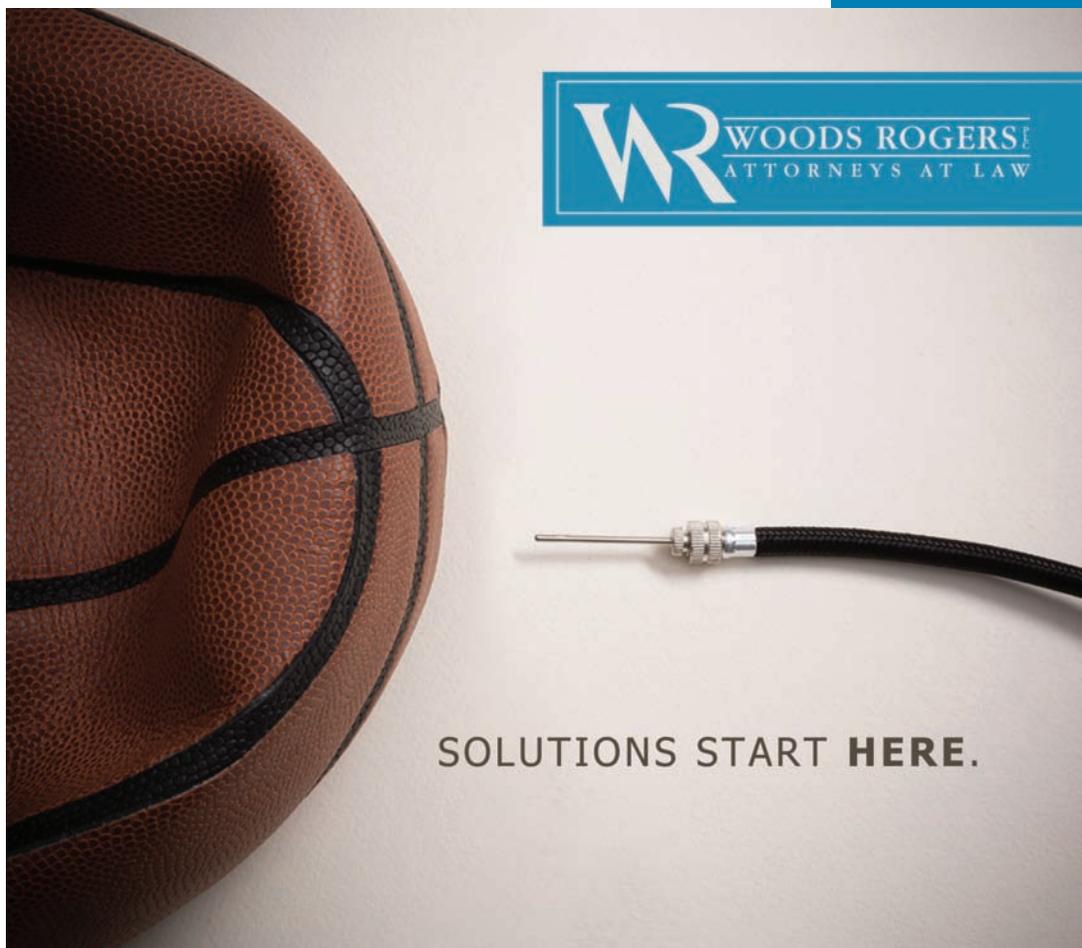
As an Oriental medicine practitioner, his treatments aren't limited to needles. He says, "If you came to see me, I would do Oriental body work and herbs. I would also go over diet. Diet therapy in Oriental medicine

is a lot more sophisticated. Diet is a way to become healthy, not just lose weight."

Alexander also offers several styles of Oriental bodywork, including tuina, a Chinese style, and shiatsu, a Japanese style. Either may be used in conjunction with acupuncture and herbs.

When patients visit, significant medical problems—such as those requiring surgery—have usually been confronted, so he can focus on relieving symptoms.

Alexander sees patients with female issues, insomnia and anxiety. "Those all respond very well to acupuncture ... Three quarters of my practice is pain—neck pain, back pain, shoulder pain," he says. "I would expect significant relief in three treatments. It might not be fixed, but they can say, 'Wow, this is significantly better.'" 



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Tech Scoop

Say 'cheese' >

Executive Summary:

Don't worry about the photo's focus. You can do that later.

By Michael Miller

Has this ever happened to you?

You're standing there at the zoo, the spouse and kids are finally lined up, faces clean, clothes reasonably on, their eyes open and mostly pointed at you. The camera is on the tripod and the self-timer is set to 10 seconds. You push the button and rush over to join the family. Click!

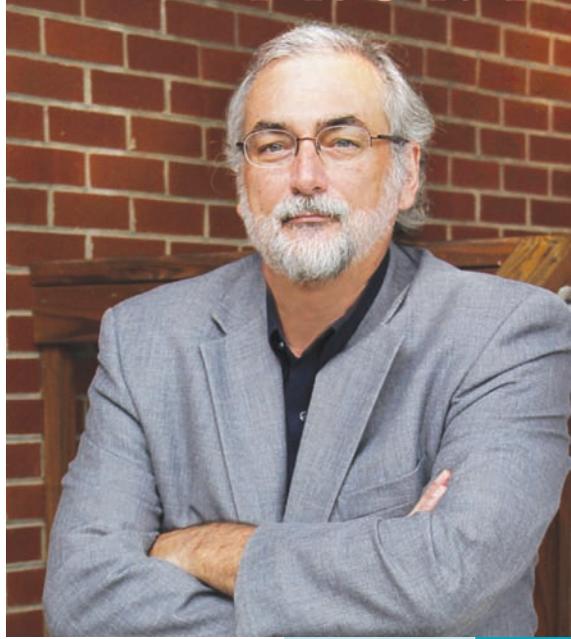
But when you look at the photo, the only thing in focus is the giant grizzly bear that was sneaking up in the cage behind you. Everybody else is a blurry mess, although you can see in great detail the leftover lunch stuck in the grizzly's teeth (hopefully not a visitor).

In the old days, you would not have found out your vacation snap was ruined until you got the film developed, perhaps years later. Digital cameras now allow you to experience your incompetence almost immediately.

But all that may soon be a thing of the past, because it is now possible to take pictures with a camera that will let you focus the images however you like, after you take the photo.

That's right, the camera is called Lytro, and it promises to revolutionize digital photography.

In a normal digital camera, there is a large front lens that focuses an image onto a chip that contains several million tiny light sensors, each recording a tiny portion of the image, just like the lens and retina in



Michael Miller

your eye. Software inside the camera converts the data from the sensor into an image file each time you press the button to take a photo.

The Lytro, instead, uses a lot of tiny lenses positioned over the sensor matrix, so that each "pixel" in the sensor is actually seeing a composite of light from all directions. This is called "light field" capture, because it doesn't really save an image, but rather saves a digital representation of all the light, somewhat like the eye of a fly. The special software in the camera then allows you to rebuild the image with the focus anywhere you like.

The camera is a rectangular box measuring about an inch square by five inches long, with an LCD touch screen on the back. It could be compared to a sort of visual iPod, and it costs about the same.

I am excited about this photographic development. No longer will I have to explain to my wife why my Virginia Tech football game photos always turn out with blurry players in the foreground and crystal clear cheerleaders in the background. With the press of a button, I can focus wherever I like in the field of view, thereby eliminating the need to sleep on the couch every night after a home game. 



all photos: Tom Field

Frank and Debbie Moeller

Work Spaces

Of Mice and Beer >

Executive Summary:

Finding a craft beer, even locally, is becoming not that hard to do. But building the brewery to make it? That's like telling a small rodent he can fly.

By Tom Field

First of all, it's not a bat. Bartleby Hopsworth is the brand/logo/mascot of the brand new Flying Mouse Brewery off the winding little road between Daleville and Troutville. And he is indeed, a mouse. But he's determined to fly, so he invents wings, straps them on, and takes off—looking like a mechanical marvel from a Steampunk fantasy.

"You can be something really small and still be something incredible... from invention," says Frank Moeller.

And that's the idea behind this new brewery.

Frank left his engineering job in August 2011 to strap on new wings in pursuit of his passion. He had been brewing his own beer for 18 years, and at the urging of his wife, Debbie, he made the leap to running a



brewery even before he had a site.

An abandoned concrete fabrication plant out in Botetourt County turned out to be a great place to set up; and though Frank and Debbie just closed on it in February, they are determined to get the 18,000 square foot facility on the 15 acre property ready for production by Fall. The couple is also excited about the location because it is convenient from interstate (just minutes from Botetourt exit 150 off I-81), close to the growing commercial retailers nearby, and right off the route for both Appalachian Trail hikers and bicyclers. It's also snuggled between two heavily wooded ridges with an opening from the building that serves as a perfect frame for viewing Tinker Mountain.

The story of the flying mouse is all part of

the business. Frank calls it the "anti-couch potato" side of brewing and beer. Flying Mouse is an "iconic image" that's all about the outdoors, the sense of adventure, even the appreciation of family.

"There are a lot of craft beers that take off on the wine industry," Frank says, meaning they can be a bit snobby. "That's not us. We want to make palatable session beers, a good local product..."

"And local hangout," Debbie chimes in.

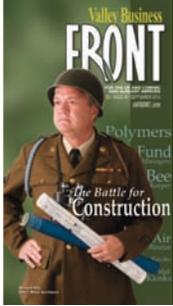
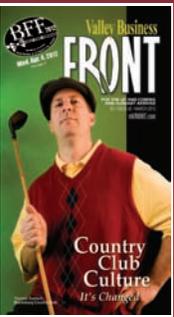
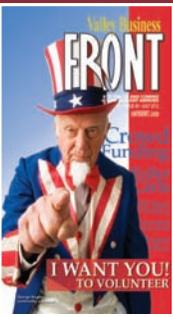
While Frank still uses his engineering skills, as a consultant, and in building the brewery, Debbie still works full time at her accounting job. Yes, she'll be running the numbers and books for Flying Mouse. The couple met as students at Virginia Tech.

Flying Mouse Brewery: Evolution Plans >



- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Entrance Gate | 8. Outdoor Patio |
| 2. A.T. Hiker Shelter | 9. Future Grain Silos |
| 3. Hops & Herbs Garden #1 | 10. Brewery |
| 4. Public Parking | 11. Bicycle Event Parking |
| 5. Hops & Herbs Garden #2 | 12. Stage |
| 6. A.T. Showers & Toilets | 13. Lawn Seating |
| 7. Offices & Lab | |





Coming Up...

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.



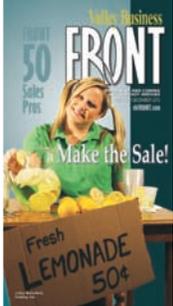
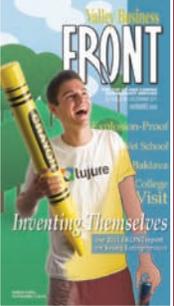
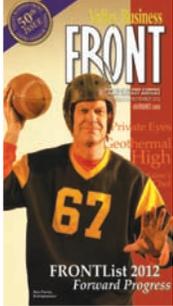
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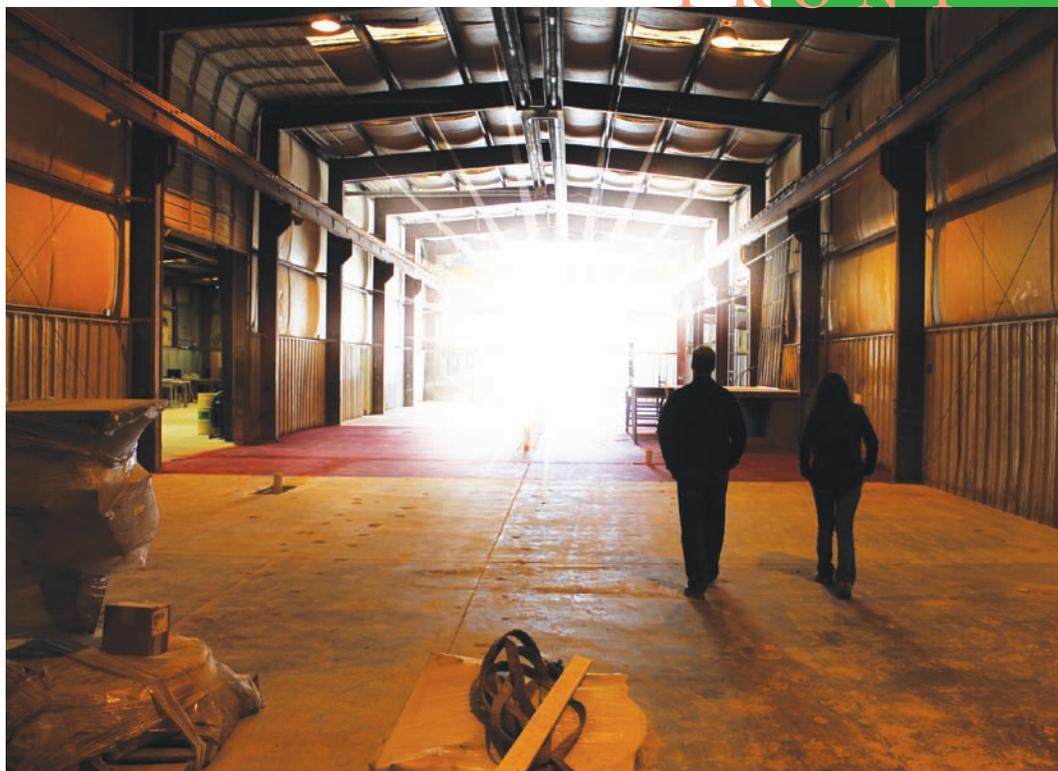
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They have three teenage children, Zoe, Clark, and Heather.

To be a "hangout," the idea is to have Flying Mouse Brewery become a public destination, for regular patrons and people passing through. There's a clearing and natural rising bank on one end of the property that's perfectly suited for music and entertainment or special events; and Frank intends to configure the brewing operations inside in such a way for visitors to walk right up and watch. The large solid building contains wide open

areas as well as a separate "wing" for offices. There is a lot of room to dream.

"It feels good spending your days working hard, but doing what you want to do," says Frank.

That's good. It's going to take a lot of work, engineering, accounting, and entrepreneurial spirit to get those mechanical wings flapping strong enough to really take off.

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all photos: Rachael Garrity

Preparing the food at the Merc.

Bringing them back to Draper >

Executive Summary:

Draper Mercantile in Montgomery County has become more than just a store. Much, much more.

By Rachael Garrity

“Build it and they will come” is not only a catch phrase for the feel-good baseball myth that attracted millions to the movie “Field of Dreams,” but the amorphous idea behind lots of businesses that have failed, and a few that have succeeded—wildly. The flip side is, “Now that we have them here, what can we do to get them back.”

For Debbie and Bill Gardner the success of one business gave birth to the idea for another, and in many ways they have lived out the “field” of dreams, minus the smelly socks and chewing tobacco, because they believe in what they do enough to take the time to make it better—and bigger.

It all began in June 2002 when they decided

to open up their vacation cabin snuggled along the New River to renters. That cabin is now one of 33 vacation properties the couple operates (five of which they own) as part of New River Retreat.

“In the beginning,” Debbie remembers, “we had to create our own market. Southwest Virginia has truly begun to come into its own as a destination in the last decade, but when we got into this business, we had to quite literally either design or find the attractions to put into those books you keep in vacation places about what to do and how to have fun.”

As the business mushroomed, they also needed office space, and they were eager to showcase the rich culture that bespeaks the New River and its surrounds. So, in 2008 they bought a building that had been most recently a furniture store, but had served myriad purposes since its early 19th Century construction—a general store, a barber shop, a blacksmith, the post office, a dress shop, an antiques emporium and even a branch of the Pulaski County library. Draper Mercantile—the Merc—was born.

Readying the large frame structure for its latest iteration required a great deal of work. While Bill spent the majority of his time on the printing business he operates in North Carolina, Debbie climbed a learning

RETAIL / SERVICE FRONT

curve far steeper than she'd anticipated.

She admits that had she known how tough the start-up would be, she might just have decided to forego the effort. Instead, though, she has created a thriving restaurant, a stage for performers, a private room for special events, a small specialty grocery and a gallery space to showcase the creations of local writers, craftspeople and artists.

Debbie's already soft voice becomes even quieter when she says, "You know, there's

includes the mentoring of a staff of 24 at the Merc, 11 full-time and 13 part-time. "I tell them all I've done is build the platform. They need to realize the possibilities."

With great sincerity, she recounts the story of a woman in her 80s who lived across the street and come over to help scoop ice cream—a task she had performed for her father when he owned the store fronted by a soda fountain that then inhabited the Merc—when Bike America riders swarmed through the facility last year. "She sat there



So many local people have told us that this has been a gathering place for 125 years, and I felt a deep responsibility to honor that role.

—Debbie Gardner

just a certain energy about this place that you can't ignore. So many local people have told us that this has been a gathering place for 125 years, and I felt a deep responsibility to honor that role. Those same customers, who are matter-of-fact, middle-of-the-road people, have mentioned the energy that seems to flow from these walls. And it's become a central part of how we do business."

How Debbie Gardner "does business" also

in the rocking chair with tears gliding down her face," Debbie recalls, "and said how much she wished her father could see the Merc now."

A sellout Sunday brunch and a regular Wine Down Friday event are only two of the varied attractions that bespeak a thriving operation that is a startling mixture of history, creativity and heart. Maybe Kevin Costner should take off his baseball mitt and pay a visit. 



The fare is pure heaven.



The signs give an old-style flavor.



Dan Smith

Thomas Bagby: “There are 40-plus vacancies [on the Virginia bench] and there are backlogs [of cases] that need to be dealt with.”

New president, new agenda >

Executive Summary:

Roanoke’s Woods Rogers’ attorneys have been in a high-profile position as president of the Virginia Bar Association six times and the latest top exec has some distinct plans.

By Dan Smith

Thomas Bagby is No. 6, but that is of little concern to him. No. 6 on this list is impressive enough.

Tom was installed in January as the 6th Woods Rogers attorney to head the organization since 1928. The VBA has existed since 1888 and was instrumental in helping organize the Virginia Bar 50 years after its founding. The association is a lobbying and service arm and the Bar regulates what lawyers and lobbies for the profession. They work together on projects where the Bar is prohibited from going (like lobbying).

And the boys are not the only state

representatives for Woods Rogers: Elizabeth Perot was recently named president of the Virginia Association of Defense Lawyers.

Tom, who is 62, is a former trial attorney with the U.S. Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division, where he handled a lot of pattern and practice employment discrimination cases. He served as a law clerk in the District of Columbia to U.S. District Judge June L. Green for two years before joining the Department of Justice. He earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Virginia where he was a walk-on basketball player for two years. He co-wrote *Labor & Employment Law in Virginia: A Business Guide for Employers* for the Virginia Chamber of Commerce.

Tom’s legal practice involves employment law, representing employers, and he counsels employers on employment law.

He has worked his way through the ranks to become president of the association, a voluntary membership organization (the Bar is required) and it’s a position he’s serious about, one he wants to make work for the benefit of lawyers. His first concern, he says, is that Virginia is short

a lot of judges for political and funding reasons. "It has become a critical issue," he says, his brow furrowing. "There are 40-plus vacancies [on the Virginia bench] and there are backlogs [of cases] that need to be dealt with. Companies and individuals can't get disputes resolved."

This is more than an inconvenience, says Tom. "This is a state that wants to be business-friendly and you can't do that if you're holding up legal decisions. It could affect economic development if [people making moving decisions] companies see that."

The Virginia district and circuit courts "are very short of judges. There are a couple of vacancies in Roanoke and there's a study being done to tell us where the most vacancies are the most acute. Funding seems to be a problem now, with

the economy the way it is and people vying for more [government] money."

He'd like to instigate some judicial reforms dealing with better funding for Legal Aid ("It's just fair. Poor people need legal protection, too") and the standard of proof needed to set aside a conviction. The latter is based upon a specific case, where an innocent man spent 22 years in prison before his innocence was determined (he's working in the Attorney General's office these days, Tom says).

Woods Rogers, with 65 lawyers, is the largest firm west of Richmond and with all those lawyers walking around, Tom is going to get some help as he puts in his hours (the presidency "ranges between 20 percent of his time to 100 percent," he says). I couldn't do it without their support," he says. 

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The CHS goal: “Making a different model of education available to as many families as we possibly can.”

—Josh Chapman



Randolph Walker

Josh Chapman (left) and John McBroom in the auditorium named for McBroom’s mother.

A ‘moral imperative’ in education >

Executive Summary:

Here’s how Community High School is swimming against the tide of rising educational costs, making high-end education available to far more students.

By Randolph Walker



Dan Smith

Exterior of the renovated downtown warehouse that became Community High.

John McBroom had many phone conversations like this. He’d be discussing Community High School of Arts & Academics with a prospective parent. The conversation would be going fine, then the parent would ask about the tuition.

“As soon as I’d say that number, the parent would say, ‘Thank you very much, we’ll call,’ or else they’d hang up,” recalls McBroom, the school’s administrative director.

Now more conversations will end on a happy note. In an age of escalating costs, the private school in downtown Roanoke is going against the grain, slashing tuition from \$10,200 to \$5,000, starting with the 2013-14 school year.

In fiscal 2011-12, the school’s expenses of \$1,064,156 exceeded revenues by \$55,617, according to Form 990. So how does cutting tuition make sense? Community is able to make the move through the generosity of donors, says Josh Chapman, academic director, who called the board’s decision “a moral imperative.” Total donations for 2011-12 amounted to \$643,000 from people who wish to remain anonymous.

“Most private schools K through 12 are

tuition driven, and we have been too, historically," says Chapman, "but thanks to some committed sustained gifts and the financial management of the board, we're able not to be as tuition driven as we used to be." Community has "folks who are able to commit to giving every year going forward. We can cover a significant percentage of tuition from that money."

Some schools might have chosen to put the bulk of donations into an endowment. "We are working on building our endowment, as well," says Chapman, "but looking 20 years down the road doesn't do the valley much good now."

Another choice might have been additional bricks and mortar. "When a school's lucky like we are in that way, a lot of times they invest that money back in non-instructional building—fancier dorms, gymnasiums, student centers," says Chapman. "That's not our board's philosophical position." Its goal is "making a different model of education available to as many families as we possibly can."

Community offers small class sizes, with a total of 42 students in grades 9 through 12. "I think of us as progressive, alternative, college preparatory, and innovative," says Linda Thornton, chairwoman of the board.

There are no organized sports teams, although Thornton playfully notes "we do have all of downtown Roanoke to play in."

The various arts are emphasized. The school's rock and jazz ensemble was selected to play in FloydFest, says McBroom, who is also a music teacher. Its award-winning and intensely creative Marginal Arts Festival (named the Best of the Arts by FRONT in 2010 and has been a Perry F. Kendig winner) has become a major annual Roanoke event.

The building's showpiece is the 150-seat June M. McBroom Theatre, named after John McBroom's mother. The theater was created in 2011 when Community moved into a repurposed warehouse on East Campbell Avenue and is used by the school and the community for



Randolph Walker

Algebra students getting one-on-one instruction.



Randolph Walker

Rashad Clark (left), Jonah Woodstock work together on a project.



Dan Smith

Josh Chapman in lab with a CHS class.

arts presentations and education.

The building is owned by Innovative Educational Partners. Everyone involved in that group is a supporter of the school, says Thornton. A favorable rental situation adds to the school's financial strength.

Even with the tuition cut, some students will qualify for, and receive, financial aid, Chapman says.

There are few families for whom college tuition is not an issue, he says. It's a concern for families with older siblings already in college, as well as families looking ahead to college costs.

Chapman says that services won't be trimmed as a result of the tuition cut. In any case, tuition only covers a little more than a third of the educational cost per child.

Thornton expects enrollment to rise, though probably not over 60.

Shortly after the tuition cut was announced in March, Chapman heard from a relieved parent.

The parent had just told her daughter that she would be able to apply to Community. "That made me feel really good," he says, "because that's a conversation with a parent we might never have had." 



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Randolph Walker

Pete Eshelman, Beth Doughty

Recruiting outside >

Executive Summary:

Roanoke's newest industrial recruitment policy is about bringing in people first, followed by industry. And the great outdoors is a big part of that lure.

By Randolph Walker

In the mid 2000s the Roanoke Regional Partnership's board reassessed its economic development strategy.

"Our business was totally focused on attracting big boxes where people make things," says Beth Doughty, who started as executive director in 2008. "The old theory is you attract jobs and people follow. The

new theory is you attract people and jobs follow in search of talent."

The partnership still wants to attract big boxes, but there was a new angle in the five-year plan launched in 2008.

"We have installed the outdoors as the regional narrative that enables us to get to our ultimate goal, which is to monetize the outdoors as an asset and attract people, money and ideas around the outdoors," says Doughty.

Recreation already accounts for a significant share of the region's economy. At least 2,500 individuals are employed in the Roanoke and New River Valley providing outdoor recreational services, or in manufacturing, distribution, retail or services for the outdoor market, according to statistics provided by the partnership.

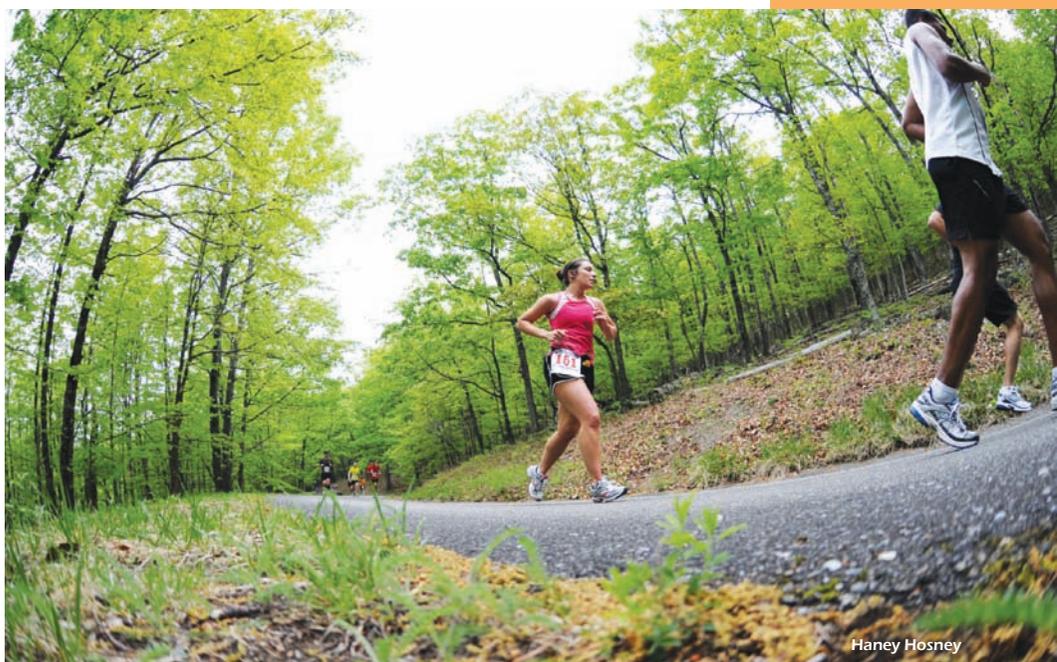


Kemper Fant

Woman in the pack for the Blue Ridge Marathon.

When comparing the Roanoke region's assets with those of competitors, outdoor recreation stands out. "Our advantage is twice as strong in that sector as it is in any other sector," says Doughty. "There aren't very many [regions] that have the natural assets and the capacity to promote those assets. We have a distinct advantage."

The first step, she says, was getting local residents to buy into it—which wasn't hard. "We could not have sold this [outside Roanoke] if the people here didn't believe it," she says. "Part of that was building the image or brand or reputation as an outdoor town locally, then you turn them into ambassadors."



Haney Hosney

Photo taken along the course of the Blue Ridge Marathon.



RRP

GO Outside Roanoke events are for everybody.

To help achieve that goal, the partnership hired Pete Eshelman as director of outdoor branding. Since Eshelman came on board in 2009, the partnership has started a weekly email newsletter, developed roanokeoutside.com, co-founded the GO Outside festival in cooperation with Roanoke Parks and Recreation, and launched the Blue Ridge Marathon.

“We recognized we didn’t have a signature outdoor event to attract people to the area,” says Eshelman. “The event’s had more than a million dollars in economic impact in three years. Orvis [which has a downtown Roanoke store] has its best weekend of

the year on the marathon weekend.”

The marathon’s route, says Doughty, was “specifically developed to showcase our assets,” including the urban environment, Mill Mountain, the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Roanoke River Greenway, and the river.

The strategy has resulted in increased recognition. Roanoke was voted “Best Mountain Town” by Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine. The Blue Ridge Marathon made the Weather Channel’s list of 15 Toughest Marathons. GO Outside was featured in Running Times.



RRP



RRP



RRP

While hotel bookings, restaurant visits, registration fees and retail purchases are all welcome, the partnership is looking beyond those. The expectation is that exposure to Roanoke's outdoor charms will lead to start-ups and relocations. "We're looking for long term sustainable economic impact," says Doughty.

The biggest fish landed so far has been Backcountry.com, which located a fulfillment center in Christiansburg. The partnership has also assisted several new or expanding businesses including UnderDog Bikes, Walkabout Outfitter, River Rock Climbing, and

East Coasters Bike Shop.

Roanoke's outdoor assets also help existing businesses attract and retain young talent, for example, in the medical and technological fields. Eshelman compares Roanoke with other metro areas: "Five minutes after work, you can be on your bike, or you can be stuck in traffic for an hour."

Regardless of age, it hasn't been hard to get people on board with the outdoor strategy. Says Doughty: "I give talks to the Rotary, Kiwanis, and I see the light bulbs going off in people's heads." 

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A short goodbye >

My View >

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

This will be my last column for FRONT, maybe my last column for anybody. I'm leaving the magazine I helped start 4 ½ years ago in order to pursue the growing bucket list I've accumulated, one that includes four books in various stages of completion.

This has been what any fool would call a "labor of love," if you'll pardon the cliché. Tom Field and I founded FRONT as a reaction to the takeover of the Blue Ridge Business Journal by people we had no confidence in. We were employees and could not go along with the plan that looked to us as if it were designed to kill a publication we'd put a lot of blood and sweat into—me for 20 years. The BRBJ was unceremoniously put to rest (without the dignity of an announcement in its pages) two years—and a lot of money—later.

FRONT was more a reflection of our vision and values than anything that had come before. I don't want to speak for Tom, whose design of the magazine has been a huge part of its success, but FRONT gave me the freedom to do what I know how to do, a kind of journalism I'd been learning since 1964 when, at the age of 18, I became a copy boy for the Asheville Citizen-Times in my hometown. I couldn't even type the day I took the job, but the sports copy boy had left for the newsroom the day before and a warm body was needed. I had that. I had enthusiasm, too, though I didn't know anything. Nothing at all.

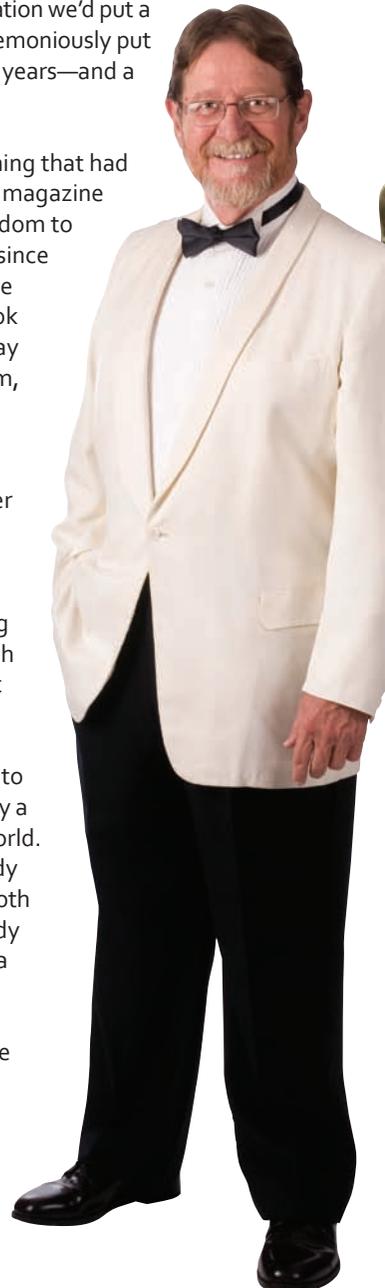
This was a time when half the newsroom didn't have a college degree and those journalists were as good as they are now, better in a lot of cases because they hadn't had their courage nailed to the wall by incompetent—non journalist, bottom-line slave—executives. It was a time when young people got one-on-one instruction from mentors and were led into the profession, taking baby steps. That, I suspect, was expensive for the company (though my beginning salary was more an allowance at \$5 a night. I spent it learning to type).

Our goal over the past few years has been to tell stories, not just to give you bland reports from writers whose voice has been stolen by a system that homogenizes words. That is not acceptable in my world. We've sought to find people, events and situations that everybody else is ignoring for one reason or another—telling stories that are both fascinating and instructive. Many of our writers are talents nobody else wanted or those too young to have a resume. They've been a shining success and I've adored them all.

Tom will continue that focus on good writing and storytelling. I've said from the first day that FRONT could afford to lose me, but it couldn't operate without him. He can do my job. I can't do his.

So, the next step is to finish these dang books that have been hanging over my every day begging for attention. I think they

continued on Page 52



Dan the man >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

I remember that summer day in 2008 when I walked into Dan Smith's office. My mind and spirit were set, and I was past the frustration that had been building since the first quarter. I knew I was leaving the business journal that I had played a role in starting back in 1987, and in a strange turn of events, had returned to manage in 2005. Dan would be the very first person to hear the news.

As I began to lay it out on the table that afternoon, he stopped typing and turned around to face me. That was uncharacteristic, so I knew I had his attention. There has never been a need to beat around the bush with Dan, so I simply announced that I was leaving. I then shared my disappointment in the newspaper management, because for the first time since they bought the journal from its second, private publisher, I had helped navigate the venture into profitable performance; and we were tracking to have our very best year on record. The product was strong, the page count higher, the staff was more efficient than ever, the morale up and spirits high. Dan, on the other hand, had suffered through two sales, major staff changeovers, and in particular with the newspaper's ownership, a handful of general managers coming and going nearly every year in the past decade, like a string of text messages on a teenager's phone the night before the school dance.

Up until this point, the journal had been a venture property; but with organizational changes, the core newspaper decided to step in and change everything. They would absorb the business journal and discontinue the very things that made the journal unique. In other words, eliminate the way we presented a publication that made it something to "anticipate."

But while I had all this on my mind, I also had something else up my sleeve. I had decided I was not going to just walk away. I had announced to the newspaper publisher that if they indeed decided to take the journal in that direction, it would not survive. My prognostication was rejected.

"Dan," I said, "I really can't just walk away. I don't like to say this kind of thing out loud, but I'm actually proud of what I accomplished here." I mean, it's pretty amazing that in less than three years we went from questionable existence to a tight operation with increasing market response and favor with every new week. (The day I was hired as general manager it was announced at my introductory meeting with the staff that one sales rep just resigned that day, and the journal was so far in the red that even the short term future was doubtful.)

So, I pulled out a couple of pieces of paper. I told Dan I was just going to start my own publication. It looks a little different (it cannot appear to be a newspaper or tabloid); it does not run off a pre-published editorial calendar (so old school); and it covers all the core industry segments all the time (instead of a special focus one at a time throughout the calendar).

continued on Page 52



Smith / My View

from Page 50

have a good bit of potential, but three of them are novels and I'm having to learn how to be a novelist. It's not easy. Writing fiction is counter-intuitive to somebody who has dealt in fact for nearly 50 years, but I've never had more fun writing than when I'm with my characters, eagerly beginning each day without knowing where we're going with this story.

I'll also emphasize that this decision does not affect the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference, which I founded six years ago and will continue with until I croak, I suspect. We've already booked the marvelous Sherri Reynolds as next year's keynote speaker and recently I tried to tempt Sarah Vowell to join us. She said, "Talk to my agent." That's a "No."

I'll be doing some freelance writing on occasion (maybe even some for FRONT) to supplement my meager retirement income (I'm living proof that journalists aren't rich, or even middle income), but my attention will be on my stories and an update of the memoir I wrote four years ago, *Burning the Furniture* (now available on amazon.com in e-book). I've discovered that memoirs can be written prematurely. Mine was. I'm not dead yet and I've been doing a lot of living—some of it pretty interesting and all of it sober—since the book was published.

I've never been good at goodbye, so I won't say that. I'll likely see most of you in our usual places in the near future. I sure hope so. You mean a hell of a lot to me. 

Field / On Tap

from Page 51

It also won't look like a stuffy business report with men in suits staring at the camera. But in essence, it's guts were very similar to the voice the journal

had established over its 20 years.

Dan's next words floored me.

"I'll go with you."

Exactly 20 straight years of working and editing the business journal, and this man; this professional associate and good friend; this person whose politics were opposite of mine in just about every respect, and yet we could engage a civil conversation... was ready and willing to walk out and join a new, high-risk venture after two decades of formidably establishing himself with a well known and vested media brand. And it took him less than five seconds to make the decision.

That's Dan.

He doesn't beat around the bush. He's pretty much equipped to make up his mind at any given moment. That's why the stories flow from him and his words are so prolific in the Roanoke community. That's why there's always a camera in his hand.

And that matches the reason why we find another move on the horizon from Dan Smith today. I have no doubt he'll continue to have a camera in his hand. And increasingly, his other hand will be holding the hands of his grandchildren. Along with notepads and keyboards and theatre ticket stubs and new writings and old writings to finish up. You know, all the Dan Smith things we've come to expect.

I'm happy my partner and friend gets to spend a lot more time with his personal creative endeavors now, even though I'll miss him in the vocational capacity. He's passionate about what's going on, and that means everything when you want to make a difference.

Good luck, Chief. 



Most of the rest of the world doesn't operate on our time line — Page 21

Letters

On "Hardships" >

Good lord that piece is great. ["Working Through Hardship" FRONTcover story by Dan Smith; March 2013]. Read this, not because I'm blessed to be included, but because it's superb and real and encouraging, no matter who or where you are.

Pam Rickard
Roanoke

Fabulous article, Dan Smith!

Karen Dillon
Roanoke

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

Mark Young
Artist
Blue Ridge

Your words are such a gift to this [Roanoke] community!

Gloria Swann
Lynchburg

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

On "Wind" >

Just a note to thank Mike Miller for what I consider to be a fair presentation regarding wind generated electricity ["Wind Energy," April 2013 FRONTcover story].

I could not help but noting that Doug and Mary McCallum's investment appears to be a particularly poor example to demonstrate the viability of wind-generated electricity on any scale. With the total cost of their installation at \$78,000 and only \$600 worth of electricity realized over a year ... that reflects a payback in 130 years (10 times the life expectancy of the system).

I believe one big factor is that effect of federal and state incentive grants have drastically inflated the cost of the systems. Only four years ago, a client of mine installed an equally sized system, 10 kilowatts, at a total cost of \$55,000 including state and federal grants.

I totally agree that we are all in a crisis mode to find solutions to our increasing energy demands and atmospheric pollution. When we have a local forum opportunity through such an excellent publication as yours, I hope we can somehow explore these critical issues further.

Eldon Karr
Appalachian Architect
Bent Mountain

Your article on wind power is very well done, and so, so important. The area needs this information and reminder.

Dan Crawford
Sierra Club
Roanoke

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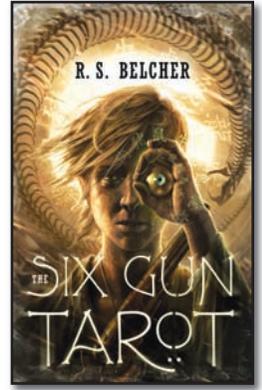
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Books @ the FRONT >

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



Rural chat

My guess is that you don't know Margo Oxendine, but you should and you can if you'll read her wonderful column collection, *A Party of One* (Snowy Mountain Publishing). Margo has been a working journalist for 30 years or more and writes a regular column for my pal Anne Adams at the Recorder in Monterey, one of the state's best small newspapers, the source of this book.

Margo is one of those rural columnists we all joked about for so long ("quaint," we called them), but her observations on life in the mountains and within herself are treasures of complex simplicity. Hers is a life most of us want and she is a marvelous—funny, insightful, direct, clever, artistic—writer.

This is Margo's second book. She's also written a play and a public TV documentary. A woman of broad scope, I'd say. (Buy it at PO Box 10, Monterey, Va., 24465. It's \$27.)

—Dan Smith

Belcher's debut

R.S. (Rod) Belcher's *Six-Gun Tarot* (Thor) presents a sci-fi feast: gods, angels, Lucifer, zombies, divine relics, ancient Chinese magic. Not to be outdone, the human characters have unique qualities as well. One housewife is a trained assassin with an ancient lineage. The town taxidermist has a power over the dead that greatly exceeds stuffing. Giant bats and rat-people get mentioned casually by townsfolk. Belcher's fictional town of Golgotha is not for the faint of heart.

Six-Gun Tarot is a debut novel that demands attention. Belcher (who has been a contributor to FRONT over the years) wisely eases the reader into chaos. The character-building is deliberate. By the time the heroes are in peril, my sympathy

for them reached a fever pitch. Emotional engagement is a mark of great writing. Belcher delivers that engagement. There's no obvious cliffhanger, but Golgotha draws evil from far and wide creating the potential for more stories. Clever, stylish, imaginative; "Six-Gun Tarot" will leave you satisfied.

—Dusty Wallace

Detective duo

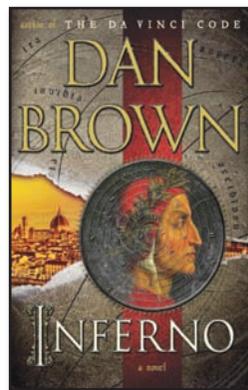
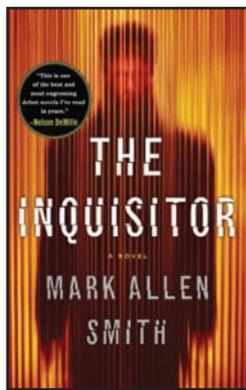
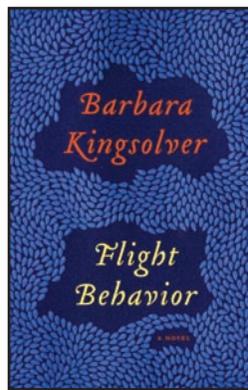
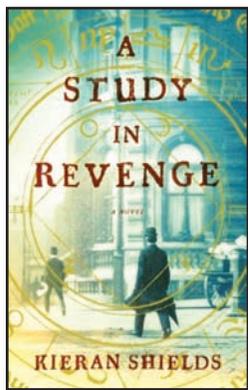
Kieran Shields' *A Study in Revenge* (Crown) is an inviting follow to last year's debut *The Truth of All Things*, in which Portland, Maine, Detective Archie Lean and uber-detective Perceval Gray (think cerebral, like a guy named Sherlock) team against evil. They're at it again here, trying to piece together the murder of a thief, the search for a lost daughter and all kinds of mysterious symbols.

This is a slow, complex reading that will require patience and attention for a good half of the read, but it's the last half that will reward that attention to detail. Shields is a solid writer with a workable series and interesting people dotted throughout. It will be interesting to see how these two develop in the future.

—Dan Smith

Kingsolver's 14th

Western Virginia-based Barbara Kingsolver's 14th book, *Flight Behavior* (HarperCollins) is an insightful, fast read that falls slightly short of her earlier exemplary works. It successfully grapples with the big dilemmas of climate change and media and political manipulation. It does so on Dellarobia Turnbow's Tennessee farm where her family raises sheep and the men contemplate logging the mountainside to ward off bankruptcy.



In the upheaval of common struggles, change arrives on that site as an unnatural phenomenon that worries the scientific world and leaves everyone else to merely wonder. In typical Kingsolver fashion, resolutions are satisfying and surprising and there are many characters to love.

It is the opening voice of the central character, Dellarobia, that doesn't ring true on the first 200 pages. At the start, her language and reflections are too polished for her humble roots (accredited to her having taken an AP English course in a subpar high school), but luckily the polish dulls midway and her voice rings more authentically. *Flight Behavior* is a multi-faceted reference that begins by speaking to Dellarobia's frustrated heart and expands to embrace a damaged world running out of time.

—Leah Weiss

Inspired by events

Mark Allen Smith is a former investigator for ABC's *20/20*. *The Inquisitor* (Henry Holt & Co.) is fiction, but its details are inspired by events Smith covered as a journalist. It's a character-driven story starring a professional torturer named Geiger, a freelancer who frequently works for the military and mob.

Geiger isn't malevolent. His capacity for violence is fueled by indifference. He abides by a strict ethical code that resembles (perhaps too much) Jeff Lindsay's Dexter series, with more psychological torture than physical. So you won't see Geiger hurting children or committing atrocities unfitting a protagonist. His aversion to hurting kids is the plot's catalyst.

Geiger has no friends, but allies help in his

quest to save a child from torture, because Geiger isn't the only interrogator out there and the others aren't as squeamish around kids. With simple, effective writing, Smith's imagination and expertise make for some truly grisly imagery. *The Inquisitor* is worth a look for fans of violent thrillers.

—Dusty Wallace

Brown's baaaaaack

Like Michael Crichton before him, Dan Brown knows how to tell a story. Like Crichton he's not a great writer, often not even a good one, but, oh, those stories—like *The Da Vinci Code*, which has sold 80 million copies. Brown's back (and back and back and back, like any franchise worth the income of a small country) with *Inferno* (as in "Dante's Inferno"), wherein our hero, long-suffering academic Robert Langdon, is trying to work out a civilization-threatening mystery and facing down all manner of evil.

As has become the case, Langdon faces a frightening adversary in his attempt to learn the truth, using Dante's epic poem as a base in finding the answers. Along the way, we get Italy's art, its hidden passages, Langdon's classic education and science and a good bit of speculative fun. As much fun as anything is waiting to find out who's most offended by Brown's stories, then looking for the counter-stories from those whose oxen have been gored.

—Dan Smith

(**The reviewers:** Dusty Wallace of Roanoke blogs regularly and reviews books and movies. Leah Weiss works at Virginia Episcopal School in Lynchburg and writes short fiction. Dan Smith is editor of FRONT.)



“Book” Review >

The **Ad 2 Roanoke** club (an AAF advertising club) held its annual **Portfolio Review** at Virginia Western Community College on March 23. Professionals in advertising and marketing reviewed communication and design works of students and others looking for creative jobs or professional development advice. Included in the Saturday morning group, were **Dana Sow** (left), a visual communications senior from Virginia Tech, reviewed by **Angie Martz**, a marketing traffic advisor with Carilion Clinic.



KnowledgeWorkers >

Christine Spalding, member services coordinator, and **Lindsey Eversole**, global partnership manager of **VT KnowledgeWorks** work the Fifth Annual **Entrepreneurship Challenge** at the Inn at Virginia Tech on April 10. The event included Tech Transfer and Student Business Concept competitions where five teams each pitched their ideas to a judging panel for a \$100,000 mentorship/business support award (Tech Transfer) and \$10,000 scholarship / summer workspace at VT Corporate Research Center (Student).



Songs of Blue Ridge Vineyard >

Jim Martin, who has played with Waylon Jennings and Reba McEntire, accompanies a Sunday wine tasting at **Blue Ridge Vineyard** in Botetourt County on April 7. The view is from the tasting room of "the barn" which features a Sounds of Summer concert series complete with mountain decor, rustic setting, and rolling hillside vineyard in Eagle Rock.

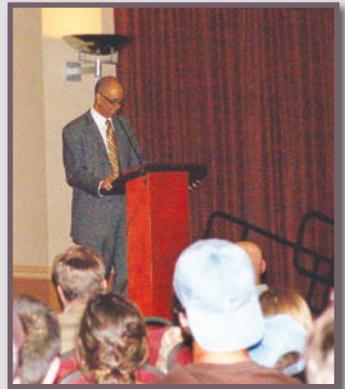


Vowell at Hollins >

Noted author **Sarah Vowell** poses with FRONT editor Dan Smith before her March 29 talk at Hollins University. Vowell is not only the author of several books with history themes, but she is also a Public Radio regular, frequent guest on shows hosted by Jon Stewart and David Letterman and voice star of the movie "The Incredibles." She drew a packed house at the Hollins Theater.

Belton at Roanoke College >

Marc Belton, executive vice president for global strategy, growth and marketing at General Mills Corp. addressed over 200 students and guests at Roanoke College on April 8 as part of the college's "Got Honesty?" program theme this year. Belton's topic was Honesty in Marketing, and in addition to sharing how his faith supplements his business activities, Belton said "integrity is key," and that executives must "act right even if it's at a cost to you."



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

CONTRIBUTORS

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Gene Marrano, a former sales and marketing executive in various manufacturing fields, is one of the most prolific journalists in the Roanoke Valley. He not only writes for several publications, but he has a television show ("Interview With Gene Marrano" on Cox Channel 9) and a radio show ("Roanoke This Week with Gene Marrano" on Fox Radio 910). [gmarrano@cox.net]

Michael Miller is senior licensing manager for Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties in Blacksburg. His consulting company is Kire Technology. With more than 25 years as an inventor and technology consultant, working with Fortune 500 companies and startups, he screens businesses for the World's Best Technology

Showcase and mentors tech startups through Development Capital Networks and the National Science Foundation. [mbmiller2@gmail.com]

Anne Piedmont is the president of Piedmont Research Associates, a marketing communications firm she has started after working for the Roanoke Regional Partnership as director of research for more than 18 years. She's also worked in public relations and journalism. She loves numbers and wants them to make sense for you. [annepied@yahoo.com]

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

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

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Randolph Walker graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a journalism degree in 1983. He has been a daily newspaper reporter in Roanoke and an advertising copywriter for the Edmonds Packett Group. He is now a freelance writer as well as a performing musician and guitar teacher. [rwalker25@cox.net]



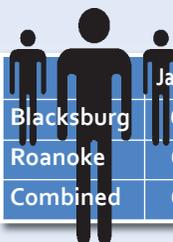
Sometimes, the best path to success is to strike out on your own — Page 22

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While unemployment rates in the Blacksburg and Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Areas were up in January, compared to both the previous month and the same month a year ago, housing is showing definite signs of recovery.

Unemployment/Employment

Unemployment rates in the Roanoke and New River Valleys dipped in January. The Blacksburg MSA showed more volatility, while the Roanoke MSA's stayed nearly steady over the year. Virginia's unemployment rate of 6.2 percent was up almost 13 percent from December, but up 3 percent from a year ago. The Roanoke rate rose at a slightly slower pace (12.2 percent) from December.



	Jan. 2012	Dec. 2012	Jan. 2013
Blacksburg	6.2%	5.4%	8.3%
Roanoke	6.3%	5.7%	6.4%
Combined	6.3%	5.6%	7.0%

On a more hopeful note, **initial unemployment claims** for the region fell by 61.5 percent during Week 11 of 2013 (March 8-March 14) from the same week last year. The regional drop was nearly identical to Virginia's 61.4 percent decline over the same period. The Roanoke MSA's initial claims fell by 65.5 percent, while the Blacksburg MSA dropped by 52.5 percent.

Week 11 2012	Week 11 2013
332	128

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Real Estate

Housing continues to be a bright spot for the local – and national – economy. The National Association of Realtors stated in its monthly news release: "February existing-home sales and prices affirm a healthy recovery is underway in the housing sector." Home prices locally in February were up 19.1 percent over the same month in 2012 (besting the 10 percent increase at the national level). The number of homes sold also is up from January 2012. The local average home price is 20.5 percent lower than the national average price of \$221,700. It should be no surprise, then, that the region ranks near the top (27th out of 225 MSAs) in the National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Opportunity Index. The Roanoke MSA (Blacksburg is not included in the survey) has an affordability index of 91.3 for the fourth quarter of 2012, meaning 91.3 percent of homes are affordable to families with a median income. The region ranks highest of all Virginia MSAs included in the index.



Feb. 2012	Jan. 2013	Feb. 2013
\$148,022	\$159,461	\$176,218

Feb. 2012	Jan. 2013	Feb. 2013
255	238	268

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

—By Anne Piedmont,
Piedmont Research Associates

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vbFRONT.com

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



Dan Smith

Andrea Shreeman had “one of those 3 a.m. brainstorm.”

A movie to die for >

Executive Summary:

Andrea Shreeman comes home to make her funny movie—about assisted suicide—because “you can’t shake this perfect little town.”

By Gene Marrano

Andrea Shreeman is trying to shake loose a little money in her hometown to make a movie.

The Roanoke native lives in Los Angeles now where she pursues her career as an actor and producer, but she has spent the last few months back home, looking to raise \$2 million for a feature film she plans to shoot in the Roanoke area in the fall.

“A Good day to Die” is the project, co-written by Andrea (she pronounces her first name Ahn-draya, but some of her old Roanoke friends call her Andi) and Gregor Collins. It is a dark comedy about assisted suicide. The star is octogenarian Cloris Leachman, on television now in “Raising Hope.” The Oscar and Emmy winner met Andrea through her son Morgan, after the two took an acting class together.

Leachman later saw Andrea in a play and the connection was made. At the film’s website thediemovie.com there’s a clip of the

TV and movie star sharing some sort of green soup recipe with Andrea. She also makes a pitch for funds. Andrea helped raise money for a documentary, “Fuel,” which won awards at the Sundance Film Festival in 2008.

Andrea is a Cave Spring High School graduate (class of 1987) who attended George Washington University on a gymnastics scholarship and later went

on to earn a master's in acting at the University of Southern California. She has been making that same money pitch recently, meeting with prospective investors. She officially kicked off her campaign with a meet and greet at the Patrick Henry Hotel in early March.

Shooting could start once the first \$800,000 or so is raised and Andrea (who also will have a supporting role in the movie) plans to conduct the month-long shoot in Roanoke even if she has to go elsewhere to raise some of the money.

The Virginia Film Office has told Andrea that tax credits are available for a movie shot here, but those credits would come after the money is raised privately. "A Good Day to Die" could also mean jobs, perhaps as many as 40 to 50 locally.

Filming "A Good Day to Die" in Roanoke made perfect sense to Andrea, who cut her acting teeth on stage at Mill Mountain Theatre. It came to her in "one of those 3 a.m. brainstorms," she says. Collins and director Emily Lou are also from Virginia. Lou ("The Selling") and Andrea made a scouting trip last year.

Roanokers have offered in-kind assistance like cast and crew housing, labor, transportation, filming locations, props, and the like. Roanoke City Manager Chris Morrill, who helped start a film office when he worked in Savannah, Ga., has been receptive. "We're riding on some of his

experience and expertise," says Andrea.

The City of Roanoke has pitched in officially, donating office space at the Mountain View Recreation Center. Economic Development Specialist Lisa Soltis notes that the city rolled out the red carpet for Sara Elizabeth Timmons when her film "Lake Effects" was shot around Smith Mountain Lake a few years ago.

Soltis is the local Virginia Film Office liaison in Roanoke. "We have a lot of calls, but usually people are filming commercials," she says. Soltis also points out that Roanoke "is one of the few cities," that does not require a special permit to film. "We're movie friendly."

Andrea's high school chum and local business owner John Lugar (Virginia Varsity Storage) has helped open some doors for her.

Andrea hopes that "A Good Day to Die," when it is made, will spark a dialogue. "It's about people being empowered [when] facing end of life issues—with their eyes wide open." Collins spent time as a caregiver for an ailing 93-year-old Holocaust refugee and even wrote a book on the experience.

As the producer Andrea will have to raise \$2 million, assemble a cast and crew, shoot, edit and market the film. She plans to make most of that happen in her old stomping grounds: "You can't shake this perfect little town." 

"Power To The People"

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

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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Banks

First Bank of Virginia has named **Bob Rotanz, Mark Atkinson, Richard Goodwin and Cliff Whitley** members of its local advisory board.



Snow

Michael Snow has joined StellarOne Bank's Wealth Management division as a Private Bank Advisor serving the New River and Roanoke Valleys.

Frank Chrzanowski has been named senior vice president of the Westlake location; and **Kristin Langford** has been promoted to branch manager of the downtown

Roanoke location of HomeTown Bank.



Murphy

Insurance

Bethany Murphy has been named vice president of Scott Insurance in Roanoke.



Vipperman

Andrew Vipperman has been promoted to vice president, controller of Shenandoah Life Insurance Co.

Investing

Dixon Hughes Goodman of Roanoke

has added **Adam Stevens** as an assurance associate; **Emily Blevens** as a tax associate; **Amanda Dearing** becomes a senior associate specializing in taxes; **Annette Mathenty** joins as a seasonal tax preparer; and **Mark Adkins** becomes a seasonal tax preparer.

Lisa Angle of the Downing Group of Merrill Lynch in Roanoke has earned her financial planner certification.

LEGAL FRONT



Maxwell

Law Firms

Richard C. Maxwell III, an attorney with Woods Rogers in Roanoke, has been named a

fellow of the American College of Bankruptcy.



Thompson

Lori D. Thompson, of Roanoke's LeClairRyan firm, has been elected to the board of governors of the Virginia Bar Association.



Hastings

Maryland law firm Whiteford Taylor & Preston has brought in **Michael Hastings**, formerly of LeClair Ryan in Roanoke, as a partner to work from its new office in Roanoke.

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WELLNESS FRONT

Counseling

The Botetourt Counseling Center in Blue Ridge has affiliated with counselor **Susan Highfill**.

Therapy Works in Roanoke has hired **Denise Legg**.



Abraham-Hardee

Education

The Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine in Blacksburg has named **Sofia Abraham-Hardee**, a pediatrics and osteopathic manipulative medicine faculty member and **Debbie West** director of institutional assessments and outcomes.



West

Pain Management

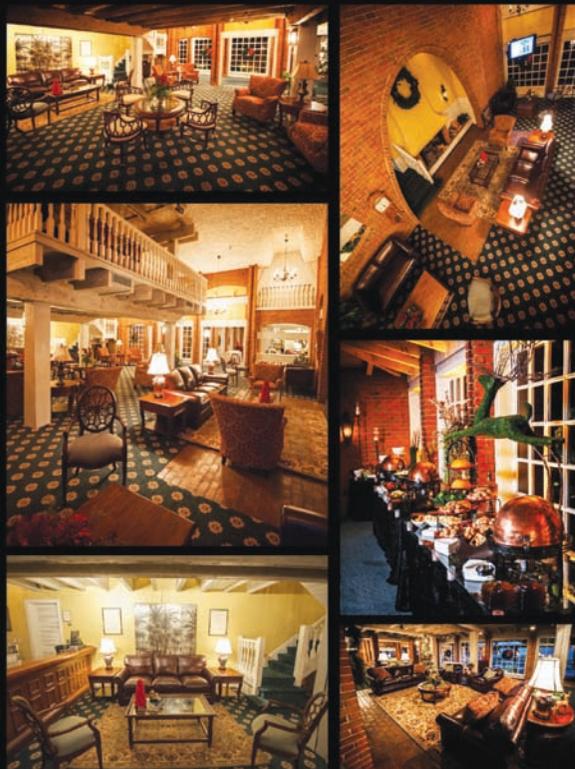
Arun Sun has joined Virginia Interventional

Pain & Spine Center in Roanoke. She has advanced knowledge in intrathecal pump therapy and treating musculoskeletal problems through trigger point injections, joint injections and peripheral nerve blocks.

Veterinary

The Virginia Veterinary

GOOD FOR BUSINESS ... & PLEASURE



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Hunting Hills
COUNTRY CLUB



HUNTINGHILLSCC.com

Career FRONT

Medical Association has added **Dr. Mark Finkler** of Roanoke Animal Hospital to its board of directors.

TECH/INDSTRY FRONT

Ron Poff has been named manager of global marketing brands of Mar-Bal Inc.



Snyder

Sue Snyder has been named president of D'Ardenne Associates.

Nick Brown has been named president of Carter's Cabinet Shop.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Architects/Engineers

Aecom's **Dustin Brookman** has

earned his professional engineering license.

Real Estate

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

Robin Atkins has joined Gwyn Harmon Realtors in Roanoke.

Darvis Real Estate in Roanoke has named **Sam McCoy** vice president of its new regional office.

John Spangler has been hired by Advantage Realty in Roanoke.

Margaret Galecki has been named vice president and general manager; **Shelly Baldwin** has been named director of relocation and business development; and **Carolyn Fedison** has been named treasurer of Coldwell Banker Townside Realtors.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT

Restoration

LeSavior (Nikki) Jones, Ariel Olson, Holley Pence, Josh Bullock and **Stacie Smith** of ServPro in Roanoke have earned certifications as water damage technicians.

Auto Sales

Larry Dunn of Roanoke's Woodson Honda has been honored by the American National Honda Motor Company for achieving Gold Master status and being the top-volume sales consultant in the company's zone.

Food

Melissa Dragoo is a new independent consultant in Roanoke with Tastefully Simple, a prepared foods franchise.

Organizations

AAA Mid-Atlantic

has named **Kyle Farr** a travel agent.

EDUCATION FRONT

Childhood Education

Early Learning Centers 460 East Center in Roanoke has promoted **Kayla Kitchens** to assistant director.



Shaw Collins



Garcia

Colleges/Universities

The Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine in Blacksburg has

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MEMBER FDIC

named **Ann Shaw Collins** a pediatrics and osteopathic manipulative medicine faculty member. **Maria Garcia** has been named coordinator for international and Appalachian outreach.

Ralph Badinelli has been named the Ralph Medinger Lenz Professor in Business; and **France Belanger** has been named the R.B. Pamplin Professor of Accounting and Information Systems by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors.

Guru Ghosh has been appointed vice

president for outreach and international affairs at Virginia Tech.

CULTURE FRONT



Henderson

Arts

Barry Henderson has been appointed by the Western Virginia Foundation for the Arts

and Sciences (Center in the Square) as a consultant, assisting in fund raising initiatives, operations, and fundraising.

OTHER FRONTS

Organizations

DePaul Community Resources in Roanoke has named **Amanda Stanley** executive director.

McLeod Family Foundation in Roanoke has named **Michelle Hills** executive director.

Compiled by Dan Smith



You can approach anything in the world with that philosophy

— Page 28

So much more.

vbFRONT.com

- > Lorton Retires from Carilion; Halliwill New CFO
- > Dual Winners in VTK Tech Transfer Challenge
- > Advance Auto Shuffles, Eliminates Executive Chairs
- > Interactive Achievement Gets Cash Infusion
- > Ground Broken for West End Center Project
- > Startup Business Workshop in Roanoke March 29>
- Red Sun Farms Bringing Jobs to Pulaski
- > Locking Down the Cell in Roanoke
- > Virginia Tech Climbing the Rankings Ladder
- > Life-Guard 12 To Get New Home in Lexington

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So many FRONTreaders just can't get enough in our monthly magazine. "Give us more!" they say. Well, we say, "OK." Read more stories and latebreaking updates on our moreFRONT blog.

- > Alleghany Gets 55 New Manufacturing Jobs
 - > Richfield Cuts a Ribbon on Rehab Center
 - > Roanoke's Luna Sells Secure Computing Group
 - > Norfolk Southern Cuts 140 Roanoke Jobs
 - > South Peak Plans New Hilton Garden Inn
 - > A Broadband Step Forward for Roanoke Valley
 - > Carilion Rolls Out (Stair) Wellness Campaign
 - > New Dentists Office Features Green Technology
 - > Girl Scouts Head New CEO of RVSPCA
 - > David Bandy New President at Spectrum
 - > Taubman Selects Art Museum Professional as ED
- and much more (of course; hence, the name)**



Advance Auto Parts

Advance shakes execs

Roanoke-based **Advance Auto Parts** is restructuring its executive leadership, hiring a Best Buy executive as president. The company will eliminate its COO and commercial sales and marketing top executives. George Sherman, who headed the Geek Squad at Best Buy, is the new president, stationed in Roanoke. Darren Jackson, former CEO and President, will now be CEO and will focus on strategy.

Kevin Freeland and Donna Broome held the eliminated positions of COO and president for commercial sales and marketing. Jim Durkin of Autopart International becomes senior VP for commercial business.

Project breaks ground

Freedom First Credit Union (FFCU), along with the City of Roanoke and the West End Center for Youth, held a groundbreaking ceremony March 21 to celebrate the beginning of construction for the West End revitalization project. Plans for the site include an urban mix of commercial and meeting space, a community pavilion with a full-service production kitchen, and gardens to encourage and promote healthy financial and physical lifestyles.

The project will be anchored by a full-service Freedom First branch scheduled to open in early 2014, which will serve the West End, Hurt Park, and Mountain View neighborhoods, as well as commuters to downtown Roanoke.

"This important project will enable Freedom First to reach into the community with the financial education and specialized products we've developed to serve people of modest means," says Credit Union President/CEO Paul Phillips. "Establishing a Community Development Financial Institution in the West End area of Roanoke gives people who are currently unbanked and under-banked a real opportunity to move toward long-term financial self-sufficiency."

Amphitheater to car dealer

Former Roanoke City Manager Darlene Bircham's goal of having a large amphitheater on 17 acres off Orange Avenue has been a non-starter for some time now, but there seems to

be a final settlement in the offing. **Haley Toyota** is buying the graded site to create its own version of a dealership strip, since it is near other large dealerships. The cost of the land is \$1.035 million as opposed to an assessment of \$1.7 million.

Dental partners

Roanoke-based **Delta Dental** of Virginia and **Optima Health** have formed a partnership to create a health insurance that provides dental benefits for small businesses. The option provides dental insurance products that can be purchased at the same time as health insurance products for small employer groups. This preferred pricing dental program will provide a five percent discount off dental

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

insurance rates from Delta Dental only when partnered with an Optima Health product. With a target quote availability date of July 1, 2013, the program will be offered exclusively for Optima Health customers when purchasing a medical plan.

The preferred pricing dental program is offered for employer groups with 2-99 eligible employees. Voluntary plans are also available for groups with up to 300 eligible employees in the large group market.

CHP wins award

Community Housing Partners (CHP) has won the Multifamily Contractor of the Year award as part of EarthCraft Virginia's 4th Annual Sustainable Leadership Awards, the organization's yearly recognition of Virginia leaders in the adoption of green, sustainable housing. CHP was honored at a ceremony in downtown Richmond which brought together over 120 individuals representing home builders, non-profit and for-profit housing providers and developers, affordable housing advocates, and those interested in creating green housing opportunities in Virginia.

RIDE Solutions to Lynchburg

Region 2000 residents and businesses looking for a way to cut commuting costs now have another

option. Jeremy Holmes, program director for **RIDE Solutions**, has announced that RIDE Solutions, the commuter services program that has helped the Roanoke region since 2001, has partnered with Region 2000 to offer its services to the New River Valley. The service is free and available to anyone who commutes into or out from the greater Lynchburg area.

"Over 10,000 people a day commute between Roanoke and Lynchburg," Holmes says. "As gas prices remain volatile and on an ever-increasing upward trend, these commuters will need options to help address the high cost of commuting. With our regional ride-matching database and other services, we can help drivers cut their commute costs in half, keeping more of their money in their wallets and in Southwest Virginia."

Jr. League gives grants

The **Junior League of Roanoke Valley** has announced the 2013-2014 recipients of the Community Opportunity Grants, mini-grants that are used to fund a one-time event or short-term need or project. The grants are limited to \$1,500, reflect the JLRV Mission and fulfill an unmet community need.

United Methodist Community Outreach Program of Roanoke.

Funds will provide increased transportation

for at-risk children in Roanoke to evening meals and programming.

The Salvation Army, Turning Point Domestic Violence Shelter. Funds will purchase two laptops and other necessary equipment for a "Homework Station" for children staying at Turning Point.

Total Action for Progress (TAP) Head Start. Funds will purchase one Hatch Early Learning Tablet loaded with educational software and the ability to link to online child assessment programs. Funds will also pay for teachers' training on the use of the tablet.

Center in the Square. Funds will support the creation of a Center in the Square-specific iPad app for K-12 audiences.

IA gets big investment

Interactive Achievement, the Roanoke-based creator of standards-based instructional improvement software has received a \$3.5 million growth equity investment for a minority stake in the company. "This investment will allow us to continue to help educators make a difference in the lives

of children all over the country," says Jonathan Hagmaier, founder and CEO. "It reinforces to me that we are on the right path as a company; we have a bright future ahead of us."

To assist in its mission of creating leading education products to better personalize a student's education through the use of data, Interactive Achievement will add offerings related to technology enhanced assessment items, curriculum and instruction management, resource management, and data analysis to its award-winning software platform.

Founded in 2006, Interactive Achievement currently employs 45 staff, mostly in the Roanoke-Blacksburg region.

CHP wins award

Community Housing Partners (CHP) has won the Multifamily Contractor of the Year award as part of EarthCraft Virginia's 4th Annual Sustainable Leadership Awards, the organization's yearly recognition of Virginia leaders in the adoption of green, sustainable housing. CHP was honored in Richmond



The Homestead

at a gathering of 120 people representing home builders, non-profit and for-profit housing providers and developers, affordable housing advocates, and those interested in creating green housing opportunities in Virginia.

New affiliation

The Homestead in Hot Springs have been accepted as a member of Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI). The ALHI Global Sales Organization sales force will provide services and sales support to planners and organizations seeking distinctive venues for their meetings and programs. The Homestead, which is nearing completion of a multifaceted \$25 million renovation, becomes ALHI's fourth Virginia member within the portfolio.

Russian client

VTLS in has an agreement with Russian

International Olympic University (RIOU), completing the installation of Virtua. This local implementation was completed in cooperation with the VP Group, a local systems integrator and official VTLS distributor in Russia. RIOU is a new university with campuses in Moscow and in Sochi, home of the 2014 Winter Olympics. The library, which is under construction, will feature a significant collection of literature on the history and development of the Olympic movement and related sports management.

Breakell theft

Former **Breakell Inc.** project manager Jamie Graham has pled guilty in federal court of fraud that led to the closing of the company. Graham, who is 33 and a Virginia Tech engineering graduate, was found guilty on one of 15 charges, following a plea agreement, of shifting costs from the Meridium project in

downtown Roanoke to the home of friends. Involved was as much as \$1 million of Breakell money.

PBS shutdown

Blue Ridge Public Television in Roanoke, which has lost almost all of its state and federal funding in the past year, is closing its transmitters in Marion and Norton, blacking out the far southwestern corner of Virginia and upper East Tennessee. There is the possibility that cable providers will continue to carry the programming.

The PBS station has lost all of its state funding—that was cut for radio and TV—which was nearly a third of its budget and another five percent, which was cut by the federal budget sequester.

Luna losses

Luna Innovations, the Roanoke-based technology development company, has lost \$1.5

million for a second straight year, but its recent sale of its secure computing division earned \$6 million and Luna plans to focus on fiber optics in the future. Revenue is down nine percent to \$32.3 million.

Truss bankrupt

Salem-based **Timber Truss Housing Systems** went from 50 layoffs to Chapter 11 bankruptcy in less than two March weeks. A debt of \$5.5 million left the half-century-old business with nowhere to turn, but to the courts. The company was hoping to find a buyer and interest had been expressed, according to published reports.

Lexington listed

Lexington has been named to Smithsonian magazine's list of "The 20 Best Small Towns to Visit in 2013." The list of small towns is featured in the April 2013 issue of Smithsonian, a monthly

magazine that chronicles the arts, history, sciences and popular culture and enjoys a readership of 6.5 million.

*Lorton retires;
New CFO named*

After more than four decades of service to **Carilion Clinic** and Virginia health care, Donald E. Lorton is retiring. After three years with Pulaski Community Hospital, Lorton began his career with Carilion in 1972 when he became the

Assistant Controller. He has served as Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer since 1986. In 1993 he was named Executive Vice President.

After accepting Lorton's retirement, the Carilion Clinic Board of Directors appointed Donald B. Halliwill as Chief Financial Officer. A southwest Virginia native, Halliwill has a 20-year history in health care, serving in many capacities since joining Carilion in 1997, including Director of Finance for the New River Valley Region, Chief

Executive Officer for Carilion New River Valley Medical Center and Chief Financial Officer for the organization's hospital division.

Women owners up

Virginia has an estimated 217,000 women-owned firms, employing 210,500 and attributing to roughly \$35.6 billion according to the third annual State of **Women-Owned Businesses Report**, commissioned by American Express OPEN, a comprehensive report

released today analyzing the 1997, 2002, and 2007 data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.

Nationally, the number of women-owned businesses has increased 59 percent since 1997. Virginia is ranked fifteenth (64.1 percent) in growth of number of firms over the past 16 years and eighth (103.6 percent) in growth of firm revenue between 1997 and 2013.

Compiled by Dan Smith

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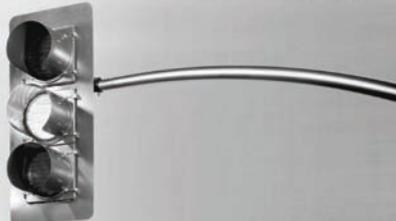
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Berryfield	71	Member One	
Blue Ridge Copier	30	Federal Credit Union	3
Carilion	BC	Mountain Shepherd	
Controllers, Etc.	71	Wilderness Survival School	23
Duncan Audi	70	Professional Network Services	69
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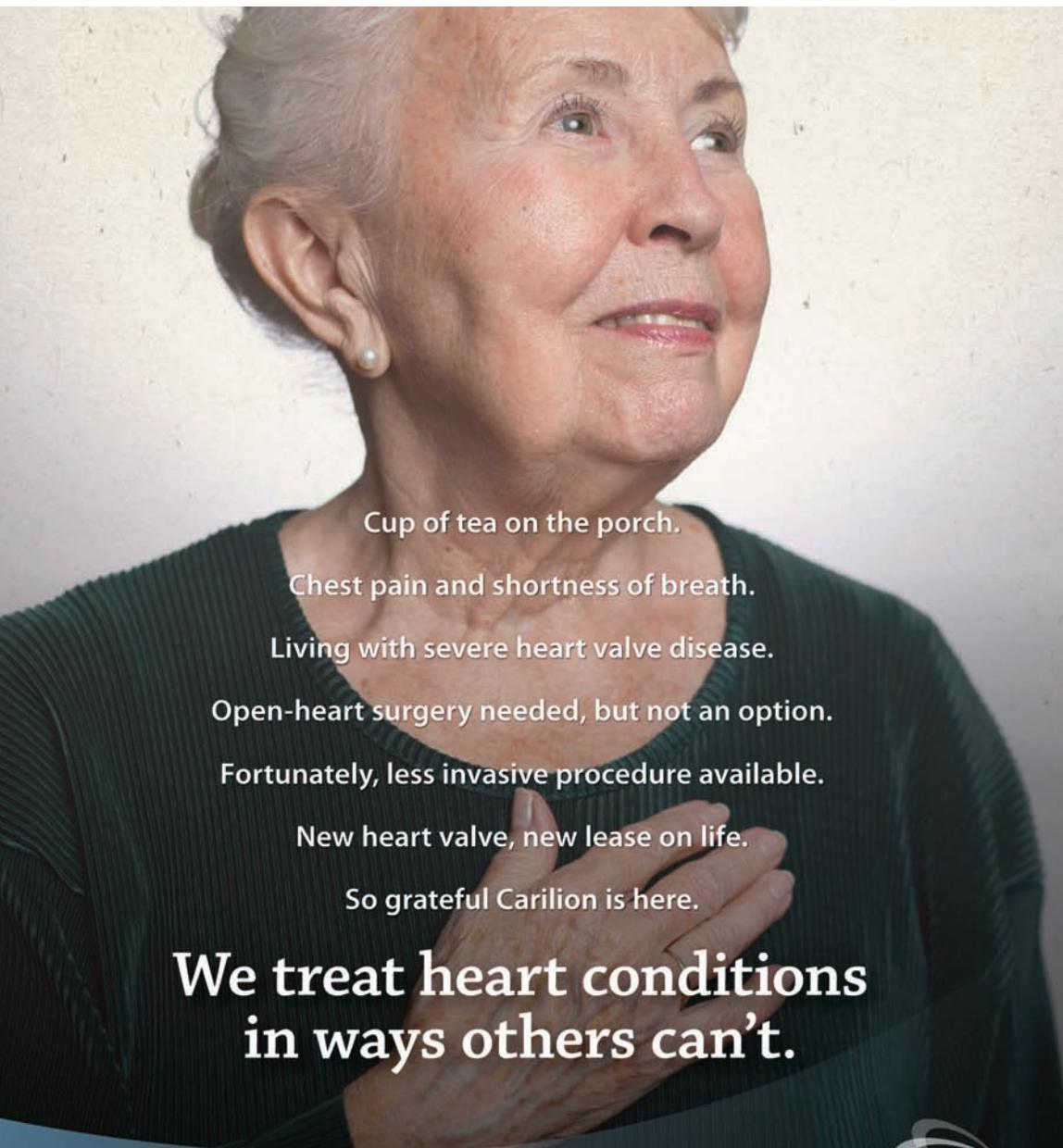
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