

Valley Business

FRONT

THE SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEUR
CHAMPION IN VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE

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A New Deal

The Collaboration of a Startup

Stephan Sabo,
Card Isle





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Since I've been writing or covering business stories now for three decades, you might think I've heard it all. Or at least a variation of every possible scenario when it comes to how an idea becomes a full fledged business or how an existing business continues to remain successful.

Not true.

Every business story is like every person's story. As unique as the DNA.

Our FRONTcover story for March is no exception. What's unique about three guys getting together by virtue of the school they attend, then coming up with an idea, then taking that idea through various channels and resources connected to their "business and technology" network, then launching a new product? It's happened before.

What's unique is the story itself. No other components or factors or activities or markets or people or organizations could have come together in precisely this same manner to make this story happen in the same way it did.

I once heard a popular business advice talk show host claim that he could come into any city anywhere, including ones in which he had no familiarity, and select a new business start up that would be successful. No extensive research. No formal market analysis. No collaborative planning sessions. He would just drive around in his car. And observe.

I don't doubt that. Any one of us sees opportunities and places where a product or service should thrive at any given place or point in time.

But great ideas originate from all sorts of ways. Whether you're driving your car down Main Street or talking with a few friends from college. And despite the advice from all the experts, the magic formula is as diverse and random as the structured and CFO-approved strategic plan of a giant industry, to the half-baked crazy notion to invent something that's never been done before or hardly proven.

There are all kinds of stories.



Tom Field

1983 . . . 2015 . . . tomorrow



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MARCH



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Editorial Advisory Board

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

This board has been given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. "Members essentially have a red telephone at their hand," says publisher Tom Field. "The can inform us best on what is important, what is new, what impacts the greater community. Of course, our red phone reaches right back to them as well, for assignments and insight on our coverage. Although the members are encouraged to keep FRONT updated on their own industries and the key players, they aren't limited to their area of specialty, as all commercial enterprises ultimately collaborate to impact our quality of life here in this part of Virginia." An additional contribution by the Editorial Advisory Board involves direct input on the various FRONTLists we present throughout the year.

CONTRIBUTORS



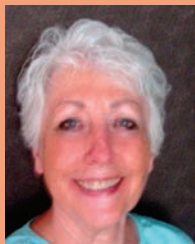
Dan Dowdy



Tom Field



Keith Finch



Rachael Garrity



Mike Leigh



Ariel Lev



Chris Perkins



Whitney Puckett



Nicholas Vaassen

“”
You need to be
spunky and smiling

— Page 59

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 40.

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Stuart Mease Virginia Tech (Education)
Mary Miller IDD (Tech/Industry)
Ed Walker Regeneration Partners (Development)

“”
Our cancer
rates are the
highest in
the world

— Page 21

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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Pick a Card

Given the current political climate in this country, it would be easy to argue that “collaboration” is both a word and a concept that is as extinct as the carrier pigeon, but three go-get-'em young men, an innovative class at Virginia Tech, government funding and private sector investing have built a business that begs – long and loud – to differ.

It all started in a class in the VT College of Engineering funded by a National Science Foundation program called I-Corps that is designed to foster entrepreneurship by commercializing technology supported by NSF-funded research. In other words, ivy-covered walls meet Wall Street, by way of Main Street.

Students in the class were asked to pitch an idea that could effectively push technology transfer. The class was then tasked with identifying the best ideas among those presented and creating teams that could take the next step in bringing good concepts to market. In this kind of class exchange, some ideas gain traction early. Stephan Sabo, an undergrad from north central Ohio, pitched one of those. As he explains it:

From a radio interview of the founders of Warby Parker sunglasses, I had learned that almost all the major brands of sunglasses are made by one company, and the markup is 10 to 20 times the cost of manufacture. That led me to Google high-markup products, and up came greeting cards.

Like most everyone in my generation, I'd grown up comfortable with social media, but in my home, one of the rules was you wrote a thank you note for a birthday or Christmas gift. I realized this is a market segment that offers two important benefits: domination by a very few companies that have changed little in design of product or distribution over the years, and a margin that provides enough room to innovate without going deeply into debt on developmental costs.

Listening to Stephan's reasoning in class that day were Adam Donato and David Henry, both graduate students. The two saw early on that Stephan had found a clear route to the kind of project that would allow them each – and

Executive Summary:

The Card Isle story is more than a interesting business startup case study; it's an eye-opener on how future innovations may arrive from the marriage of education and entrepreneurship.

By Rachael Garrity



together—to flex their “build it and they will come” muscles. Adam, who last December earned his PhD, remembers:

Most start-ups fail because they can't find a customer base fast enough. When we interviewed people – several hundred of them – we realized this was a market ripe for disruption. We heard over and over that people buy cards, but all too often are frustrated when they try to find what they want.

David, who grew up on a nature preserve in Pennsylvania, echoes those points:

After we'd all presented our ideas, there was a kind of free-form conversation, and Adam (whom I had not really known well before) and I both decided to saddle up and join Stephan's team. It was easy to see that by flipping the distribution model of the greeting card industry we could open the space to the creativity of our generation, connect local artists with their community, and help young people rediscover the power of the written word. I couldn't wait to explore the potential that Stephan uncovered that night.

And Card Isle was born.

Start Out, Start Up

In the beginning, one of the three sat beside a laptop, and worked the customer through the interface. Next came a kiosk at Eats Natural Foods just off the VT campus. Humor laces the voices of the trio when they stress that,

COVER STORY

after all, they're engineers and building is what they like to do. Essentially a painted wooden box, the Eats kiosk has now been improved, thanks to the input of an intern majoring in industrial design at VT, and there are nine kiosks in locations throughout Southwest Virginia, including two on the VT campus; three in malls—The Chocolate Spike at First and Main in Blacksburg, University Mall in Christiansburg, and Valley View Mall in Roanoke; 16 West Market Place in Roanoke; Carillion Clinic Pharmacy - Riverside; and Hollins University.

With the need for more space for construction of kiosks, the Card Isle team became the first inhabitants of the VT incubator in Blacksburg called NuSpark. Designed to create 10 new start-ups and generate \$10 million in funding in two years, NuSpark is not on the VT campus, funded by the Corporate Research Center as well as some other organizations and provides free space to qualifying individuals and start-ups like Card Isle, much the same way that communities provide subsidized studio space for artists. The idea is not only to stimulate business within the larger community, but also to allow the inhabitants (there is room for six at one time) to share ideas and expertise.



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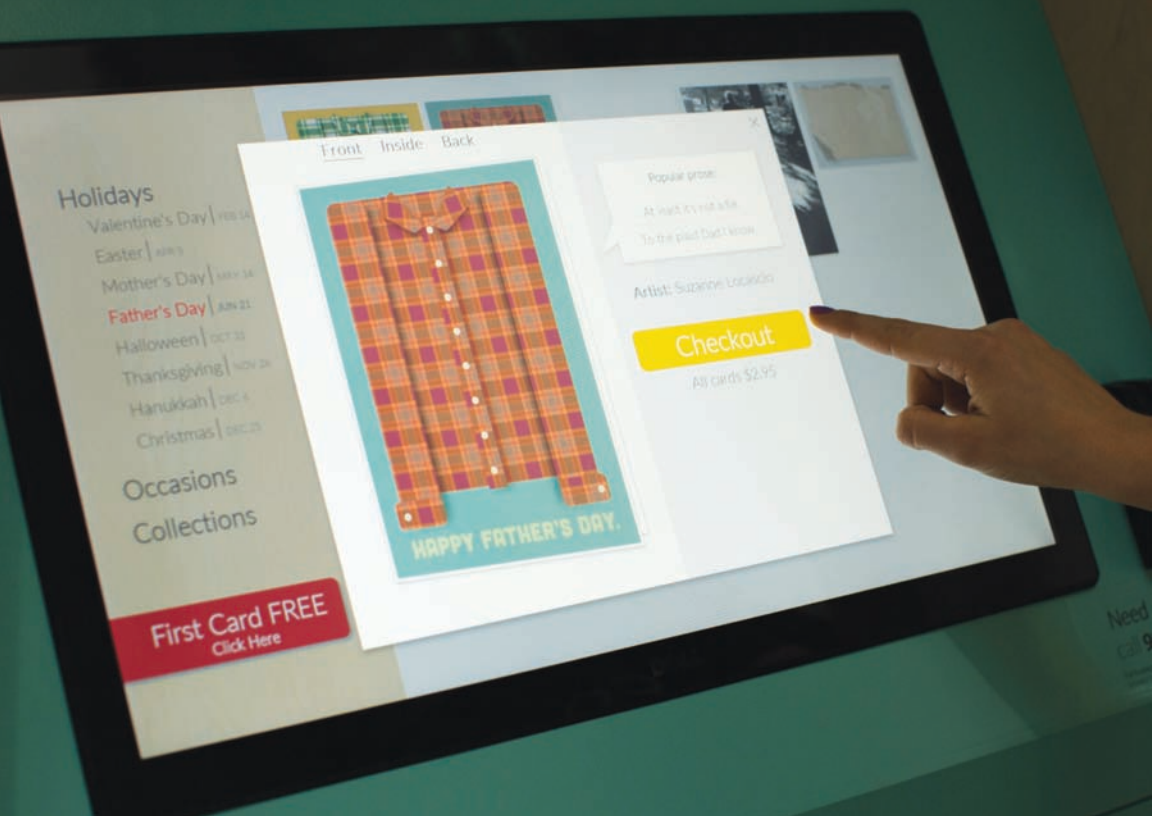
David Henry, Card Isle



There, as well as within their classroom experience, the Card Isle team had learned the value of collaboration not merely among themselves, but also with potential support systems to provide the M-M-M: money, mentoring and motivation. February of this year found them in San Antonio, Texas, at Techstars, a leading startup accelerator that chooses 10 companies per location (there are 15 around the world) out of thousands that apply annually. The Techstars program divides participants into cohorts of ten companies, starts with a broad-based interface with mentors, winnows that down to specific intensive mentorship exchanges, and concludes with a demo-day.

Who's on First?

In addition to identifying a firmly established customer base and a sparkingly different distribution mechanism, the Card Isle team seems also to be handily ignoring the normal managerial pyramid model. No one of the three claims to be CEO. Asked to delineate their roles, Stephan describes himself as the dreamer, Adam as the chief of technical details, and David as "head hustler," meaning the person responsible for the financial, legal and operational side of the company. K Alnajar, Card Isle's first full-time employee (Sarah Lane, the industrial design intern, is now a consultant.), he jokingly refers to as "head hacker."



The team spirit is quite clearly a core value for Card Isle. As Adam puts it, "It's purposeful that we start with interns, because we are quite concerned that whoever works with us does just that." For his part, David explains: "We have an operational guru, a product mastermind and a watcher of moving pieces. I really like systems, so the day-to-day is my wheelhouse."

So far as functions such as product design and marketing, the near-term approach has been to work with local contractors or let the enterprise speak for itself. The Card Isle website features a contract for aspiring card artists and writers, but the team recognizes that the future may hold a full-fledged designer. So far, there are 600 card designs from which to choose in the system, but as it is now configured it will accommodate 10,000.

Stars in Their Eyes

Any entrepreneurial enterprise is likely to be heavy on enthusiasm, and Card Isle is no exception. The key, of course, is to focus the fire in a way that adds endurance. Interestingly, for the likes of Stephan, Adam, and David, the focus is somewhat easier, since their core competency is engineering. Still, there is an element of the non-scientific at work. Adam, for example, chose Bucknell University for his undergraduate experience, because it was one of very few that would allow him to pursue a double major in engineering and art. When he discusses the future of Card Isle and its developmental path, David becomes quite philosophical, but in a way that would warm the pockets of the NSF I-Corps developers, to wit:

COVER STORY

What we're really about is learning how to sell to our generation. If we can figure out how to get greeting cards to work with that customer base, we become an attractive acquisition not just within the greeting card industry, but with other business segments as well.

That phone in my hand and yours is a powerful tool, but used inappropriately, it can also become a distraction. Similarly, the ability to pause and create words on paper can provide a powerful connection that reaches beyond what the digital interface can do, in terms of being lasting.

If we become experts on the millennial consumer, we are no longer innovating in a flat-line industry.

And what about acquisition? Are the three looking for wealth and fame? Who is in charge of identifying and appealing to angel investors?

Stephan again sounds the collaboration chime:

To be honest, we haven't really made specific plans in that direction. I suppose we'd all participate, and the lead would be the one of us who relates most easily to the prospective investor.





Card Isle's David Henry, Adam Donato and Stephan Sabo




all photos: Kara Gomez

Yes, it would be nice to be acquired for a tidy sum, but as much of a cliché as this seems to be, I enjoy the journey. If we sold Card Isle, I'd most probably set about trying to find another idea. I like playing in this space.

Representing as they do a spectrum of higher education degrees – Stephan bachelors, David masters and Adam doctorate – the three also create a new paradigm in the nexus between academia, and the public and private sectors, in that none of them at least at the present has any plans to add an MBA. Indeed, asked by a friend if he felt he'd wasted time and money pursuing his PhD now that Card Isle is the linchpin of his career, Adam is, well, adamant: "What a PhD is really about is teaching you how to learn something new, and by that I mean knowing when you've learned enough and it's time to start applying what you know."

Winston Churchill famously wrote: "Some people regard private enterprise as a predatory tiger to be shot. Others look on it as a cow they can milk. Not enough people see it as a healthy horse, pulling a sturdy wagon."

Apparently engineers, at least three young ones in Southwest Virginia, have their horse before the cart. 



Getting out of the office >

When you finally get out of the office for a work-related conference it's only natural to view it as an opportunity to relax, dress comfortably and play hooky. However, it's really the perfect time to project your best professional image.


Here are several reasons why you should dress well for conferences:

1. Dressing well reminds you you're there on the company's dime and you should use your experience there to benefit your company or build your skills.
2. You can generate new business for your company, thereby increasing your value to your company.
3. Dressing well at a conference can renew your enthusiasm for your job, making you rethink your career direction and the image you want to project.
4. Increases opportunities for networking with your peers in the industry, encouraging them to take you and your company seriously.
5. Creates a recognition factor in a group, helping you stand out personally and as a company representative.
6. Offers an opportunity to step up and become more involved in your industry on a state or national level.
7. Perfect opportunity to prospect for your next job by being seen as a professional in your field.

No matter if your conference is for computer programmers who dress ultra-casually or bankers who dress formally and conservatively, a conference is where you meet with peers to learn, share information and network. You want to come away from the meeting having been memorable and impressive in a good way. Certainly, you don't want to be mistaken for a busboy or janitor in jeans, sneakers and a t-shirt. You won't get introductions to the movers and shakers in your industry that way.

Conversely, attending a conference dressed as if you were on vacation gives the impression that you don't take seriously the opportunity to learn more about developments in your field. You're also less likely to network with knowledgeable peers, and impress them with your expertise.

Even elite athletes, who dress in uniforms or skin-tight work out clothes, know that showing up for a business meeting or conference means dressing in your best suit. They don't wear sweats simply because they're athletes! They sport their best bespoke suit, their finest handmade shirt and luxurious silk tie.

A conference is an opportunity to connect, learn, network and search out opportunities to advance your career. Be ready for it. 

Comments? Email Kathy@peacockimage.com

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Dressing down is your choice; but you might want to think twice about it when you're on business—even afar.


Team player >

In the corporate world today it is generally accepted that being a team player is key to one's professional success. Some of us have team playing in our DNA. Others of us have learned it through experience. Some of us just plain don't want to be, and won't ever be, a team player! That's quite all right. Many professions need the lone player. Some Information Technology jobs, for instance, come readily to mind. However, no matter what your position, thoughtfulness and good manners will make you a more valuable asset to any organization.

When my husband retired from a senior position at a major university, many people came to him to wish him well. He was gratified that so many came from the bottom rung of the institution. Why was this? He always treated them with respect and courtesy: in other words, he gave them value. The serendipitous result was that he could always get things done, because while he respected them, they returned his kindness with loyalty. He was courteous to absolutely everyone, from the President to the housekeeping staff.

Being a good team player helps win the respect of your co-workers, so let's look at some ways to improve teamwork:

- Always be loyal to your boss and organization, especially outside the office. Remember the old adage: we can criticize our family, but not to strangers!
- Be as courteous to those on the bottom of the job scale as to your boss.
- Don't carry tales—unless the person involved is dealing drugs!
- Be kind to newcomers: make them feel welcome and a part of the team.
- Follow the Golden Rule: treat everyone as you would like to be treated.
- Keep your word: say what you will do, and then do it.
- Work on honing your sense of humor and learn to laugh at yourself.
- Take responsibility for your errors. We're human and we make mistakes.
- When one is genuinely kind and courteous, it improves office morale. Good work is done in a pleasant atmosphere.
- Curtail your urge to gossip: gossiping can derail your career.
- Give credit where credit is due.
- Be inclusive! Why not say, "We did that!" rather than, "I did that!"?

Vince Lombardi summed it up nicely when he said, "Individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
If you're not a team player, you might need to rethink that position if you work with others.



The bio cloud >

Executive Summary:

Synergistic Environments for Experimental Computing is using cloud technology, research and process analyses to find biological improvements for healthier living.

By Sarah Cox

Wu Feng describes what he is striving to do as a “pie-in-the-sky ... a Holy Grail.” But, think about turning on the lights with a switch back in the 1600’s. It would have been regarded as wizardry, he says. Feng, a professor in Virginia Tech’s College of Engineering, is founder and director of the Synergistic Environments for Experimental Computing. While he has been featured in a Microsoft ad that focuses on leaders “in harnessing supercomputer powers to deliver lifesaving treatments,” Feng is



Wu Feng is a professor in Virginia Tech's College of Engineering

adamant that many others have a part in the effort to computing a cure for cancer, among other things. His "visions of what I'd like to see done" include what he calls "The big three ... computing a cure for cancer, personalized medicine, and trying to figure out how I can help the chemist or biologist figure out how our food supply in the U.S. is correlated to cancer." He uses cloud computing, which means storing and accessing data and programs over the Internet instead of a computer hard drive.

The third is his personal favorite. Feng says that the United States allows artificial substances, banned in other countries, to be used in our foods. Our cancer rates are the highest in the world, he says. Furthermore, once a person emigrates to the U.S. the likelihood of his getting cancer increases. "The material used to keep yoga mats and wrestling mats pliable was used in Subway bread," he gives as an example. In 2014, Subway announced that it would no longer be using azodicarbonamide, approved by



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the Food and Drug Administration for use in food as a bleaching agent and dough conditioner.


His second Holy Grail, personalized medicine, Feng sees as directly impacting patients, and he gives cholesterol readings as an example. The blood is drawn, sent to the lab, calculated and then returned to the doctor in a matter of weeks. Then, the doctor prescribes medicine to you. But your genetic makeup and how it may react to drugs such as Lipitor or Crestor are uncertain. There may come a day when you have an application on your smart phone that could run a drop of blood through the cloud, use computation to extract what is needed for a reading, and then prescribe based on your genetic makeup and how that has changed based on food, radiation and whether or not you live near an environmental hazard. "I could certainly see this coming," he said.

What he is doing is leveraging the cloud, the way that Netflix or Google docs does. There isn't a great big Netflix building that stores all the movies you want to watch. Those shows are stored in the cloud, he says. And by using the cloud, he has his hand in "software magic to accelerate the time of discovery based on the tools. I've taken some known tools of the trade and enhanced them in a way that will accelerate the ability to make discoveries." He has shortened the response time towards identifying a

mutation in a DNA sequence, for example, and "that mutation then helps the biologists understand what pathways may be defective, or pathways that may then be affected by this mutation. Many times, these tools require significant computer or storage capability, and not everyone has access to that. This is where the cloud comes in."

We all use the cloud every day, he says. Smart phones. Hulu and Netflix. "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic – that's a quote from Arthur C. Clarke," he said. "Ultimately, we want to get to the point where these biologists don't view this as a magic thing."

He prefers to think positively when the ethics question is raised. Yes, it would be a terrible thing if insurance companies got hold of your genetic makeup and based insurance rates on it. "Is there a line crossed? I'm not going to be judge and jury on this, but with great power comes great responsibility, (Voltaire), and what I and a cast of hundreds of thousands are trying to do is make this a better tomorrow and impactful for society. If we really understood why cancer rates are higher in the U.S., we can take proactive measures to improve what life there is right now."

That is, "rather than manipulate and create life," he said. But that's another question for another time. 



Continuous improvement >

Early in my career of helping organizations improve their operations, I learned that all organizations are either “green and growing, or ripe and rotting”. There is no in between. In today’s competitive environment, an organization must continuously strive to improve, or risk falling behind the competition.


Almost every organization will take action to improve performance when it is convenient or if its operations are struggling. But are you willing to implement change even when it’s not?

Twice in his career when he was dominating the competition, Tiger Woods completely revamped his golf swing. Most people would have never changed what was working, but by doing so Tiger remained the #1 golfer in the world in 11 of 12 straight years. He was never content with his performance, and he always strived for improvement.

I assume if you are reading this article, you probably want to improve your operations. If so, pursue these two core principles of continuous improvement.

First, embrace innovation and change. Eliminate apathy in your organization. Create a culture where it is ok to try and fail, but it’s not ok to not try. Solicit ideas from your team, and reward their efforts. And most importantly, lead the effort from the front lines. Join your team in their improvement efforts. Change won’t happen by edict from your office.

Second, you must dedicate time, money and talent to your improvement efforts. Look at your calendar. How much time have you scheduled to improve processes or develop your people? Look at your budget. How much money have you set aside for improvement initiatives? Look at your team. Who do you have working on your continuous improvement goals?

One company I work with provides a free international trip annually to one employee who has submitted at least one improvement idea in the past year. What are you going to do to keep your business green and growing? 

Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:

Organizations can either improve or risk the consequence of extinction.

Ownership rights >

"Sorry, your web site isn't actually your web site . . ."

The CEO's voice was controlled, but I could sense the panic underneath. He was about to crack. It sounded almost like he might even start crying.

"We have paid a total of more than one hundred thousand dollars for that web site over the years!" he said, his voice quavering with anger. "And now Those New York Bastards won't even give us a copy of it. I want you to sue them tomorrow. I want justice!" he said.

"Whoa, whoa, OK, yes, justice, of course," I said, "but before we travel all the way to Yankeeland to start a lawsuit, let's figure out what they're thinking, from a legal perspective. Do you have a written contract with this web site company?"

He did have a written contract with Those Bastards. He sent it to me. It was about four pages long and mostly detailed all the various types of work that they were supposed to do on the web site.

They had done the work very well. The web site that they hosted for our client was brilliantly designed, and it sat at the core of our client's business. Loaded with product information and boasting a flawless fulfillment engine powered by up-to-the-second inventory information, it was the conduit for ninety-five percent of our client's orders. And now they were threatening to shut it down.

See, it seems that our client had decided to try to save money on web hosts. Just before the contract was due to expire, the CEO had gone shopping around for better deals on bandwidth and storage. Then, based on some bargain-basement offers he'd received, he made a lowball renewal offer. Dickering led to bickering led to bad blood, and the CEO was damned if he was going to do business with Those Bastards any more. He let the contract run out and demanded a copy of the web site.

Those Bastards wouldn't give him a copy of his company's own web site.

"They say they own it! Can you believe it?" he laughed. "After we paid them all that money to build it!"

"Well, I've looked over your contract, and actually, they do own it," I said.

"Er . . ."



Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

Executive Summary:
When it comes to work-for-hire and copyrights, be advised: you and your company may not own what you think you own.

"The thing is," I said, "this is all copyrighted work. Whenever someone makes a creative work that's recorded in a physical medium—like the illustrations, text and computer code on your web site—it's copyrighted, and the author owns the copyright."

"I know that," he said. "But I paid them. So I should own it!"

"Well, copyright only can be transferred in writing," I said. "There's nothing in this contract that transfers the copyright in the web site to you. So Those Bastards still own the copyright."

"But I paid them!" he said. "So . . . wait! If I paid them, then that makes it a 'work-for-hire.' Right?"

"Ah. Well, when someone creates something for you as a work-made-for-hire, it's actually kind of a special situation," I said. "It means that you actually are the author, not the person who creates the work. Usually this happens because the person is your employee and creates the work as part of his or her job."

"Got it. So when I pay them, I'm the author," he said.

"Hold on," I said. "It doesn't automatically become a work-made-for-hire just because you pay the person who creates it. That only happens if the person is your employee. Like, if you give the person a W-2."

"OK."

"Otherwise, it's only a work-made-for-hire if (1) it's something you specially order, (2) you agree in writing with the creator that it's a work-made-for-hire, and (3) it falls within a very narrow list of certain types of works, like atlases, translations, tests and textbooks, that can be a work-made-for-hire," I said. "If it's not on the list, it can't be a work-made-for-hire."

"What about web sites?" he said.

"A commercial web site isn't on the list," I said. "A whole bunch of things aren't on the list. Software isn't on the list. Photos and illustrations aren't on the list. Architectural plans aren't on the list. None of these things will be a work-made-for-hire unless it falls into one of the categories that actually is on the list. Take your company logo for example. Who created it?"

"Our logo?" he said. "Well, I asked my cousin to design it for us. We didn't have a written agreement."

"OK, then, you don't own that either," I said. "No written agreement, no transfer of copyright. Your cousin owns the logo. You need to have him sign a document transferring the




When someone creates something for you as a work-made-for-hire, it's actually kind of a special situation. It means that you actually are the author, not the person who creates the work. Usually this happens because the person is your employee and creates the work as part of his or her job.

logo to your company. Here, let me prepare one for you. . . .”

In the end, the CEO managed to purchase the copyright to his company’s website from Those Bastards—in exchange for an extortionate “processing fee” of about \$30,000. On the plus side, we made sure that going forward all of the company’s contracts with outsiders—graphic designers, freelance writers, photographers, software developers, web designers, and anyone else that the company hired to do creative work—contained a simple little paragraph stating that (1) the creative work was a “work-made-for-hire” where possible under the law, and (2) the artist or author handed over the copyright in the creative work whenever it could not be a “work-made-for-hire.”

Of course, sometimes the artist wants to keep some rights in the creative work—like the right to put the creative work in an online portfolio, for example—and it’s easy to change the contract so that the company grants a license back to the artist for whatever he or she needs. Sometimes the artist positively refuses to sign over the copyright (that’s how creative types are, sometimes) but that’s not a problem either, because we can change the contract so that instead of owning the copyright, the company just gets an exclusive and permanent license to use the creative work for whatever it needs.

So if you hire someone to create something for you, you might not actually own that thing unless you have the right contract language. Even though you paid for that thing. 

Keith can be reached at keith@creekmorelaw.com

Note: *facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn’t legal advice—you should consult a lawyer before actually changing your contracts, etc.*



Of course, sometimes the artist wants to keep some rights in the creative work—like the right to put the creative work in an online portfolio, for example—and it’s easy to change the contract so that the company grants a license back to the artist for whatever he or she needs.

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From left to right: Dr. Howard - Hampton-Sydney; Dr. Sandel - Virginia Western Community College; Dr. Bishop - Roanoke City Schools; and Katherine Fulton - Moderator and Director of Deloitte Consulting LLP.

School of tomorrow >

Executive Summary:

Education2024, a forum hosted by North Cross School, presented an informative perspective from educators on the future of our educational system.

By Whitney Puckett

On Thursday, January 29, 2015, a small panel of educators from across the area gathered in Fishburn Auditorium at North Cross School to discuss the future of education in America.

Katherine Fulton, a prestigious graduate of North Cross School, returned to her alma mater to receive the Distinguished Alumni Award, the first in the school's history. In lieu of a speech, she requested to host this panel and act as its moderator because, as she put it, "My life has been



photo courtesy of North Cross School

very much about passionately pursuing learning.”

Fulton chose to discuss three key issues in education: the impact of globalization on education, how technology will continue to change the way we teach and learn, and the future of liberal arts education.

Joining her were three distinguished local educators: Dr. Rita Bishop, Superintendent of Roanoke City Schools; Dr. Robert Sandel, President of Virginia Western Community

College; and Dr. Christopher Howard, President of Hampden-Sydney College.

Despite the myriad of credentials among the panelists, the most important attribute for the audience’s consideration was their unique place in the spectrum of education. Collectively, these panelists represent the gamut of any school system dichotomy: public vs. private, large vs. small, urban vs. rural, and primary vs. collegiate.

Fulton began by introducing each panelist



Dr. Christopher Howard

to the audience before posing a question to each of them on how the changing global economy will impact education.

According to Dr. Sandel, "Our key mission is still to fill the work force needs of our region. We need to make sure that our students, your students, meet the requirements... [because]...a lot of students can get outstanding jobs without going through a four year program."

However, Dr. Sandel's embrace of the paradigm shift away from the classic four-year college degree and towards a more job specific training program was not echoed amongst the other panel members, and discussion shifted quickly to the role of a liberal arts education in the future.

Dr. Howard disagreed saying, "The liberal arts education forces one to think critically and then to communicate what you've learned. We need to provide these types of educational precepts to prepare students.



Dr. Rita Bishop

It's a very complex world, and it's going to require both of these things."

Dr. Bishop echoed the sentiments of Dr. Howard saying, "The liberal arts are the great equalizer."

The other great equalizer, according to Dr. Bishop, is access to technology. Bishop noted a correlation between the access students have to technology in their homes and their success on the Standards of Learning tests.

"The kids that have access to computers at home tended to pass. Those that did not, tended to fail...we have to be mindful of equity."

And those same students are coming to college with an expectation that 21st century technology will be the standard in every aspect of their educational careers.

As Dr. Howard noted, "...these students are different than they were ten to fifteen years



Dr. Robert Sandel

ago. The average age of a student is no longer twenty-two – it's twenty-five. To meet those people who cannot go back full-time, technology is huge."

Dr. Sandel noted, "I really see that the S.T.E.M.-Healthcare will be the emphasis in the next decade."

And with that focus on the sciences comes technology. As to the impact of technology on a classical education, Dr. Howard stated simply that, "Technology is forcing all of us to be more nimble. We have to be open to experiment."

So, what will American education look like in the next ten years?

According to Dr. Bishop, "there is every probability that we will see an erosion of [classic] public education."


As the global market continues to shift, so will our children's educational experiences. And while none of the panelists went so

“ ”

Our key mission is still to fill the work force needs of our region. We need to make sure that our students, your students, meet the requirements because a lot of students can get outstanding jobs without going through a four year program.

—Dr. Robert Sandel

far as to say that all core-curriculum will disappear from the post-secondary experience, Dr. Howard offered what could arguably be the best piece of advice for the evening:

"Train for what you know and educate for what you don't." 





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RBTC: Leading Our Region in Technology & Innovation

By **Rebecca Holland**

The Roanoke-Blacksburg region is accelerating in its effort to be recognized as one of the top innovation corridors in the United States, and the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council is spearheading the effort.

What began as a small group of thought leaders in 1998, known then as the New Century Technology Council, has grown into an organization of over 200 member companies, all of which believe the assets found in the Roanoke and New River valleys have put the region in a favorable position to compete in the global economy.

Jonathan Whitt, President and CEO stated, "One of the most important keys to our continued growth is a proactive approach to talent development and recruitment. Expanding outreach efforts to help the region's youth make the connection between Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math and the area's technology companies, along with connecting employers in meaningful ways to higher-education institutions, is a top priority."

By taking on the responsibility to connect, grow, and lead, the RBTC vows to prove that

the technology community is a driving force in the region's economy and an important part of shaping its future.

One organization, two valleys

The RBTC is a member-driven nonprofit, and the only organization that bridges the gap between Roanoke and the New River Valley. With members ranging from large, well-established companies such as Carilion and Virginia Tech, to small, one-person start-ups, it provides valuable opportunities for like-minded professionals to intermingle, share ideas, and promote this region's technology sector.

The council hosts 60 events annually, punctuated by the Fall Gala and TechNite – an evening of recognition where local technology companies are put in the spotlight. These two events are the largest gatherings of technology professionals in Southwest Virginia, attracting 450 and 700 guests respectively. Other RBTC events include monthly Tech and Toast breakfasts, C-level gatherings, and the FIRST LEGO League Tournament.

Innovative engagement

Members can reach optimal engagement with the RBTC by joining member communities and lending their strengths to subjects they're enthusiastic about.

WoTech gatherings provide an exclusive



opportunity for women in technology fields to network. Tech Matters serves as the RBTC's passionate government relations community, and the Business Development Forum is the ideal place for professionals to discuss best practices and lessons learned.


Niche groups like the STEM Committee, Product Owners Forum, Life Sciences Forum and the Software Developers Forum offer professionals interested in these specialized areas the chance to explore their passions.

Mapping the future

In 2015 the RBTC is moving forward with plans originally outlined in the "Innovation Blueprint," a collaboration between public

and private sectors that provides a plan for turning our community's innovation assets into new high-impact companies and jobs.

By using resources effectively and efficiently, the organization plans to concentrate on increasing technology-based start-up activity, support the growth of high-impact companies, develop the supply of technical talent and connect the technology community to valuable resources.

The Roanoke-Blacksburg region's technology assets are impressive and will continue to receive more recognition as its innovation ecosystem expands. 

For more information about the RBTC or to inquire about membership, visit www.thetechnologycouncil.com






YP for ROA >

To the outside world, Roanoke is gaining notoriety as an interesting city. Take the article published on SmarterTravel.com in July 2014 titled "America's Best Small Cities on the Rise," for example. It states, simply, "In the last four years, this Blue Ridge Parkway city has attracted hundreds of hipster residents to a revitalized downtown with a new amphitheater venue in Elmwood Park and a new pedestrian plaza in the historic city market."

Ask many Roanoke locals, though, and you'll get a different story entirely. "Roanoke is better than it used to be, but we are still 10 years behind." I hear this sentiment phrased differently almost every time I talk to someone my age who grew up here or someone who went to college here and ended up staying. I am new in town, so I admittedly do not have the same perspective as my colleagues. However, I do tire of hearing people use the same tired excuse: we are behind.

Most adults will agree that it is irresponsible to constantly compare one's self to friends, colleagues and neighbors. As we grow up, we learn that it is more important to be the best version of ourselves rather than copy those we find to be great. So why do we, as Roanokers, tend to compare ourselves to the likes of Charlottesville, Asheville and Boulder?

I talk a lot about learning from others, and this example is no exception. Roanoke has a lot to learn from these amazing cities. We can emulate the blossoming, progressive culture in Asheville and the booming outdoor economy in Boulder. But, we can also learn from the mistakes that turn many people away from those towns. The gentrification that has driven parts of the downtown community to the outskirts, the high cost of living—the factors that many consider "part of" living in a town that isn't "behind."

Citizens of Roanoke have a unique opportunity. We get to decide, by voting with our dollars, what types of cultural pastimes survive past infancy. Restaurants, entertainment, nightlife, residency; these things drive our economy and make Roanoke a truly interesting and fun place to live. Instead of blaming the city for being late to the party, Roanokers should relish in the opportunity to get to pick the theme. Along the way, we can also work hard as a community to avoid some of the same unfortunate development issues that befall most progressive, youthful cities. 

Young Professionals

By Ariel Lev

Executive Summary:

Is the Roanoke Region attractive to a younger demographic? Sure is if you work to make it so.


Stretch >

Many Americans are now focusing more on their health and wellness. The wellness bug has fortunately developed a strong foothold in our society. People are eating better and exercising more. There is one area that many people neglect in this paradigm and that is stretching. We all exercise on a regular basis but do not spend the time needed keeping our body limber and loose.

There are many benefits of stretching. It improves your flexibility, reduces chances of injury, relieves stress, improves posture and helps with balance and coordination.

It is important to perform a full body stretch every day. Many of the stretches you need to perform can be done at the workplace. You can stretch your neck, shoulders, arms, wrist, hands and fingers while working at your desk. This is an easy way to work on these areas throughout your workday to work against the stresses of poor posture and ergonomics.

Some examples are moving your head through all ranges of motion and apply light pressure with your hand in each motion and hold for 30 seconds is great for your neck. For your shoulders you can reach up over your head as high as you can and apply light pressure with the opposite arm. Flex you hand forward and backward and apply light pressure to stretch your wrist and hands. If you type a lot you can stretch your fingers in all ranges of motion too. If you have any pain during these stretches it is important to stop and make sure there is not a problem.

As far as full body stretches there are great resources online or Yoga is an excellent way to work on the entire body. 



Wellness

By Chris Lauria

Executive Summary:
Stretching is important, whether you're very active or confined to a sedentary job.

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Chheany Ung

An intervention process >

Executive Summary:

Dr. Chheany Ung's practice for treating pain includes two critical elements: identify the true source and don't delay.

By Sarah Cox

Virginia Interventional Pain & Spine Center has an overriding goal: To see patients right away, to prevent chronic pain if possible, and to offer effective therapies that get patients back to a good quality of life. Dr. Chheany Ung, who started this practice eight years ago, is double board certified in both Anesthesiology and Pain Management. While a resident in anesthesiology, he saw himself as "a phantom that goes in and out of the room." He wanted to take care of patients, to use his hands, and to help those post-op patients "who were typically miserable, in a lot of pain, and couldn't get control of the pain after surgery." When his mother was suffering with cancer, he said

what she went through "put a new perspective on how I treated people." He has brought that perspective to his practice, which he shares with another double-board certified doctor, Dr. Tejal Raju, who is in the practice's Christiansburg office (Ung is in Roanoke), and a physician assistant.

The practice is noted for several things: Ung and his colleagues will not prescribe opioids on a patient's first visit. In fact, Ung is adamant that narcotics are prescribed way too often and mask the pain but do not treat the problem. And the problem may have become exacerbated because of the wait times that pain-sufferers go through to see a specialist. In fact, he works closely with orthopaedic surgeons, one of whom remarked at the end of a day that he'd seen 46 patients that day and only one was a surgical candidate. The other 45 were passed along to another doctor. "And they waited two months to be pushed somewhere else?" Ung asked his colleague. "Why are they going to you, first? We need to be able to get those patient in sooner and get the right treatment for the diagnosis."

He is frustrated when he sees a patient for the first time who has been on narcotics for a year as a result of an acute injury – a situation he could have alleviated sooner. "We have a deficiency to early access care in this area. My patients, if they call and say they are hurting, we get them in that day because delays lead to more issues and they get addicted to more meds that they don't need."


Which leads to another interesting approach – what Ung calls complementary therapies. He does not use the term "alternative therapies" because he said people in this area will leap to the conclusion that he's offering non-Western medicine. Once he does a physical exam and listens to his patients – both key in determining the source of the problem – he discusses options with them, such as injections, chiropractic, massage therapy, shiatsu, yoga, bio feedback, reiki, and acupuncture. "The first thing they normally get thrown at them is pain meds – it's our knee jerk reaction. The big narcotic issue is that we don't know how to treat pain, and doctors make patients dependent on meds they don't have to have," he said.

A study done by Johns Hopkins, released in

2011, stated that “routine MRI imaging does nothing to improve the treatment of patients who need injections of steroids into their spinal columns to relieve pain. Moreover, MRI plays only a small role in a doctor’s decision to give these epidural steroid injections (ESIs), the most common procedure performed at pain clinics in the United States.” Ung agrees and says that one “really has to do a good clinical and history to support what you are going to do next. Truly, it’s what the patient tells you. That’s why we’ve been able to get good results – we try to figure out what’s going on.”

And what presents and what is going on may be two entirely different things in two places of the body. Ung said a patient came in with shoulder pain, only to find out the problem originated in his neck. “This makes it really interesting, but really hard.” Early treatment also makes a major

difference – early and aggressive, that is. The goal, he said, should always be to try to get patients back to functioning as soon as possible, and the pain treated in the most specific way for their diagnosis. “Where I send people, and what I do myself, is to maximize function and minimize dependence on medication. From a pain standpoint, medications just cover up what you are trying to get better.”

According to a U.S. Department of Justice report release in 2012, “drug deaths have increased throughout Virginia over 80 percent since 1999 and 41 percent in Western Virginia from 2007 to 2011. In 2010, the majority of drug-related deaths were accidental. Fentanyl, hydrocodone, methadone and oxycodone, all prescription opioids, were found to be wholly responsible for 53.8 percent of drug-only deaths. 



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We will see an erosion of [classic] public education — Page 31



Jill Wolfe, who owns the mom-and-pop Wolfe's BBQ, goes over numbers at the restaurant with Ken Heath, the town's economic development chief. After winning a \$5,000 Pop Up award, "we did not have to focus on making sure we had all those bills covered" during the restaurant's early days.

You just never know what'll pop up in Marion >

Executive Summary:

A smartly named boot camp readies entrepreneurs for battle.

By Andrea Brunais

What town wouldn't want to force a downtown vacancy rate from a recession-prompted 17 percent to less than 6 percent? For that feat, look no farther than Marion, home of the PBS program *Song of the Mountains*.

With nearby Hungry Mother State Park

drawing a quarter-million visitors annually, town leaders wanted to cash in on tourists' needs for food and sleep. They created an eight-week training program called Pop Up Marion.

Would-be entrepreneurs complete intensive training in marketing, customer service and business-plan creation. Then they're eligible for a \$5,000 Pop Up award.

"It's created businesses like an antique shop, restaurants, nightspots, even a pet groomer, which is something we really didn't expect," says Ken Heath, the town's executive director of community and economic development. "It's helped transform our community from being traditionally service based to catering to tourists and even to locals, which is something that helps us out as we continue to develop our economy." 

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The Big KISS Off >

Most of us like the KISS principle: Keep It Simple, Stupid. But that's not possible these days, is it?

I was chatting with Greg Brock of Roanoke's FireFli Media, and we got on the subject of all the options that are now available to businesses when they go to market their products and services. He whips out the iPad and pulls up a graphic. In just four stages over a very short period of time, we "progress" from a small handful of truly powerful media channels to what's out there now: a mile long list of services that are all viable and proven performers.

I have a strong connection to about six social media "experts" (the most knowledgeable don't mind telling me that's a misuse of a title, because there is still too much change and the landscape is still too new). However, these "most informed" individuals are constantly sending me tips and advice on what is really hot right now, what you need to do, and how great that new tool, portal or service is working for others. In nearly every case, they're right. At that moment, the new offering (or old source that has magically improved), really is more than a trend. The results prove it's working.

I love visuals. I have a number of them that graphically depict the brands or channels of marketing providers; and my favorite are the charts that show the multidisciplinary options. Even though digital contains the most subsets (it hasn't been conglomerated quite yet), marketing experts like to see the media mix of top options in all categories on one page. If that's even possible.

We've come a long way from the town crier, the Pony Express, the weekly Gazette.

So what's a business owner, executive officer, or poor marketing director to do?

With all the cluttered landscape, I see three reactions. Two of them are dangerous.

1. Forget the new stuff. Wait until it all shakes out. This company believes change is not necessary. Or too costly.

We've built this business and know what works. The new mechanisms out there may work here and there, but they're too new and trendy for the bigger picture. If and when those tactics really start performing and cutting into our business, we can address it then. For now, we'll hang tight, keep

On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:

How does one develop a business marketing strategy when confronted with so many options spiraling out of control?

working hard, and keep doing what we know best.

Dangerous? Ummm, just pay attention to history. Payphones were really popular for a while.

2. Don't get left behind. Go with what's hot.

This company knows it's important to be on the leading edge. A step ahead.

Our business was launched as an answer to something needed in the market. We understand how important it is to be ahead of everyone else. We want to be out there, using the very latest techniques and methods. If someone else is showing up somewhere we are not, we need to get there fast. If it's the latest and greatest thing, you can bet we'll be there.

Dangerous? If you're in a lot of things a little way, you're not in any thing a big way.

3. Stay Informed. Embrace a short list.

This company crafts a simple program. One you can wrap your hands around.

We know what has worked and we know there are new things that are also working. We're not going to sit and do what we've always done—and we're not going to jump and grab at something just because it's new and different. We will only do a set number of things, but they will be things we can manage and do very well. We will allocate no more than (5 to 25%) of our resources to a totally new methodology; otherwise any significant change will be to integrate the new activity into areas that have proven results to us before.

Dangerous? Not really. There's just enough risk here to balance solid experience with forward thinking strategy.

Once a well-reasoned program has been established, there are opportunities for mid-point reviews, so that with each upcoming strategy, the effort matches the forward momentum of the company within the industry. The program changes incrementally, matching the business response.

Here's the irony: Long term programs are short sighted. But short term programs can delay your performance in a way that is long-lasting.

KISS is an old acronym.
Not so catchy anymore.

Too bad it doesn't sound enlightening. It still works. 



We've come a long way from the town crier, the Pony Express, the weekly Gazette. So what's a business owner, executive officer, or poor marketing director to do? With all the cluttered landscape, I see three reactions. Two of them are dangerous.



Chris Perkins

Engagement provides growth >

In November 2014, the Roanoke Police Department began the Growth through Opportunity Initiative, known as GTO. GTO membership is comprised of adult individuals, known as GTO Cadets, with unique challenges related to, but not limited to, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down syndrome, intellectual disabilities and other cognitive impairments. The Department provides volunteer opportunities to these individuals to help enhance their skill acquisition, self-esteem and inclusion within the community. GTO Cadets are assigned tasks that will serve to enhance the productivity of the Department while simultaneously providing opportunities for positive interactions designed to lead to opportunities for personal relationships with all members of our community. Josh Leonard is one of four GTO Cadets who volunteers approximately 12 hours per week. He spoke in February to the Roanoke City Council about the importance of the Police Department and his role in the Department. Josh said, "as a police officer you got to keep good people safe from bad guys....As a GTO Cadet you need to be McGruff, which I am...He's a crime dog."

Guest Commentary


By Chris Perkins,
Roanoke City
Chief of Police

Executive Summary:
Initializing a joint partnership with individuals who have unique challenges is rewarding; even a very structured police department can do it.

The implementation of this initiative was a coordinated effort of the Department; the City of Roanoke Municipal Volunteer Program (MVP), a program housed within the City of Roanoke's Department of Human Resources; and the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services. The MVP Coordinator and police personnel interviewed candidates to assess their abilities as volunteers and placed them in roles that best suited their skills. The Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services, and any other similarly situated organization, maintains its own liability insurance and provides job coaches and other services for our GTO volunteers. The Department designated numerous personnel to serve as liaisons with the job-coaching staff and GTO Cadets. The growth of the GTO Initiative is only restricted by the availability of job coaches and the number and types of available and suitable GTO volunteer tasks. Tasks specific to the individual interests of the GTO Cadets are created through discussions between designated Department contacts, the Cadet, the Cadet's family when appropriate, and the assigned job coaches. GTO Cadet tasks include, but are not limited to, key master, Quartermaster, office

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assistance; participation in special events, Citizen Police Academy Alumni functions, Department graduations; speaking engagements with me, and outreach events such as playing McGruff, which Josh described while addressing City Council.

The question and the challenge are: will you consider an initiative such as this in your business, be it public or private. Will you open your doors to those individuals, who after high school, have very limited opportunities for the further development of skills critical to a life of growth and enhanced self-esteem? Are you willing to try? A rigid, structured police organization tried and the reward has been overwhelming, and the growth isn't limited to the Cadets. Police officers and civilian employees of the Department have experienced growth both personally and professionally through their interactions with the GTO Cadets. So we, the Roanoke Police Department, challenge you to step up to this incredible opportunity to make a difference. If we can do it, so can you. 

For more information and suggestions for tasks, please contact Officer Travis Akins at travis.akers@roanokeva.gov.



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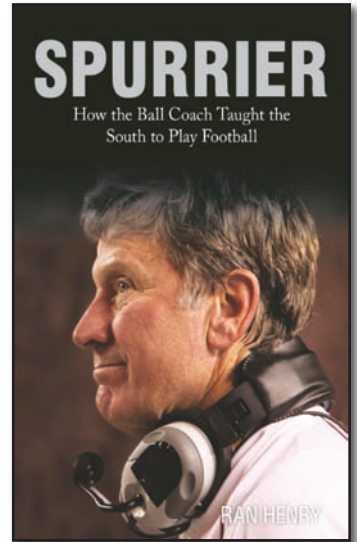
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Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our contributors and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit short 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 news@vbFRONT.com



Old ball coach

Let us establish immediately that I am not a fan of Steve Spurrier, ball coach. He broke my Tennessee heart far too many times when he was at the University of Florida for me to ever forgive him, but as the topic of a book by Ran Henry, Spurrier is riveting.

UVa professor and Bluefield native Henry's new work is *Spurrier: How the Ball Coach Taught the South to Play Football* and it's a heck of a read, whether or not you're in Spurrier's corner (which is at the University of South Carolina these days). Henry covered Spurrier as a Florida sports writer some years ago and developed a good relationship with him.

Spurrier is an interesting man, always the contrarian, the innovator, the stubborn realist, the teacher. He made Duke matter in football for a while, then turned Florida into a fearsome offensive machine in the 1990s before tanking with the Redskins and bringing South Carolina to respectability. Henry is a fine writer who captures the heart and soul of the cantankerous coach and brings his life and times to life.

Whether you are a fan of his or not, Spurrier has a lot to say and Henry interprets it well.

—Dan Smith

A cozy escape

First Frost (St. Martin's Press 2015) by Sarah Addison Allen continues the story of the Waverley sisters, Claire and Sydney, who were first introduced in Allen's novel *Garden Spells*. Though the sisters are happily married and have successful businesses, each has her own sense of dissatisfaction to address. Then, a mysterious stranger shows up in their small town of Bascom, N.C., weaving tales of his own that add to Claire's doubts about her identity and abilities.

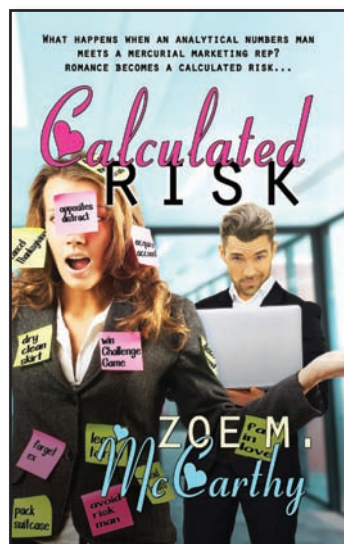
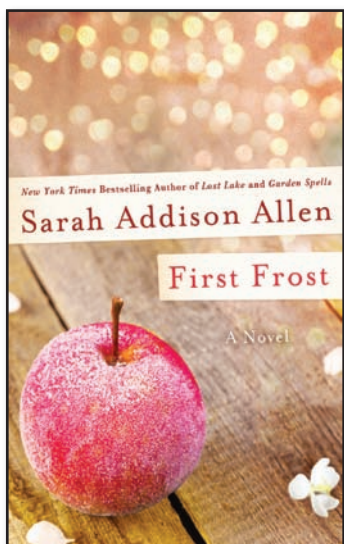
Elements of magical realism, like the sassy apple tree that throws apples and blooms at first frost, and the house whose doors stick when certain people knock, capture our imagination and reveal the enchanting world the Waverley's inhabit. Each has her own unusual gift that is both a subject of awe and dismay depending on the circumstance.

Having grown up in Asheville, N.C., Allen has a gift for creating the ambiance of a small Southern town. She provides a cozy escape for those who enjoy a light-hearted read with a touch of charm.

—Laura Leighty Wade

Still rising

Roanoker Rod Belcher's meteoric rise in the literary world continues with his



new *Nightwise* (Tor), which follows rapidly on the heels of the hugely successful *The Six-Gun Tarot* and *The Shotgun Arcana*. Belcher, who has been a freelance writer in this region for some time (including working for FRONT upon occasion) has worked hard at his niche, fantasy, and *Nightwise* represents the beginning of a new series.

Nightwise focuses on Laytham Ballard, something of a legend who is “wise in the ways of the night” and a “cynical bastard who stopped thinking of himself as a good guy a long time ago.” In this opening chapter of the legend, Ballard is running down a Serbian baddie who has disappeared. But Ballard has made a promise to his dying friend to find the fiend, no matter the cost and the chase is on.

Belcher is a fine writer with a rich imagination who takes western themes, updates them, weirds them out and you get a good read. This one will be out in August.

—Dan Smith

Inspirational romance

Memorable characters, engaging plot and great romance kept me turning the pages to finish *Calculated Risk* by Zoe McCarthy (White Rose Publishing), a writer based

in Wytheville. What happens when your future isn't what you thought it would be? Can Cisney Baldwin and Nick LeCrone work together, get past their hurdles and find true love? I laughed at Cisney and Nick's assumptions, and cried when things didn't go as planned.

Cisney is a marketing rep who loves her sticky notes and Nick is an actuary who loves his numbers. When Cisney's boyfriend jilts her right before Thanksgiving, Nick invites her to his family's house for the long weekend. Sparks start flying.

Cisney suspects Nick has a problem communicating. She thinks he needs remedial communication classes. Will Nick's matchmaking family push them farther away? Can they get past what they think they know about each other?

These characters became like family. This book is for anyone who enjoys an inspirational romance with humor.

—Sally Shupe

(The reviewers: Dan Smith of Roanoke is a writer and founding FRONT editor; Hollins grad Laura Leighty Wade of Roanoke is a Certified Passion Test Facilitator; Sally Shupe lives in Newport, works at Virginia Tech and is a freelance editor.)



Tom Field

TT @ 85 >

On Valentine's Day 2015, downtown Roanoke's cultural icon **Texas Tavern** celebrated its 85th anniversary. Local dignitaries recognized the event in the morning, and crowds packed the tiny building throughout the day, buying 85-cent specials. TT draws its biggest customers at noon, late afternoon, and late night; above, diehard fans brave frigid temperatures just before dusk.



Tom Field



SRCCC show time >

Salem Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce held its annual **Business & Technology Showcase** at Salem Civic Center on Feb. 11. The event commandeered several rooms, featuring local businesses on display to members and the community at large.

FRONT 'N ABOUT



Courtesy of Rachel Tully, UW/NRV

UW aspirations >

United Way of Montgomery, Radford and Floyd has released its newest campaign, asking the community "What do you aspire for the New River Valley?" The Aspire video was presented Jan. 29. Utilizing social media, the campaign solicits input, including contributions out of the starting gate from members Charlie, Danielle, Terri; and Darin Britt, Melinda Dunford, Michele Brauns.



Courtesy of Roanoke County

Business threat prep >

Roanoke County's Police and Economic Development departments are holding Violence in the Workplace workshops, including this one on Feb. 3 at South County Library with 72 attendees. Statistics were provided about "active shooter incidents" as well as information on developing an emergency action plan and what to do when faced with a violent situation.

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

Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

David Booth and **Ethan Cook** have been named shareholders at Foti, Flynn, Lowen & Co.

Joshua Mattox has been promoted to senior vice president; and **Stephen Waskey** and **David Ellis, Jr.** have been promoted to first vice president at Morgan Stanley / Wealth Management office.

Debbie Plogger has been promoted to vice president of title services, and **Paula Bussey** has been promoted to assistant vice president and branch manager at Bank of Botetourt.

LEGAL FRONT



Summerlin

Daniel Summerlin, III, has been named president of Woods Rogers.

Thomas Bagby and **Thomas Bondurant** have been inducted into the Virginia Law Foundation Fellow Class of 2015.

The Roanoke Valley Paralegal Association has announced its



Bondurant

2015 positions: **Kathie Coulson**, president; **John Kong**, vice president; **Whitney Jennings**, secretary; **Susan Albert**, treasurer; board members: **Tara Barnett**, **Brittany Corn**, **Monica Guillems**, **Erin Polley**, **Matt Westmoreland**; and **Eva Gray**, National Association of Legal Assistants representative; and **Jayne Atkins**, Virginia Alliance of Paralegal Associations representative.



Pulley

Glenn Pulley has joined as partner at Gentry Locke's new Lynchburg office.

WELLNESS FRONT

Warren Bickel, director of Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute's Addiction Recovery Research Center, has been selected as a fellow by the Academy of Behavioral Medicine Research.

Jocy Graham has joined as fitness director at Warm Hearth.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Sarah Miller has joined as senior client executive; and **Jeremy Rasor** has joined as business development executive at Advanced Logic Industries.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Mike Eades has been elected president; **Merle Heckman**, vice president; **John Hopkins**, secretary; **Sean Horne**, treasurer; **Mike Shorten**, vice president and associate; and **Susan Fortenberry**, immediate past president of 2015 Roanoke Regional Home Builders Association.

Daniel Poe has joined commercial and residential sales and leasing services at Hall Associates.

Chris Barba, **Chris Burns**, **Ben Crew**, **Daniel Hansen**, and **Brad Schurman** have joined as associates at Balzer and Associates.

Michael Nelson has joined as senior project engineer, and **Tammy Leonard** as accounting specialist at Draper Aden Associates.



Bartorillo

Patrick Bartorillo has been promoted to general manager and vice president of Branch Highways.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT



Child



Devine

George Child has been appointed chief executive office of Richfield Living; **Sue Devine** has been named administrator of Richfield Recovery & Care Center and The Rehab Center.

EDUCATION FRONT

Lorraine Lange has been named director of co-educational Master of Arts Teaching and

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies at Hollins University.



Dean



Cruikshank



Kates

Dennis Dean has been appointed to serve as interim vice president for research; **Dana Cruikshank** has been named marketing



Lyon-Hill



Minter

and communications manager for Continuing and Professional Education; **Angela Kates** has been named chief of staff in administrative services; **Sarah Lyon-Hill** has



Helmick

been named economic development specialist; **Ryan Minter** has been hired as an annual giving officer; **Mary Helmick** has been named director of procurement at Virginia Tech.

Christina Giuliano has been named executive director of Blue Ridge Autism and Achievement Center.

CULTURE FRONT



Polan

Rebecca Polan has been appointed to the Virginia Chamber of Commerce board of directors.

Charles Overstreet has been elected chair of the board of directors of the 2015 Better Business Bureau of Western Virginia; officers include: **Mike Leván**, vice chair; **Susan Still**, secretary;

Have a career announcement?

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



Long term programs are short sighted, but short term programs can delay your performance in a way that is long-lasting

— Page 43

Career FRONT



Levan



Aldridge



Still



Kevin Oddo



Bell

Michael Bell, treasurer; **John Aldridge**, past chair; **Kevin Oddo**, legal counsel; and new board members: **Mike Cox**, **James Hall, Jr.**, **Susan Mini**, **Henry Scholz**, **Heather**

Shepardson, **Tommy Wood**; joining continuing board members: **Bob Evans**, **Rick James**, **Gayle Merrill**, **Quin Mongan**, **Rachel Nichols**, **Janet Riddlebarger**, **Gary Robertson**, **C. Michael Shannon**, **Bob Smith**, **Stacie Vest**, and **John Williams**.

Thomas Becher has been named to the Public Relations Society of America's national nominating committee.

The Virginia Western Community College Educational Foundation announced its 2015 officers and new members of the board of directors: **J.**

Kenneth Randolph, president; **Warner Dalhouse**, vice president; **Dr. Bertram Spetzler**, secretary; **Neil Wilkin Jr.**, treasurer; **Edwin Hall**, immediate past president. New members: **Nancy Howell Agee**, **J. Spencer Frantz**,

William Farrell, **Leon Harris**, **Drew Parker**, **Garnett Smith**, **Charles Steger** and **Nicholas Taubman**.

MUNICIPAL FRONTS

Beth Doughty of the Roanoke Regional Partnership, has been named one of the top 50 economic developers in North America by Consultant Connect.

Compiled by Tom Field

“Why do we... compare ourselves to the likes of Charlottesville, Asheville and Boulder?” — Page 36

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FRONT Notes



PBS winners

Pledging pays off

Steve and Karen Ellingson of Blacksburg won an 8-day Viking River Cruise, Amsterdam to Switzerland on the Rhine River, as part of the **Blue Ridge PBS** fall and winter festival fund raising drive.

College advertising

Jefferson College of Health Sciences won gold awards for a television commercial and recruiting brochure in its "Be Next" branding campaign at the 2014-2015 Collegiate Advertising Awards.

Non profits granted

Virginia Foundation for the Humanities (VFH) has announced grants to the following

organizations in our region: Taubman Museum of Art (\$4,750); Virginia Museum of Transportation (\$8,000); Legacy Museum of African American History (\$8,500); Bassett Historical Center (\$6,900); Virginia Tech African American History at Solitude (\$2,150); and Ferrum College Virginia Canneries Project (\$2,000).

Legal maneuvering

Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore law firm has opened a new office in downtown Lynchburg at 801 Main Street, 11th floor.

Technical maneuvering

Qualtrax, a subsidiary of CCS, Inc., is moving from Christiansburg to

downtown Blacksburg historic district at 105 East Roanoke Street.

No library card needed

Kissito Healthcare has announced its intention to purchase the former Roanoke County Library headquarters building on Electric Road to be used as its Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE center), a nursing home alternative, with adult day care and therapy services.

Plastic award

Plastics One Inc., a medical component and cable manufacturer in Roanoke, is sponsoring the VT KnowledgeWorks Global and Student Business Concept Challenge finals in April, with a \$25,000 grant

and \$10,000 scholarship stipend for most outstanding tangible product concept.

Pamplin @ 50

Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2015; activities and communications on the milestone will be happening throughout the year.

Respect for elders

Foundation for Roanoke Valley recently awarded over \$200,000 in grants to non profit organizations serving the elderly, including: Family Services of Roanoke Valley (\$35,000); Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment and Endowment (\$30,000); Joint Resident

Council (\$40,000); Goodwill Industries of the Valleys (\$29,450); Mental Health America of Roanoke Valley (\$35,000); and Rebuilding Together (\$50,000).

in Botetourt County by 144,000 square feet; the transmission parts manufacturer currently employs 580, and expects to add another 75.

Have an announcement about your business?

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

Mobility email

Mindsense, a software company at VT Corporate Research Center and initially funded as a Kickstarter campaign, has released its next generation Mail Pilot program (Mail Pilot 2)—an iPhone/iPad app that provides a "stable, mobile-friendly, gesture-rich email experience" with iCloud syncing.

Transmission in high gear

Dynax America Corporation is expanding its facility at EastPark

Tower power

Towers Shopping Center in Roanoke has filed a \$2 million permit for renovation; expecting to add a food court, among other structural improvements.

Creative collaboration

The **Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology** is partnering with the **Pamplin College of Business** (both of Virginia Tech) to capitalize on entrepreneurial opportunities for students. The "convergence of

science, engineering, art, and design" provides opportunities for business that will be fostered through academic and extracurricular activities such as seminars, contests, research and planning, along with access to funding.

Wiping in new business

Edelmann Technology, a Germany-based manufacturer of non-woven flat sheets (often used as wipes and absorbent products),

is locating its North American headquarters in Franklin County; initially hiring about ten employees at a County-owned building in downtown Rocky Mount.

Square feet at office unchanged

Roanoke's Poe & Cronk Real Estate Group has released its 28th annual Office Market Survey, which reports overall office space holding steady at



Dynax groundbreaking



Virginia Tech Peace Corps

86% occupancy, following previous year declines; the report covers data through the end of 2014.

Peace out

Virginia Tech has been ranked 11th place in "top volunteer-producing colleges and universities across the country" by the Peace Corps.

Healthy diagnosis

After one year of operation as a Federally-Qualified Health Center, **Community Health Center of the New River Valley** has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Health

and Human Services as a Health Center Quality Leader.

Cleanup

Domermuth Environmental Services of Knoxville, Tenn. has opened a location in Roanoke; the company provides cleanup and emergency response services, particularly for transportation projects.

Locked up award

Salem's **Medeco**, a manufacturer of locking products and systems, has won the Chicago Athenaeum Museum's 2014 Good Design Award

for Protective Equipment for its M100 Aperio eCylinder with Prox technology mechanical door retrofit hardware.

Alternate taxi

Gov. Terry McAuliffe has signed legislation authorizing ride-sharing companies like **Uber** and **Lyft** to operate in Virginia; a change from the initial ban and subsequent temporary agreement.

Dawg show

Salvage Dawgs, a DIY Network reality show featuring the crew from **Black Dog Architectural Salvage** in Roanoke,

Virginia, is now available to download on Amazon Instant Video and iTunes TV.

AEC firm coming to Roanoke

Burns & McDonnell, an architectural engineering firm, is expanding and opening an office in Roanoke; Mid-Atlantic office manager Jeffrey Ganthner says the 50 employee company plans to grow to more than 100 within two years.

Unified name

Union First Market Bank (acquired StellarOne last

year) has changed its name to **Union Bank & Trust**.

Litigate award

LeClairRyan was named Virginia State Litigation Firm of the Year by Benchmark Litigation at the awards banquet on Jan. 29.

Envious rubdown

Massage Envy has opened at Towers Shopping Center in Roanoke.

Bit slot

Anderson, Desimore & Green has reported that it is the first law firm in Southwest Virginia to accept digital currency Bitcoin, as payment for services; an offering to "embrace new, innovative technologies for its clients."

Attracted to Vinton

Magnets USA, a provider of promotional products, is moving from Roanoke City to the Town of Vinton; the company is also celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Pay taxes, play ball

The General Assembly has passed legislation that would allow home-schooled students to participate in public

school sports (often referred to as the "**Tebow Bill**"); but as currently written, local school boards can still decide whether to implement the policy.

Better have hall pass

Delegate Mark Cole has introduced a measure allowing school security officers to be armed with stun guns, pepper spray, and similar weapons; the officers are not allowed to be armed under current law.

Shack shut

Radio Shack is shutting down its shops at Valley View Mall, New River Valley Mall, and West Main Street, Salem.

More chocolate

ChocolatePaper is closing its store at Shoppes at West Village in Roanoke County, but expanding its shop in downtown Roanoke City Market to take over the adjacent space formerly occupied by Native Grace.

Peddling movie

Roanoke **RideSolutions** has sent out its call for entries for the upcoming 5th Annual Bile Shorts Film Festival, where anyone can submit a short film about anything, as long as it features

a bike; deadline on March 31 and details at www.ridesolutions.org.

Shopping center bought

Piccadilly Square, a roadside shopping center on Franklin Road in Roanoke has been sold to M.T. Holding Co.

Obamacare growth

As of Feb. 18, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has reported 384,612 Virginians have purchased health care insurance through the federal government's exchange marketplace.

Melted away

Salem's **Scott & Ellie's Ice Cream** has closed its shop at Spartan Square.

Haz fine

The combined \$612,000 in fines for hazardous waste violations cited in 2011 against **Chem-Solv** and Austin Holdings-VA has been upheld by the EPA.

Food monopoly

The Federal Trade Commission is seeking to block the merger of **Sysco** and **US Foods**; claiming a limitation to competition; the combined companies would control 62 percent of the local

market foods supply to restaurants and institutions, according to the complaint supported by Virginia's Attorney General Mark Herring.

Hummus hangout

Zoe's Kitchen, a Mediterranean style restaurant, is opening in Blacksburg at the new Cinebowl & Grille at First & Main shopping center.

Jail time

Former first lady **Maureen McDonnell** has been sentenced to one year and one day in prison for the public corruption charges involving about \$165,000 in financial favors with the former CEO of Star Scientific while Governor Bob McDonnell was serving office.

Botetourt winds

Botetourt County supervisors and planning commission are addressing the need for ordinances in advance of potential wind turbine projects that could be targeted for remote and sparsely populated mountain ranges within its borders.

Compiled by Tom Field

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

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



all photos: Anne Sampson

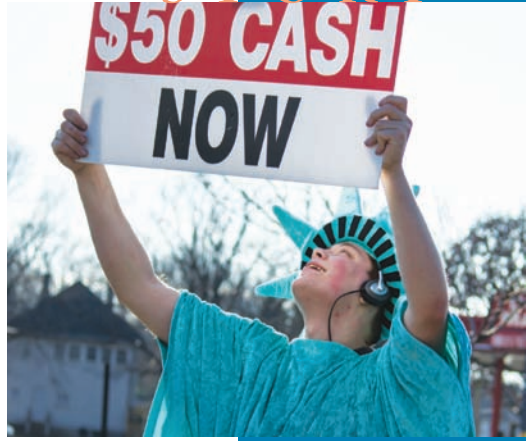
Spin selling >

Executive Summary:

You see them everywhere; streetside performers, spinning signs for various retail and service outlets—crying out for you to pull in.

By Anne Sampson

We told Anne Sampson to hit the streets. Not as bad as it sounds... when it's Anne and her camera; that's what she does best. For our Work Spaces for March, we thought we would check out some people who have an interesting job. Spinning signs to attract you to their business, from tax preparation services to automotive services to cellular phone shops to salons—you never know what might come spinning at you when you're driving around town. — *Tom Field*



Mark Anthony Carver
Liberty Tax Service
1234 Jamison Ave SE – Roanoke

Moved here a month ago from Tennessee. This is his first job in Virginia. He looks like he's having fun. Is he? "Well, I've got my music." What kind? "I'm sorry, it's rap."



Amanda Harris
Ntelos
1407 Williamson Rd – Roanoke

She works three days a week for five hour shifts. "You need to be spunky and smiling."





Kenneth Hearne
Valvoline Instant Oil Change
1624 West Main St – Salem

The guys take turns holding the sign when it gets slow. The guy who's holding the sign when a customer pulls in gets some extra pay. Kenneth agreed to this when he was hired, but, "I'm a very shy person. This makes me a little uncomfortable."



Fred
Firestone
202 Williamson Rd SE – Roanoke

He approaches the job with lots of enthusiasm, but he worries a little about repetitive motion injuries. Brian Loving of Firestone says Fred really brings in customers. "If it's slow, we just put him out there. They come on in."



People Person >

When I meet Teddy Francisco at Great Clips, a salon at Lakeside Plaza in Salem, I'm surprised to see him dressed in a nice shirt and tie. I'm going to photograph him as he promotes Great Clips by holding, tossing and spinning a sign on East Main Street. "This is how I always dress for work," he says. He's done jobs from carry to trucker to custodian and been to 48 states, Canada and Mexico. He has taken every single job seriously. And he has always worn a tie.

Teddy is something of a professional sign holder — 'advertiser' is what he calls it — having worked for Liberty Tax, Great Clips and Halloween World, and as a bell ringer for the Salvation Army. He also does home remodeling and studies online to be a counselor. "I like to talk to people," he says, "It's one of the great things about this job."

He carries salon coupons in his pocket and hands them out, starting conversations at a nearby bus stop. "The best thing is when someone tells me, 'You know, the main reason I come here is because you're out there with that sign.'" He's had people request photos, and one woman videotaped her daughter

twirling a baton while Teddy twirled his sign.

"I stay with Great Clips because it's like working with family," he says. "I enjoy interacting with people. They tell me their life stories." — *Anne Sampson*



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Ivy-covered walls meet Wall Street, by way of Main Street

— Page 9



Embrace innovation and change

— Page 24

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An evolution

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