

Valley Business FRONT

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

Mechatronics Mania

Dan Horine,
VWCC Mechatronics

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Synergy is an interesting word. I hear it in business a lot and more recently in engineering terms. It's not exactly a synonym of "integration" but it does seem to be a favorite way for both business and technology people to describe a condition that is more integrated than, well, regular integration. Our FRONTcover model used it in describing the mechatronics discipline.

"It's not just integrated," Dan Horine says, "but synergistically integrated."

The most basic analogy I can use right here on the spot is that of the routine drive to work. We have your road and your car. The two are integrated. They are designed to work together, meaning the road provides a flat surface for your tires and the resulting traction to propel you to work. But a synergetic system might look entirely different. Perhaps the very substance the road is made of and how its surface is composed and designed is scientifically matched to a specific tread pattern or material composition of your tires. The two elements don't just work together, they have inherent designs to match each other's form and function.

We're talking a lot about STEM these days. But getting science and technology and engineering and math truly synergized across the board—that's where it really gets exciting.



Tom Field

“”
Wine makes daily
living easier — Page 41

“”
Complimenting someone...
takes so little effort — Page 16



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Valley Business FRONT

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Valley Business FRONT

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

Staff

Publisher / Creative Director	Tom Field tfield@vbFRONT.com (540) 389-9945
Advertising	Dan Dowdy ddowdy@vbFRONT.com (540) 797-7943 ads@vbFRONT.com (540) 389-9945
Graphic Designer	Nicholas Vaassen nvaassen@berryfield.com
Production	Berryfield, Inc. PO Box 1041 Salem, VA 24153 (540) 389-9945

Departmental Contacts

Advertising	ads@vbFRONT.com
Subscriptions	info@vbFRONT.com
News / Releases	news@vbFRONT.com
Admin / Ops	info@vbFRONT.com

(540) 389-9945
vbFRONT.com
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JULY



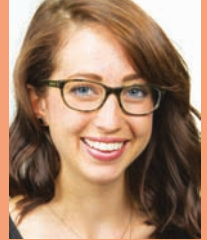
Jennifer Cooper



Keegan Divant



Mike Leigh



Ariel Lev



Randolph Walker



Alison Weaver

Editorial Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of 14 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. "They 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



Kathleen Harshberger



Christine Liana



Gene Marrano



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen

“

At the root of most crises
is a poor process — Page 31

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 42.

2016 Members

Nancy Agee Carilion (Wellness)
Laura Bradford Claire V (Retail)
Nicholas C. Conte Woods Rogers (Legal)
Warner Dalhouse Retired (Seniors)
John Garland Spectrum (Development)
Nancy Gray Hollins University (Education)
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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)

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.

“

Those tied-
house laws
make me
want to tie
one on

— Page 39

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All photos: Tom Field

Mechanical+Electrical+Control+Software ENGINEERING

The Promise from the Mechatronics Revolution

What do a brewery, a canning and jarring company and an ignition manufacturer have in common?

They all require workers with specific mechanical, electrical and computer engineering skills—and they all chose the Roanoke Valley largely due to Virginia Western Community College's Mechatronics program.

Mechatronics isn't a new field, but many people aren't familiar with the cross-disciplinary field that combines mechanics, electronics and information technology to meet high-performance manufacturing industry standards.

"Both Eldor, an Italian ignition manufacturer, and Deschutes Brewery said Virginia Western's mechatronics program was a key element in their decision to come to the Roanoke Valley," says Roanoke City Manager Chris Morrill. "When we're recruiting manufacturing-related companies, Virginia Western is always on our tour."

Jill Loope, Roanoke County's director of economic development, calls VWCC's program "vital" in recruiting businesses to the area.

Ardagh, a robotic-run canning and jarring facility in the Hollins area of Roanoke County opened its \$93.5 million plant in November 2014 in the former Hanover Direct mail order distribution center.

"Ardagh first looked for existing buildings," Loope says. "After identifying multiple buildings in multiple states, they came in and started to look at the education system, training and development, and the quality of life. Having those amenities sold Ardagh on locating here."

The rise of mecha- tronics >

Executive Summary:
Businesses won't locate here without the assurance of a large pool of workers with the right skill sets; Virginia Western Community College's mechatronics program partners with high schools and employers to fulfill that need.

By Alison Weaver



Dan Horine



The Silver Tsunami is coming. All of the baby boomers will be leaving the work force, and we've got to have people to replace them and to learn from them before they leave.

— Dan Horine

Dan Horine, head of the Mechatronics Program at VWCC, is eager to get the word out to potential students and employers.

"Manufacturing is the backbone of the country, and the increased sophistication of the equipment means that the work force has to have more sophisticated skills," he says. "It doesn't take much research to see that there's a skills gap. Mechatronics is the foundation for bridging that gap."

Horine works closely with Virginia employers to determine what their specific needs are and then meets with the VWCC staff to ensure that the college's curricula address those areas. He also uses grant money to educate high school teachers on how to prepare students for the Mechatronics curriculum.

"We were hearing that students were great at calculus but didn't know how to use a ruler or basic hand tools," he says. "Mechatronics is very hands-on. We teach the systems approach used by Siemens. The Germans have used this method for more than 100 years but it's been slow to catch on in the U.S."

In a systems approach, students are taught how to design an entire manufacturing process, troubleshoot problems, fix the problems and look for ways to improve the overall process.

"We don't believe in 'training' someone to do a single job. We want our students to have the skills to adapt to and adopt any new system," Horine says. "Employers don't expect them to know how to do everything, but they do expect them to know how to do proper research using reliable sources to design a solution."

Entry-ready, middle-skilled, advanced

Virginia Western's two-year Mechatronics program offers three degree options, allowing students to get an Associate of Applied Science in Mechatronics Systems Engineering Technology (MSET), an MSET plus a design

A certifiable choice?

Did you hear the one about the engineer who was all excited and passionate? Yeah, we didn't either. No, in truth there are jubilant and animated engineers, but certainly there exists a generalization that many in the field are primarily pragmatic. Sensible types, not too emotional, rather practical.

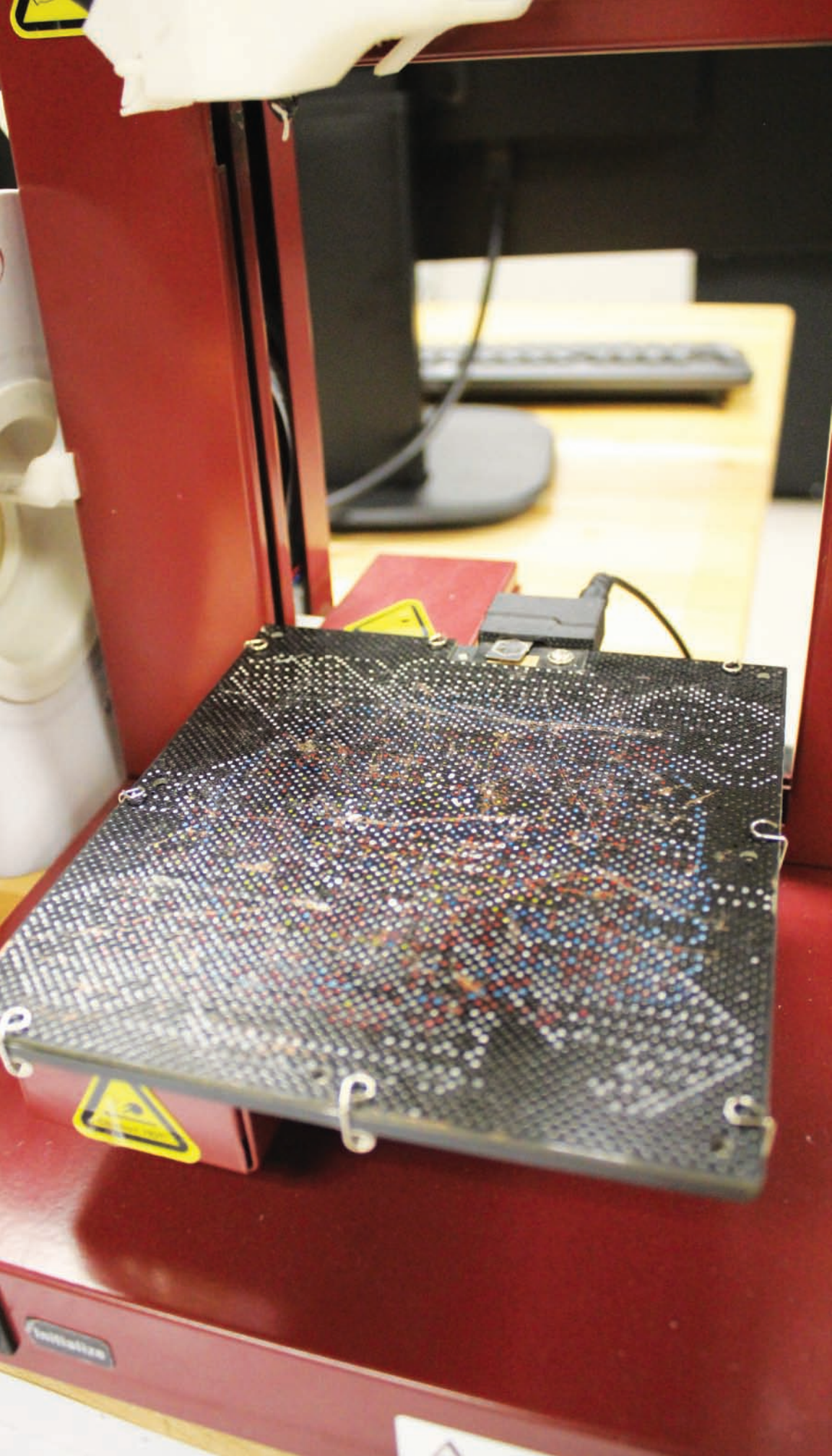
The energy at Virginia Western Community College's mechatronics program has a higher level than expected. The labs look inviting, like a supercharged version of an eight year old's first erector set decades ago. The students are more than willing to chat about their projects, most of them customized from the get go. And the director, Dan Horine, leads you around on a tour, talking as much about the skills and employment possibilities as he does his own school's program, facilities, and equipment.

He wants everyone to know that this STEM discipline is not where engineering is going—it's already here. And he's particularly proud of the internships (many in industries you might not even think of, from breweries to aerospace to consumer appliances) that have already been established, and especially two high powered connections: the Advanced Technological Education Centers (ATE) American workforce partnership network, and the Siemens Mechatronic Systems Certification Program (SMSCP).

He hands me a PowerPoint presentation with a global map that shows VWCC as one of only a handful of schools in ten countries offering the SMSCP.

If the instructor's perspective on mechatronic training and skills development is any indication of our region's student career path possibilities, they're in good hands (even if only human ones for now).

—Tom Field





**Webber Hall;
Advanced Technology
Center building**

engineering technology specialization, or an MSET with an electrical engineering technology specialization.

After completing their associate degree, students can transfer to a four-year institution or go directly into the work force. The vast majority opt to continue their education.

"Frankly, I'd like to see that change. There's such a demand for engineering technicians ... students can walk out the door after two years and get jobs paying \$40,000 and up, with very little student loan debt," Horine says. "I think a lot of it has to do with snobbery, for lack of a better word. In this country, people tend to have the mindset that you have to have a four-year degree."

The Mechatronics program also focuses on "soft" skills, such as business etiquette, appropriate attire, communication skills and the importance of punctuality.

Mechatronics students find work not only in manufacturing, but also in the transportation, logistics, building technologies, automotive, medical and mining industries. "Aerospace is another common career path," Horine says. "One student is interning at NASA this summer. Last summer we had a student intern at Boeing."

A key component of VWCC's program is its certifications. Students can test to become certified in Occupational Safety & Health Administration, Computer-aided Design, Packaging Machinery (PMMI), Manufacturing Skills (MT1), and Siemens Mechatronics Systems.

“ ”

Virginia Western is one of only nine colleges in the nation to offer Siemens [Mechatronics] certification.

— Dan Horine



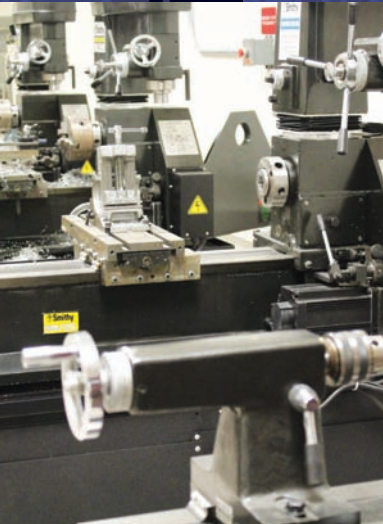


Jared Jones and
Ericka Hotiet



Mechatronics is
very hands-on.

— Dan Horine



"Virginia Western is one of only nine colleges in the nation to offer Siemens certification," Horine notes. "The certification is recognized around the world and tells employers you've mastered certain skills."

Getting hands-on

The crown jewels of Virginia Western's Mechatronics program are its two state-of-the-art labs. The Mechatronics Lab looks like the game of Mouse Trap on steroids, with gleaming circuitry, metal pathways and hissing pneumatic gates. The \$150,000 setup closely replicates the automated manufacturing system used by Elizabeth Arden Inc. at its Roanoke plant.

Down the hall is the Fab Lab, sponsored by an \$800,000 grant from the National Science Foundation. In this case, "Fab" is short for fabrication, although its contents are indeed fabulous. Basically, anything that can be imagined can be created in the lab. Students have made everything from parts for their cars to electric guitars to luggage tags.

The lab features equipment such as the region's largest 3-D printer, seven CAD work stations, a 3-D scanner, a Versa Laser engraving machine and an Onyx system that can provide accurate measurements down to .0002 of an inch.

The lab operates under a grant called PACE-ME, an acronym for Partnership in Advanced Career Education in Mechatronics Engineering. Informally, PACE-ME honors Jerry Pace, a member of VWCC's Educational Foundation board who first envisioned the Fab Lab. Pace, a mentor for both students and staff, died mid-term in 2012.


COVER STORY

"Students want to be challenged," Horine says. "We want to set the pace, and we want it to be rigorous."

Recent graduate Jared Jones, 21, helps run the lab, which he calls "Nerd-vana." In the first three weeks after graduation, Jones received four job offers but decided to stay at VWCC to set the Fab Lab up for non-credit use by students.

An abundance of job offers is not uncommon for graduates, Horine says. "One student interned at Tecton and they offered him a full-time job halfway through. Terry Drumheller, our program coordinator and grant writer, recruited her son to the program from Richmond. He now works at Plastic One."

Seth Brogan, a 2015 graduate of the program, recently stopped by the lab after work. "This program is pretty amazing," he says. He took a job at Plastics One right after graduation, manufacturing cables and connectors for the medical industry.

Horine feels a true sense of urgency in educating students to fill the needs of area industries. "The Silver Tsunami is coming. All of the baby boomers will be leaving the work force, and we've got to have people to replace them and to learn from them before they leave," he says. "Let's have Virginia Western be the community's college by supporting our regional companies and helping them be profitable." 



More than 50 companies within a 25-mile radius of Roanoke seek employees with mechatronics education. The following is a partial list of companies where Virginia Western's mechatronics students have landed jobs.

- Ardagh Group
- Coca-Cola Bottling Co.
- Dynex Technologies
- Elizabeth Arden Inc.
- GE
- Plastics One Inc.
- Ply Gem Industries
- Optical Cable Corporation
- Tecton Products LLC
- Trinity Packaging Corp.

Mechanical finger



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
When it comes to great looking—see someone, say something.

Complimentary words >


Have you ever noticed complete strangers wearing an outfit that makes them look great – and you want to tell them how much you appreciate their efforts? Next time, go on and do it.

In my enthusiasm for a great looking appearance, I often tell strangers that they look terrific in their outfit and invariably, they just light up with pleasure. It makes them feel great to be validated.

We don't take the time to do this very often anymore and there are good reasons to make it a habit.

1. When we get a compliment it reassures us that others notice our efforts to look professional. We'll be more likely to keep dressing well and avoid looking sloppy because we realize others do notice us.
2. The pleasure of being complimented makes us up our game to look even better next time. It makes us want to get noticed even more for looking good, so we search for ways to impress others.
3. Receiving a compliment encourages us to compliment others on their appearance. This spreads those good vibes and gives others at work or in the community incentive to dress better.
4. It creates a more civil work environment when people take time to compliment each other on dressing well. This leads to more courtesy in the workplace and likely more cooperation on projects. It certainly can't hurt.
5. It improves the image of not just each employee, but the whole company. One person dressing well can soon become a handful and then a larger group, until the whole company has a habit of dressing well. Before long it becomes part of a company's culture.
6. It creates a more welcoming atmosphere for clients when people are treating each other in a complimentary and courteous way. Nothing attracts business quite like a happy workplace.
7. It promotes a positive brand in the business community when a whole company dresses well and treats each other and customers with courtesy.

Complimenting someone on their appearance when it's attractive and professional takes so little effort, yet it can reap benefits that go well beyond the personal level.

It costs you nothing and makes you feel good just from the generosity of your action. Sounds to me like a situation where everyone wins. So keep an eye out and spread those compliments liberally to those who deserve it. 

Comments? Kathy@peacockimage.com

Manners of mourning >


Recently I attended several funerals, including two for very close relatives. In days gone by, the rules of mourning included severe restrictions on dress and behavior. Queen Victoria went into deep mourning, and wore black for the rest of her life after the death of her husband, Prince Albert.

Following Victoria's lead, her subjects devised complex rituals to memorialize their deceased. These mandated elaborate funerals and the withdrawal from social activities for a proscribed period of time. Excruciatingly strict rules concerning dress for men, women and children were also obligatory. As the mourning period progressed, colors became lighter, from black to grey to mauve. Fans of Downtown Abbey will recall that Dowager Duchess Violet always wore shades of grey, and mauve, because she was widowed. These rules were universally known; people (bereaved or not) knew how to behave, dress and act.

Not so today. In our increasing casual society, most simply don't know what to wear to a funeral. What do we say to friends and co-workers who are grieving? Often we don't know – possibly because we don't want to face another's grief, and perhaps our own mortality.

What to do, say, and not say:

- At the funeral, dress appropriately to show respect for the deceased, the family, and yourself.
- Send a card or note to the family, and if you can, add a little something you remember about the deceased. This gesture will bring comfort to the family.
- Please don't co-mingle a condolence message with business.
- Don't say "if there is anything I can do, call me." A bereaved person will never call you.
- Saying "I am so sorry for your loss" sounds weak, but it is the best thing to say. Then be silent and listen.
- Never ask about details of the death. If the bereaved wants to share, they will.
- Although it sounds kind, don't ask "how are you doing?" Early on, most people haven't processed their grief enough to answer that question. They may not want to talk about their feelings to you. That question might elicit a wave of grief, and that's not your intention.
- Don't say "He or she is in a better place." That's not really our call, is it?
- Or "It was his or her time to go." - see above.
- Or "I know how you feel." Please don't say that, because you don't.

Understand that people deal with grief in different ways. Give them time and space to find their paths forward. 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
How one responds to someone who has experienced the death of a loved one may have changed customs from past to present, but the words shared still require care and consideration.



All photos: Christina Liana

Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce in Fincastle

Colonial Main Street meets 21st Century >

Executive Summary:

Fincastle's economic viability can be realized by capitalizing on its past while positioning itself for living and doing business in the 21st century.

By Christine Liana

Welcome to Fincastle, Virginia.

A Small Town With Far-Reaching Borders

Just 20 miles north of Roanoke on U.S. Route 220, you might drive right by a part of American history without realizing it. But new signage is underway, beckoning visitors to a charming, colonial village.

Fincastle has been the Botetourt County seat for over 200 years. Incorporated in 1772, this quintessential main street town was the government center of a land area

that once encompassed present-day Kentucky, a portion of Wisconsin, and areas of what's now West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

Over time Botetourt County tapered off to 541.20 square miles. With convenient access to Interstate 81 and the Roanoke Regional Airport, approximately 33,347 people live in Botetourt and 353 of them call Fincastle home.

From Yesterday to Today

Fincastle's rich history attracts genealogy buffs researching their family descendants. But it's not only history this town offers; local businesses are lifeblood of this community.

A mainstay is the Bank of Fincastle, where friendly, professional staff are here to help

you. Formed in 1875, it moved to its current location on Roanoke Street in 1910. That's impressive in our age of monolith banks that outsource customer service.

Across from Main Street on Route 220 is Leonardo's, an award-winning pizzeria serving up mouth-watering pizza, pasta, and subs. Like any good neighborhood eatery, it's the place where friends gather and lunch meetings are held. Nearby, Heritage Family Market sells a delicious variety of foods.

Getting married? The historic Kyle House on Main Street is a romantic venue for ceremonies and receptions, catered by Schaal's Catering.

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Bank of Fincastle

lawyer up? Want to visit the County museum or see an 1800's jail or blacksmith shop? All this can be done as you stroll through the Fincastle Historic District, which was named to the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1969.

If you're looking to open or relocate an office and want to avoid commuter traffic in Botetourt's Route 220 south corridor, the Clark Office Building on West Back Street is a prime location. This beautiful, two-story brick professional building offers easy access from Route 220,



Botetourt County Circuit Courthouse



Richard Clark

spacious parking, and amenities. Richard Clark should know; he constructed it in 2002. Owner of Clark Home Sales, he's been a member of the Botetourt business community for 25 years. Operating a business locally is an advantage that more entrepreneurs can realize if local officials advertise Fincastle's benefits and are open-minded for the future. "Botetourt County and Fincastle are wonderful areas. The future is going to be bright, and it's a great place to live and work with a great future ahead of it if people get in this mindset," says Clark.

What Does the Future Hold?

In this age of big-box stores and stressful traffic, Fincastle provides a welcome relief reminiscent of a simpler time. But with encroaching mixed-use developments, how can Fincastle sustain itself, and what concerns does it face for the future?

The Town's major goals include encouraging economic vitality, designing for planned growth, and providing a high level of services and utilities. This takes money, and having ample financial

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David Tickner, Fincastle Town Manager

resources is a challenge, according to Town Manager David Tickner.

Fear of change can also present a challenge. But change and revitalization are two different things. Preserving historic character can be accomplished with investors, branding, and smart, managed growth through which quality, small businesses

are encouraged and incentivized to locate. Otherwise, Fincastle, like any small town, could be overshadowed by complacency and forgotten as mom-and-pop businesses sell out and take tax revenue with them. "Fincastle is a town that appreciates its history but still wants to move forward and see economic growth. We have historical assets and infrastructure that are valuable



Doloris Vest, Executive Director of the Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce

to residents and businesses," says Tickner.


Recent preservation work resulted in brick sidewalks, streetlights, and easier traffic patterns enhancing Fincastle's infrastructure. Community spirit is celebrated with year-round activities, including the annual Fincastle Frolic. Spearheaded by Ms. Lee Minnix, this year's event is August 12, 2016, from 6 to 9 p.m.

Good work is strengthened through collaboration. Through its connections, Botetourt's Chamber of Commerce has programs, marketing, and resources to help its small towns. "The Chamber supports any efforts that Fincastle has to determine a direction, and will work with them on identifying the resources to pursue it," says Executive Director Doloris Vest.

Botetourt County government supports

efforts through its Comprehensive Plan, tourism department, and qualifying incentive policy. "Fincastle is a beautiful little town. It has a lot of character to be discovered," remarks County Administrator Gary Larrowe.

Like the Duke of Gloucester Street in Colonial Williamsburg, beautiful possibilities could translate to Fincastle: fragrant boxwood, English flower gardens, colonial architecture framing an inn or tavern, a gift shop, bake shop, coffee shop, drugstore with soda fountain, and other small businesses that give main street towns their identities and attraction.

As the morning fog lifts and the golden sun rises above the mountains, it's the dawning of a new day in a new century. You can almost hear distant echoes of fifes and drums rolling out a fresh beat for colonial Fincastle. 

First Fridays

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Home Safe Home >

Americans' level of concern about crime and violence is at its highest point in 15 years according to a new Gallup survey. Fifty-three percent of U.S. adults say they personally worry "a great deal" about crime and violence, an increase of 14 percentage points since 2014. Citizens is a locally-owned Cooperative that not only provides broadband, voice, and video services to rural communities, but offers security protection and Smart automation services for homes and businesses.

Did You Know?

Over 2 million home burglaries are reported in the United States each year and, on average, a burglary of a home occurs every 13 seconds - or about four burglaries a minute. The FBI statistics show that 1 in 3 homes without a security system will fall victim to property crime as compared to 1 in 250 homes with a security system.

Citizens offers an Umbrella of Security Services

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**Brandon Williams,
 Certified Security
 Solutions Technician**

“On average, a burglary of a home occurs every 13 seconds”





Randolph Walker

Martin with some of the awards he's accumulated in the past two years

Two-channels work better than one >

Executive Summary:

Timothy Martin heads Roanoke City's award-winning social media program.

By Randolph Walker

They say you can't fight city hall. Well, maybe you can and maybe you can't. But in Roanoke at least, no one can say you can't communicate with city hall.

A major reason for that is Timothy Martin, the city's communications and media coordinator. (He's also one of the city's spokesmen; the other is communications and media officer Melinda Mayo.)

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To say that Martin is plugged in is putting it mildly. He isn't always in the office, but he's always on the job. When his wife went into labor during a snowstorm, he was scheduling Facebook posts while they were at the hospital.

Is anyone listening? Yes. During the snowstorm, the city's pages had over a million views.

The city has 46 social media pages (possibly more by the time you read this). The city's main Facebook page, www.facebook.com/RoanokeVa/, has 64,000 likes. "We use photography on that page to drive the numbers up and use that to reach out to people across the country to show how beautiful Roanoke is and attract them here," says Martin.

You can view the page even if you don't

have a Facebook account, "but you can't interact with it, and that's really what we want to do," he says. "If they send us messages, we're going to respond as quickly as possible; 84 percent of responses we get from Facebook, we respond within an hour." Employees follow social media guidelines issued in 2015 by the city's Office of Communications.

For an overview of all the city's pages, see the Roanoke Social Media Center at roanoke.uberflip.com. "It's an online hub that all of our social media pages feed into. The first page that loads shows all of the latest feeds."

While Martin likes citizens to interact, he says it's also good to have a site like the Roanoke Social Media Center which does not require accounts or logins.

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The city's main Facebook page

Martin grew up in Franklin County, studied journalism at Radford University, and worked at WFIR for seven years before joining the city in 2013.

His desk in the Municipal Building is lined with awards he's gotten from organizations such as the City-County Communications & Marketing Association, Government Social Media and the Public Relations Society of America, including Top Social Media Advocate in Government at the Government Social Media Conference in Nevada in April. The awards have led to speaking and consulting trips across the country.

He recently visited Sarasota, Fla. "I go there, I look at their social media model, I kind of do an audit of their program.

A lot of local governments are still using Facebook as a one-way channel to push out information, when really it is two-channel. Some local governments are a little bit afraid to do that."

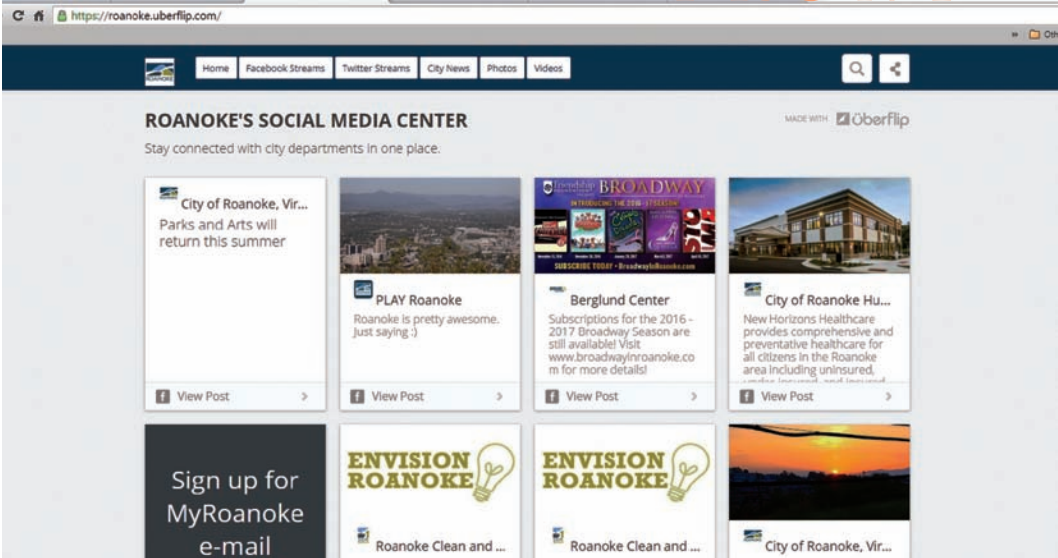
Suppose you're a business owner with a question about a tax payment. Facebook-message the Treasurer's office. Question about zoning? Message the Planning, Building and Development department.

Businesses benefit in other ways. "We will quite often Facebook Live events as they are happening or getting ready to happen in downtown Roanoke, show our thousands of followers what is happening, and quite possibly encourage them to come downtown to the events."

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Roanoke Social Media Center page

Facebook also allows the city to respond to emergencies. In May, an underground fire caused the Carilion tower at 213 S. Jefferson to be evacuated and raised the possibility of wider power outages. "We had a situation where we were faced with potentially turning off power to all of those businesses.

We were immediately on the scene with Facebook Live. We had the fire chief go on Facebook Live to answer questions. When there's a major crisis, what's going on downtown? 'I see fire trucks, I see people running out of businesses.' They can go on Facebook Live and literally watch what's happening." 

Martin with wife Holly, a kindergarten teacher at Garden City Elementary, and daughters Emma and Haddie



Courtesy Timothy Martin




Travel and work: no longer mutually exclusive >

Working in the coworking industry has exposed me to all points on the coworking spectrum. Our model is pretty typical (average, if we're using math terminology). CoLab is a business that supports workers who need low-overhead office space, satellite office space, meeting space or a like-minded community; and most often the need is a combination of those elements.

Similar to coworking spaces, you may have heard of accelerators and incubators, which share some of the same attributes. They offer a different list of services and amenities, with some overlap. In this column, I would like to shine the spotlight on another variety of this type of business: the coworking space that caters to a new type of worker, the "digital nomad."

The way people work has fundamentally changed because of the rise of the Internet. I'm sure you've found yourself checking your email or work voicemail while on vacation, even though your auto-responder is up and you've got an out-of-office message on your voicemail. Though a break from the cyber chains that bind us is necessary at times, there are those who have reframed traveling and vacations to embrace our "on 24/7" workforce.

Many coworking spaces build their business on travelers, nomadic workers who can work from anywhere with a strong Internet connection because of the nature of their business. These coworking spaces exist in remote areas, at times, and cater specifically to those in search of an experience, rather than just a place to plug in. To explain a little further, imagine if your favorite European hostel or mountaintop getaway and the CoLab had a baby. It's functional and lends itself to getting work done while also allowing the traveler to experience another culture, meet new people and explore.

As this applies to the more traditional workplace, it might be time for employers to consider policies that allow their employees more time to work on the go, as an added amenity that is somewhere between paid time off and working in the office. This would give employees a sense of freedom while exposing your workplace to different cultures. The opportunities are endless — and it's only going to become more popular. 

Young Professionals

By Ariel Lev

Executive Summary:

Working when on the go doesn't just mean vacation or traveling to and from projects, it can be an ongoing state—in some cases, you are the office.

Fire prevention >

Do you remember a time when an unexpected emergency took place, and you rallied the team to get through the crisis? We all have “war stories” to share. Overcoming adversity is something we take pride in. And don’t we usually value those leaders and employees who have the ability to effectively “put out fires?”


The need to “put out fires” every day is a common complaint I hear from leaders. Similar to the impact of interruptions that I discussed in last month’s article, putting out fires takes time away from a leader’s ability to work on more important activities. But unlike handling interruptions, leaders seem to take pride in their ability to handle a crisis. Executives put a lot of value in those who stand tall, take action, and solve problems. We all love a good firefighter.

But do you ever stop to think about why those fires occurred? Why do we spend so much time fighting fires, and so little time trying to prevent them?

Back in my Navy days, I attended a three-week advanced firefighting school. It was hot (600 degrees), dirty, and slightly dangerous (I got a 2nd degree burn). But it was also fun and exciting, and since that time I’ve always wanted to be a volunteer firefighter. Conversely, walking through my home looking for fire hazards is not fun, but much more important.

The same view should be taken in your organization. Putting out fires is an important skill, but more important to your organization is the leader who aggressively prevents fires. At the root of most crises is a poor process. Equipment downtime, material shortages, and employee errors are all process issues. It’s not as sexy as firefighting, but the leader who continuously searches for the root causes of problems, and strives to correct them, is much more valuable to your organization.

I once had a supervisor who was phenomenal at meeting deadlines and overcoming obstacles. I never had to worry about his area of responsibility, which allowed me to focus on other problems. The flip side was that we never got better, and that was my fault because I was content with the status quo. He was so good at going over, around, and through obstacles, that we never tried to remove the obstacles.

For any organization to succeed, it must regularly improve. Stagnate organizations eventually fail. It is imperative for leaders to proactively seek ways to improve processes and prevent fires, regardless of difficulty or time availability. And executives must put more value in those leaders who demonstrate their commitment to process improvement. It’s important to have firefighters on your team, but wouldn’t it be better to prevent those fires in the first place? 



Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:
Leaders should proactively seek ways to improve processes and reduce or eliminate problems before they occur.





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Chinese to English >

Executive Summary:

Dreyer Academy—a global business but based in Vinton—incorporates a passion for teaching students...half a world away.

By Gene Marrano

If Scott Dreyer sounds like an educator you might find in a traditional classroom that's because he was, including a stint as a history teacher at Patrick Henry High School in Roanoke. He's upbeat, big on student participation and getting subject details right. Now he and a half dozen employees for Dreyer Academy LLC spend their time online teaching students - whose first language is Chinese - the finer points of speaking and writing English. Most of those students are currently in Taiwan, mainland China or other Asian countries.

Dreyer Academy recently received a shot in the arm after going through The Gauntlet competition at The Hive business incubator in Vinton. After a panel of judges listened to pitches (think TV's Shark Tank), it was

awarded \$10,000 for a trip to Asia to meet with current and prospective students. There are additional funds for a new computer and upgraded e-commerce features on the DreyerCoaching.com website. "The Gauntlet has been a huge blessing," notes Dreyer.

The second year for The Gauntlet, a creation of the Advancement Foundation founded by Annette Patterson, was backed this time by a state grant from the Community Business Launch program. One proviso of the \$60,000 cash infusion: recipients of that money must be open for business by September 30 and they must hang a shingle in Vinton for at least one year.

The Roanoke County resident lives just outside the Vinton town limits and will satisfy that requirement by renting space at The Hive on South Pollard Street. "It's been very fruitful," says Scott Dreyer of The Gauntlet process that included business advice from guest speakers.

Dreyer (51) met his wife Deborah, a Taiwan native, in that country more than twenty years ago; they now have four children all born there. The William and Mary graduate

(a history major) was teaching English at the time after a church in Richmond helped raise money for his venture. Plans to locate in mainland China were nixed after the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising. Dreyer says mastering the Chinese language is a work in progress.


After a decade he returned to the States and created the web-based school in 2008 – after spending many summers back in Taiwan teaching English at camps during an 11-year tenure at Patrick Henry. He juggled both pursuits and took the plunge and went full time with Dreyer Academy LLC (formerly Dreyer International) in 2010.

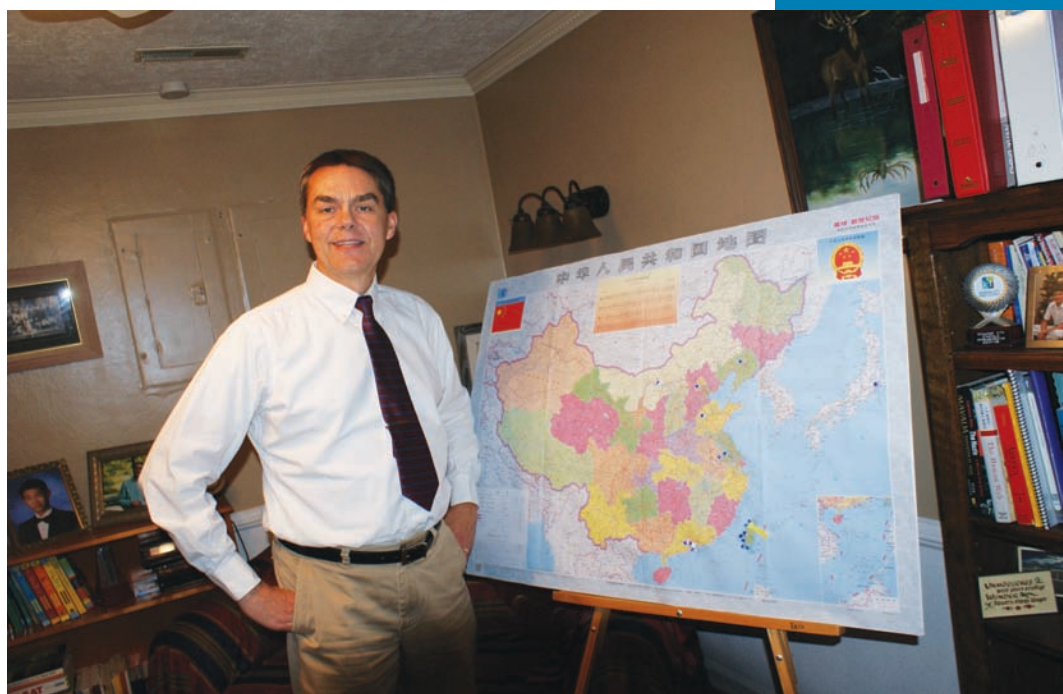
Aaron Chen (many students adopt American first names) was one of three 8th and 9th grade boys in Hsinchu, Taiwan taking a class with Dreyer via Skype in mid-May, where he asked nuanced questions about a blogpost on American history. Chen knew English beforehand, having spent two years in the United States, but is now focused on sharpening his reading and writing. “My writing skills aren’t that great but Mr. Dreyer really helps me with my English.”

Justin Chen (no relation to Aaron although

they both go to the same school in Taiwan) called the Dreyer Coaching online class his “connection to the American world.” A year-long group class typically costs around \$1300 annually.

Word of mouth has been Dreyer’s primary recruiting tool. A prestigious public school where he taught for five years in Taiwan gave him “instant credibility,” and a desire to keep teaching students beyond the summer camps they attended led to the Dreyer Academy. A handful of his pupils now reside in the U.S., including several at North Cross School in Roanoke County. Dreyer has also taught U.S. government online to international students in Maryland.

Elementary and middle school students have been the primary focus; he is looking to add more adult clients. Dreyer has also authored a Chinese-to-English textbook on writing skills. Most classes meet once or twice a week while one-on-one sessions with single students can take place more often. Rote memorization of English words “is a terrible disservice to these kids,” says Dreyer - but the Academy’s online classes can make them “much, much more successful. That’s what we’re trying to do.” 





Victor O. Cardwell, Principal



Agnis C. Chakravorty, Principal

Over(time) and Out! >

Executive Summary:

A review by labor attorneys at Woods Rogers of the Department of Labor's new regulations on overtime and final rule issued on May 17, 2016.

Special FRONT Interview

In 2014, President Obama directed the Department of Labor (“DOL”) to update the overtime exemption regulations under the Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA”). The result? **Beginning December 1, 2016**, new regulations significantly increase the salary threshold above which employers may exempt certain workers from overtime compensation when they work more than forty (40) hours in a workweek.

Under the current rules—in effect since 2004 without change—certain workers may be exempt from overtime if they are paid at least \$455 per week, which equates to \$23,660 per year. Beginning December 1, that threshold will increase to \$913 per week or \$47,476 annually. As a result of this change, DOL estimates more than four million exempt workers—currently ineligible for overtime—will become eligible for overtime when they work over 40 hours in a work week (i.e., they will be converted to “non-exempt” status). DOL further estimates that some 100,000 salaried workers will receive a raise to maintain the exemption.

Almost every employer is covered by the FLSA as an “enterprise” and/or your employees are covered as individuals. This is a sweeping change.

Here are five Q&A's that may help you in considering the FLSA and the new overtime rules.

What is the difference between a non-exempt and an exempt employee?

FLSA defines the standard work week as 40 hours in an established seven day period. A non-exempt employee must be paid for all hours worked in a workweek and paid 1.5 times the regular hourly rate for time worked above 40 hours in that workweek. An exempt employee is someone whose job includes certain exempt duties and whose weekly salary is at least \$913 (as of December 1, 2016).

How does an employer decide non-exempt and exempt status?

Employers must evaluate a “duties test” to determine status. The test requires a detailed analysis an employer can undertake with human resources or legal assistance. Under the FLSA, there are a host of exceptions to every rule. Most employers will have employees who are properly exempt as Executive, (i.e., supervisors and managers who direct the work of two or more employees), Administrative (i.e., back-office workers with significant discretion and judgment, like Human Resources Managers) or Professional (i.e., those whose work requires advanced intellectual knowledge such as lawyers and doctors).



King F. Tower, Of Counsel



Thomas M. Winn III, Principal

Given a gap between the current salary and the new FLSA threshold, what should an employer do? I.e., how is an exempt warehouse manager evaluated whose salary is \$34,500/year and who supervises a team of four? He works regular hours and rarely exceeds 40 hours per week.

If overtime is rare and the raise to stay exempt is substantial—\$13,000 in this case—moving this employee to non-exempt status makes the most sense. However, if you determine the employee works significant amounts of overtime, you might consider the pay differential as an investment to avoid the overtime obligation. This analysis should be done on a case by case basis.

I have an independent contractor tax consultant who works 40-50 hours/week on my premises and does not work for any other company. He makes \$72,000/year and receives a 1099 tax form. Is he a contractor or an employee?


You should be aware that DOL is also focused on misclassification issues involving independent contractors. Someone who receives a 1099 may be classified as an independent contractor, but under the law he may actually be deemed an “employee.” In this case, it appears the work is performed for one employer only, it is integral to operations, and the consultant is dependent financially on your workplace. The best answer here may be to convert the position from independent contractor to exempt professional employee—and there are now additional costs involved in taxes and benefits. New guidance on this issue from DOL can be found here:

www.dol.gov/whd/workers/misclassification/AI-2015_1.htm.

You receive a misclassification claim, complaint, or audit notice from the DOL Wage and Hour Division. What should you do?

Review your records and documentation for all of your pay practices. Keep in mind a DOL audit is not limited to a particular job or group of employees. Investigate the number of hours worked to estimate overtime pay liability. If indeed the job is misclassified, there may be opportunity to negotiate resolution and reclassify the position.

Now is the time to for employers to audit their pay practices. Identify independent contractors and review job duties for all exempt employees with salaries between \$23,660 and \$47,476. Review your record keeping policies and consider what your other options might be.

Finally, employers need to plan to keep up with future inflation. DOL's final rule will automatically update the “exempt” salary threshold every three years, beginning January 1, 2020. Each automatic salary update will raise the standard threshold to the 40th percentile of full-time salaried workers in the lowest-wage Census region—estimated to be \$51,168 in 2020. 

Disclaimer: This summary and the hypotheticals presented are for informational purposes and do not guarantee or predict a similar result in any future case undertaken by a Woods Rogers attorney.



Trouble brewing >

The tweet came through just as I sat down at the Taphouse:

Mill Mountain Distillery
@Mill_Mountain_Distillery
On-site tonight @StarCitySpeakeasy
for our 1st monthly Liquor Lecture.
Learn the story of our new Big Lick
Bourbon! #happyhour

I stood up and looked around the restaurant, and sure enough, there was the owner of Mill Mountain Distillery, speaking to several customers about his new Big Lick Bourbon. He saw me and waved. A little while later he stopped by my table.

"Hey, did you come for the Liquor Lecture?" he asked.

"No, actually I didn't know about it until I saw your tweet just a few minutes ago," I said. "I hate to have to tell you this, but these Liquor Lectures are against the law."

"You're joking!" he said.

"Sorry, but the Code of Virginia prohibits a manufacturer or wholesaler of alcoholic beverages from giving 'anything of value' to an alcohol retailer," I said. "There are exceptions for things like bottle openers, napkins, coasters and things, but you're here tonight providing information about liquor. There's no exception for information. And the Virginia ABC has said that educational information is a 'thing of value.' So you can't give it to an alcohol retailer."

"What about wine dinners?" he said. "Lots of wholesalers give wine dinners at restaurants. They talk about the wine, and what wine goes with which food, and they make a lot of sales that way."

"Yes, those are OK," I said. "But only because the General Assembly passed a special law to allow them after the Virginia ABC cracked down on wholesalers giving educational information to customers at wine dinners a couple of years ago. Unfortunately that law didn't cover distillers."

"Well, whatever happened to freedom of speech?" he said.

"These are old, silly rules," I said. "They're called 'tied-house' laws, and they're left over from the end of Prohibition, when legislators wanted to keep alcohol manufacturers and distributors from controlling bars and restaurants. Before Prohibition, one way that

Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

Executive Summary:
Virginia ABC law prohibits a manufacturer or wholesaler from giving "anything of value" to a retailer; and the definition of "thing of value" is pretty broad.

manufacturers and distributors controlled retailers was by giving them free stuff. So now that's prohibited."

"Well, I sure as hell know what my next tweet is going to be about," he said.

"Yes, about your last tweet," I said. "Advertising also is considered a 'thing of value.' So there's a chance that by mentioning Star City Speakeasy in your tweet, you could be considered to have broken the tied-house laws."

"Giving away a free tweet could get me in trouble?" he said.

"Not long ago, the California ABC went after several wineries under the California tied-house law for re-tweeting a notice about a wine-tasting event that was sponsored by a supermarket," I said. "It could happen here too. If educational information is a 'thing of value' under Virginia law, then I don't see why a tweet can't also be a 'thing of value.' So you'd better be careful."

"These tied-house laws make me want to tie one on," he said.

"I agree. Let's splice the main brace," I said. 🍷

Note: *facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn't legal advice—you should consult a lawyer when interpreting alcohol regulations, deciding on a marketing plan for an alcoholic beverage, etc.*

““”

The Virginia ABC has said that educational information is a 'thing of value.'

““”

The 'tied-house' laws are left over from the end of Prohibition, when legislators wanted to keep alcohol manufacturers and distributors from controlling bars and restaurants. Before Prohibition, one way that manufacturers and distributors controlled retailers was by giving them free stuff. So now that's prohibited.



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News about wines >

Executive Summary:

Ranked fifth in the nation in wineries, aficionados now have numerous resources to keep up with the scene—including Official Virginia Wine Lover.

By Dan Dowdy

The weather forecast predicts a beautiful, clear, and warm weekend. You and a travel companion have a hankering to appreciate some of our state's scenic byways and do some wine shopping—and tasting. You might even want to take in a cool festival. Where does an inquiring mind go to find out what's happening in the world of Virginia wines? A good place to start is Official Virginia Wine Lover's website: vawinelover.com

Billed as “your source for the latest Virginia wine news”, Official Virginia Wine Lover provides online updates on state-wide wine festivals, a monthly e-newsletter, eclectic recipes, and it features a Virginia winery of the month.


Official Virginia Wine Lover founder and e-newsletter publisher Bill Britt traces his interest in the business of wine back to 2003 when he experienced an “aha” moment during a conversation with another attendee at the Garlic Festival in Amherst. It dawned on him that there was a market for promoting Virginia wines. So, he expanded his existing Britt Marketing & Public Relations business to include the burgeoning Virginia wine industry. Britt co-founded and co-published Virginia Wine Lover Magazine, currently

published two times per year. He was involved in this enterprise for a couple of years, then decided to strike off on his own.

When asked what part of his wine work he enjoys most, Britt was quick to say that he really likes working with wine festivals. He started JAR Fest, an acronym for the James River Wine and Music Festival, four years ago. This event took place at Riverfront Park in downtown Lynchburg on June 11th and featured 12 Virginia wineries that took top honors in state-wide competitions throughout the past year. In addition to spotlighting Virginia-made products and local artists, foods from all over the world were available, including Australian meat pies. (One would think these pies should pair nicely with a Virginia Syrah, a varietal known in Australia as Shiraz).

Virginia, with 275 wineries, has ranked fifth nationally in number of wineries for several years, behind California, Oregon, Washington, and New York. Our wines are shipped all over the world.

Other sources of information about Virginia wines include www.virginiawine.org ; www.virginia.org/wine ; www.virginiawine.org/wineries

Attend festivals like JAR Fest that are going on frequently all over the state. Visit our abundance of wineries. Tasting room experiences can introduce you to some exquisite palate pleasers, and the setting of most wineries is pastoral. Check out the links referred to in this article and go have some fun. Be inspired by the words of Benjamin Franklin: “Wine makes daily living easier, less hurried, with fewer tensions and more tolerance.” 



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CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer Poff Cooper

is a graduate of the R.B. Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech with a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies from Hollins University. She is a native of Christiansburg, where she lives and writes in her family's home place. [cooperjp@nrvunwired.net]

Keegan Divant

is a digital marketing consultant in Roanoke currently blogging at ConnectingSuccess.net. [Keegan@connectingsuccess.net]

Dan Dowdy

is the business development director for Valley Business FRONT and owner of The Proofing Prof proofreading services (www.proofingprof.com). His background includes service in the U.S. Air Force and an extensive career in education, including teaching college-level writing competency and business courses, and working for a Fortune 100 company. [ddowdy@vbFRONT.com]

Tom Field

is a creative director, marketing executive and owner of Berryfield, Inc. in Salem, and owner of Valley Business FRONT magazine. He has written and produced programs and materials for

local and international organizations for more than 30 years. [tfield@berryfield.com]

Keith Finch

is an attorney with Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg [keith@creekmorelaw.com]

Kathleen Harvey

Harsberger is a graduate of Radford University and the Protocol School of Washington. She conducts seminars in business etiquette, international business protocol, and dining skills She has an international clientele in business, government, and higher education. She is a certified Protocol Officer. [harsberger@aol.com]

Mike Leigh

is president of OpX Solutions, LLC, a performance improvement company that helps organizations pursue operational excellence. A retired naval commander and former GE manufacturing manager, he has extensive experience in leadership development and process improvement. [Mike@OpXSolutionsLLC.com]

Ariel Lev

is the director of Grandin CoLab. She has a B.S. in communications and broadcasting from Appalachian State

University, a M.A. in communications, culture and technology from Georgetown University, lives in Roanoke with her husband, and enjoys her work with CityWorks (X)po and other business development activities. [akleath@gmail.com]

Christine Liana

is a business writer and guest speaker whose published articles on career development give readers real-life insights for workplace success. She is also a licensed insurance agent. Christine's 27-year career includes banking, insurance, law and local government, in which she's worked with a diverse management and client base. [businesstalk@protonmail.com]

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 weekly radio interview show (FOX Roanoke 910AM). [gmarrano@cox.net]

Kathy Surace is FRONT Business Dress

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

Nicholas Vaassen

is a graphic designer with 13 years experience, specializing in publications. His design projects include FRONT, lifestyle, real estate, municipal, classified sales and cultural organization magazines in Roanoke and southwestern Virginia markets. [nvaassen@berryfield.com]

Randolph Walker

is a journalism graduate of the University of North Carolina, 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]

Alison Weaver

is a freelance writer based in Roanoke. She contributed to and was a staff writer at the Blue Ridge Business Journal throughout the 1990s before working as a copy editor at The Roanoke Times for 8 years. [alison.weaver03@gmail.com]



They came in and started to look at the education system, training and development, and the quality of life — Page 9



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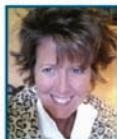
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dwallace.stylist@gmail.com





On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
The top application for your business may or may not be on your digital device currently, but it's been working since the dawn of time.

A top app for business >

We don't usually offer specific product recommendations here in FRONT. But iKag is different.

I was talking with my pal Troy at G&H Contracting the other day—if you're running anywhere around the Roanoke Region, you know the business, their signs are popping up at building sites everywhere—and within minutes we both discovered we're using the same application. And this new Roanoke Business Club we introduced in last month's issue of FRONT is completely saturated with iKag.

Frankly, all the people I see who are making the most happen with their business are all using iKag.

Some in the iKag community are tying the app to their smart phones (especially with the first and simplest feature that comes with every digital communication device: the contacts). Others are using an even more integrated use through social media and particularly Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

But what I like best is that iKag works even if you're not reliant on the internet or digital realm.

There's a chance your next miraculous business success will arrive from a first touch connection with an unknown person or entity you meet through an initial online encounter. But there's a much greater chance you'll find it through iKag. And if you really investigate the source, you're likely to discover that even that most random chance virtual encounter you experienced was actually initiated by iKag.

iKag is the catalyst.

You're probably not going to find the cool little icon on your phone that identifies the iKag app; and that would be unfortunate if it required the component. The good news is, iKag is always there and always has been. It's essentially the original OS (operating system) for all your transactions.

iKag is simply *I Know A Guy (or I Know A Gal)*.

The personal referral and the #1 app in business.

The next time you need to do anything—find a product, service, employee, associate, stakeholder, information... LISTEN for those four words. Or the next time someone asks you for any of those things, SPEAK those four words.

I Know A Guy who can help you. I Know A Gal who does that.

Best app of all time. 

Technically right is technically wrong >

I have to say, I love capitalism. As a small business owner it's what allows me to pursue the American dream. However, the magic of the marketplace fails to produce this economic freedom when competition isn't possible or allowed. That's exactly the issue being solved by the Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority's (RVBA) broadband network.

There's a problem though; there are those who are opposing the new network because they think it's government overreach. Their concerns stem from a litany of technically correct facts. Well, being technically right also means being technically wrong.


I received an email from a local leader who is working hard to stop RVBA's efforts. It was a short list of facts that seemed to support his concerns.

- The [RVBA] is NOT providing service to un-served areas.
- [This] has NOTHING to do with residential service, only with business service.
- The private sector providers already have several hundred miles of fiber in Roanoke.
- How can we not have enough fiber spread throughout Roanoke County when just one provider has fiber going to all of Roanoke County Schools?
- The private sector has been providing this type of leading edge technology for decades.
- 10Gig Service is already being used by Roanoke Valley business and serviced by our current providers.
- Very few companies actually need this type of capacity.

Sure, these all seem like valid points. The problem is that a topical list like this doesn't give you any details behind the statements being made.

For many businesses in the area, they don't have a choice in service providers. It's not uncommon to be a Cox customer simply because they are the only provider available. But even in areas where there are multiple providers there are other issues that limit true competition. Every business is unique and has a unique set of requirements when it comes to internet access. It's not as simple as picking the provider who can get you to FoxNews.com in under 3 seconds.

Here's where the RVBA's network differs from those of existing providers: it's an open access network. Meaning, I can start my own business providing broadband access without having to raise millions of dollars to build my own fiber optic network. Essentially, I could be a reseller of broadband access.

The point of the new network isn't to add one competitor by turning the government into a broadband provider. It's about cultivating an environment that will allow true capitalism to succeed. So not only will there be more competition, there will also be new businesses created in the Roanoke Valley. 



Grace Studios

Keegan Divant

Guest Commentary

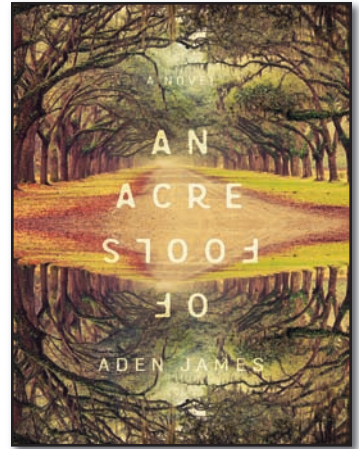
By Keegan Divant

Executive Summary:

One perspective of a municipal provided broadband network is that opens a door for capitalism instead of closing it.

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



Conflicts and choices

An Acre of Fools (Elevate Fiction; 2016) is a haunting tale of love, hope, addiction, and betrayal. Aden James portrays a true-to-life saga of what happens to a family fighting addiction, how they are drawn closer together and pulled farther apart. Peter Stewart has unwavering hope that his daughter can fight heroin and her other addictions. He stands firm in his love and hope for her, even against his other family members who have given up on her, but when Austin proves she can't fight it, Stewart must fight to hold on to his trust and belief in God. What will he do now that Austin has turned her back on him and fully embraced the life Peter never envisioned for her?

From the first page, the happiness, love, sadness, faith pull you into this family's story. Addiction is real. It affects everybody it comes in contact with. How will you respond to it? What choices will you make? You'll see them all in this book. James draws from each family member, their feelings, their thoughts, realistically portraying what could happen. *An Acre of Fools* is the hope and destruction of life's dreams from addiction.

Ninety percent of the profits of this book will be donated by the author to causes focused on addiction, human trafficking and family restoration.

—Sally Shupe

Colorful, but a little grimy

Even the social scene in Roanoke of recent months has had its share of 80's-themed parties. Funny how that goes; of all the dance and culture ties to all the various decades, the

1980s in America is the trendiest in 2016. It was a rather electric time as I recall. There's the disco and designer jeans of course (embarrassing to many of us, now). And the business scene was an entrepreneur's paradise. But then there's the art. *Tuesday Nights in 1980* (Scout; 2016) by Molly Prentiss is all about 1980 and a small subculture of artists in New York City. You really are caught up in the troupe; and in particular the microcosmic relationship of only about six of the players.

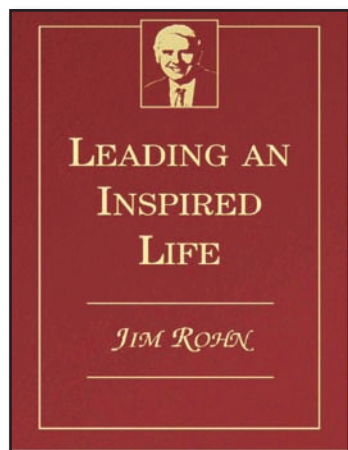
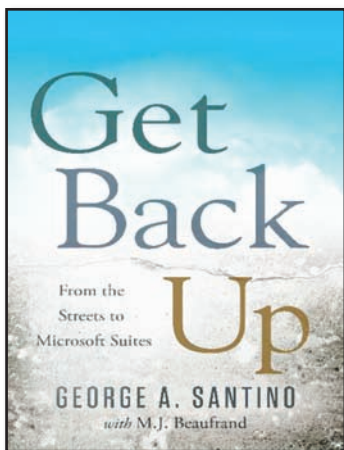
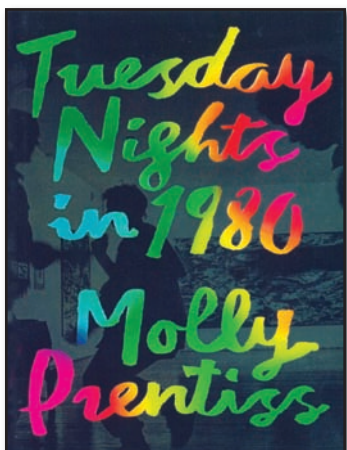
It's interesting that you only get this little art scene in our novel; there are no other trappings. You're reminded that there were no cell phones in popular use, but other than that, the setting could be today. There is some superb character development, it goes a little deep at times, and there is some of that youth angst we often experience in subculture studies familiar in this kind of story. The symbolism of one major accident serves as the hub for the work as a whole, and that's the one artistic expression that needs no interpretation. The mood has slight remnants of F. Scott's Gatsby from a previous decade.

—Tom Field

Perseverance pays

Nobody ever handed George Santino anything.

His family was on welfare. He can tell you, firsthand, what government cheese tastes like and the ends of bologna when bologna itself is too expensive to feed a family of nine. He never finished college. He joined the Army but left without finishing basic training because of a service connected disability. After a debilitating back injury, he was told he'd never work again.



He opened a business that thrived and expanded before failing completely. He interviewed with the Microsoft Corporation four times before getting a job. And yet Santino retired at fifty-five as a Partner in Microsoft, with enough of a nest egg that neither his wife nor any of their four children would ever have to know what the ends of bologna or government cheese tastes like.

Now, a widely respected and in-demand mentor to tech managers - not just on tech issues, but how to frame their problems as challenges rather than setbacks – Santino is sharing his wealth of knowledge and life experiences through his new book, *Get Back Up: From the Streets to Microsoft Suites* (Greenleaf; 2016).

Entertaining, insightful and often humorous, Santino shares what he learned from growing up in the projects on welfare; how he kept pursuing a job at Microsoft even after four rejections; business tips; and why he believes in a hand up rather than a hand out.

—Erin MacDonald-Birnbaum

Life changing

The book *Leading An Inspired Life* (Nightingale-Conant; 1996) by Jim Rohn is a book that turned my life around. I had an opportunity to meet the author many years ago, and he instantly became my mentor. I have read many books over the years, and the only other book that teaches the principles of life is the Bible. This book by Jim Rohn comes in a close second in my opinion.

The book tells the story about a young man who was broke and found a mentor and

learned and developed principles in his life to become a very successful businessman, author, and worldwide leader and speaker. The man was Jim Rohn, and this is a rags to riches story everyone should read. Tony Robbins, a very successful motivational speaker and author, explains that Jim Rohn was his mentor at a young age, and that Jim was the person that he credits his success. The book explains in great detail what you need to know and what you need to do in order to develop positive principles that will change your life, and move you to take action to achieve your full potential in life.

This book was one of my most powerful and memorable reading experiences other than the Bible, and the author presents them in such a simple way to understand. The author has the ability to motivate and effect changes in people by providing principles and methods for change in your way of thinking and acting. The book literally is a road map to success in anything you really want to achieve in life, if you are willing to change, learn, and take action with the principles outlined in the book. I would advise everyone if you ever have to read one book other than the Bible that you read this book. The principles outlined in the book are life changing and powerful tools for you to learn and master. You will find yourself reading again and again this outstanding book for direction in your life.

—Ronald Reeker

(The reviewers: Sally Shupe lives in Newport, works at Virginia Tech and is a freelance editor; Tom Field is a creative director and publisher of FRONT; Erin MacDonald-Birnbaum is a publicist in Cherry Hill, NJ; Ronald Reeker is an entrepreneur and owner of Casarock Travel in Roanoke.)



Community funded sendoff >

Foundation for Roanoke Valley held its annual scholarship dinner at Sheraton Roanoke Hotel on May 19; passing out 47 endowed funds totaling close to \$100,000 in college scholarships from nearly 1,000 applications.



God blessed Texas in Roanoke >

Little Texas, a 1990's county music Grammy nominee, Vocal Group, and Album of the Year band performed at Roanoke's Elmwood Park Amphitheater on May 28 as part of Festival in the Park.



Golf green >

The 17th Annual **Delta Dental Pro-Am** for Kids took place on May 26 and raised more than \$100,000 (over a million dollars since it began in 2000), benefitting the **Boys & Girls Clubs of Southwest Virginia**.

Say cheese >

The second annual **Virginia Cheese Festival** was held June 11 at Hilton Garden Inn in Blacksburg as part of The Blacksburg Partnership lineup of activities; **FRONT** publisher Tom Field and wife Emily, sample product at one of the booths.





Cutting the tarmac >

Roanoke Blacksburg Regional Airport undergoes construction as workers from Myrtle Beach-based Dan-Kel Concrete Core Drilling & Sawing cut out deep slabs on a hot Saturday in June.



Friday fuzzy >

First Fridays hosted local band Fuzzy Logic on June 17 in downtown Roanoke with a threatening sky that fortunately failed to produce the storm.



Cancer combatants >

LewisGale Regional Cancer Center showed its \$15.5 million investment in facility and equipment upgrades on June 22 at its Salem location, including the multi-million daVinci XI surgical system and Varian TrueBeam Accelerator that **Dr. John Rogers** and COO **Mike Abbott** say provides more accurate treatment and faster.



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



Smith

Mark Smith has been named senior vice president and chief credit officer at National Bank.

Lisa Abbattello has been hired as assistant vice president and loan operations manager; **Cindy Bailey** has been hired as marketing specialist; **Peter Sackett** has been hired as special assets manager; and **Natalie Sigmon** has been hired as director of human resources at Bank of Fincastle.

Tim George has joined the assurance practice, and **Laura Sprouse** has joined as administrator at Brown Edwards.

Steven Clemons received the 2016 Life Member Award from the Virginia Society of Certified Public Accountants.

LEGAL FRONT

Amy McLaren has joined as an associate at Glenn Robinson & Cathey PLC.

Bryce Hunter has joined Spilman Thomas & Battle, primarily as



Hunter

attorney in the financial services practice.

WELLNESS FRONT



Gleason



Misicko



Skolnik

Jonathan L. Gleason, MD, has been appointed medical director of risk management; **Martin Misicko, MS, PhD**, has joined as vice president of facilities; **Paul Skolnik, MD**, has joined as chair of the department of medicine; **William "Bill" Wasserman, MS**, has



Wasserman



Sweet



Mogen

joined as vice president of psychiatry; **Jon M. Sweet, MD**, received the Laureate Award from the Virginia American College of Physicians; **Chad DeMott, MD**, received the Academic Teaching Award from the Virginia Chapter of the American College of Physicians; **Thomas C. Mogen, MD**, received the Gold Star Award from the Virginia Department of Health's Virginia Vaccines for Children Program; and **Keith Perry**, was named president-elect of the Virginia Chapter of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS).

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Gaines



Alexander



Reed

Christopher Gaines has been appointed president; **Dr. Brian Alexander** has been promoted to vice president technical operations; and **Linda Reed** has been promoted to vice president organizational development at Inorganic Ventures.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Liz Rotenberg has been named settlement processor and closer in the Roanoke office of Virginia Title Center.

Guy Butts II has been named corporate safety manager for Draper Aden Associates.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT



Jones

David Jones has been named assistant administrator and director of activities at Showalter Center at Warm Hearth Village.

Mickey Martin has joined as general manager at Hunting Hills Country Club.

EDUCATION FRONT



Back

Donald Back, the director of the Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute, has been named an affiliated faculty member and Senior Fellow of the Institute for Policy and Governance at Virginia Tech.

Mercedes Ramírez Fernández has been named associate vice provost for strategic affairs and diversity at Virginia Tech.

Jack Maher has been appointed head of

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.



Maher

accounting and information systems at Virginia Tech.

Desiree Reed-Francois has been promoted to deputy athletics director at Virginia Tech.

Dr. Cathy Callahan has been named associate dean for clinical affairs at Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine Virginia campus.

Matt Johnson has been appointed principal at Masons Cove Elementary School.



Tucker

Lisa Tucker of Virginia Tech's College of Architecture and Urban Studies has been named 2016 Educator of the

Year by the International Interior Design Association.

Mary Miller of Interactive Design and Development and Don Halliwill of Carilion Clinic have been appointed to the advisory board for Virginia Tech's master of information technology program.



Lester

Luke Lester has been awarded the Roanoke Electric Steel Professor in Engineering by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors.



Taylor

Dwyn Taylor has been named vice president for facilities operations and construction at Virginia Tech.

Joseph Spooner has been named president of Ferrum College.

CULTURE FRONT

Paul Hassell has joined as club manager for The Waterfront Country Club at The Willard Companies at Smith Mountain Lake.

The New River Valley Regional Commission announced four award winners for 2016:

Champions of the Valley **Bill Brown** (Montgomery County Board of Supervisors-retired) and **Joseph Yost** (12th District, Virginia House of Delegates); Citizen of the Valley **Penelope Kyle** (president of Radford University); and Friend of the Valley **Mary Moody** (Northern Endowment, Mountain Lake Lodge).

Jordan Harman has been hired as education and outreach coordinator at Jefferson Center.

MUNICIPAL FRONTS

Ken McFadyen has joined as director of economic development for Botetourt County.

Compiled by Tom Field



Courtesy of Parkside Storage

Inside Parkside Storage

New storage spot

Parkside Storage, a multi-story 100% climate-controlled self storage facility and service has opened in Roanoke on Dale Avenue beside WalMart Neighborhood Market.

Still not Buffet's

Lewisburg, WV-based **Mountain Media** and owner of five community newspapers, has purchased six newspapers in our region (Montgomery Publishing) including **The Salem Times Register**, **The News Messenger**, **The Vinton Messenger**, **The Fincastle Herald**, **The New Castle Record**, and **Radford News Journal**.

Closing initiated

HSN has announced its expected layoff of employees and impending close beginning in August

with about 250 positions from the order fulfillment company formerly known as Home Shopping Network.

Bottling diversified

Chateau Morrisette winery in Floyd County has announced it has opened Cider Works and will begin serving cider in the fall; along with plans for craft beer in the future.

Bank acquired

First-Citizens Bank & Trust Company and Cordia Bancorp Inc. (and subsidiary Bank of Virginia) have signed a merger agreement.

Run for the money

The Roanoke Regional Partnership and Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission reported a local economic impact of

more than \$592,000 from the seventh annual Foot Levelers 2016 **Blue Ridge Marathon** held in April with 1,844 runners; more than \$3.2 million in contribution has been estimated from all seven years.

Timber!

Gregory Lumber plans to expand its sawmill operations in Pittsylvania County, accessing a \$50,000 grant from Virginia's Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund.

Extra security

International Critical Infrastructure Security Institute has opened in Bedford County at the Center for Advanced Engineering and Research, providing support resources for cyber security needs at nuclear power plants.

Mill tapped

Hammer & Forge Brewing craft beer plans to open this fall on Main Street in Boones Mill.

Big plans in southside

Wilmot Properties LLC has signed a purchase agreement with **Danville-Pittsylvania Regional Industrial Facility Authority** for a 300-acre site at the industrial mega park site on Berry Hill Road; a projected \$250 million investment at \$30,000 per buildable acre.

Co practice

Danville Regional Medical Center has announced a partnership with Lynchburg's **Liberty University's College of Osteopathic Medicine** to expand its graduate medical education program.

Improved formula

Abbott, a nutritional-products manufacturing company, is expanding in Altavista with a \$34 million investment and more than 50 jobs to its current 500 employee operation.

VTTI ranks

Virginia Tech Transportation Institute has been named a Best of Research & Development in Virginia by Southern Business & Development magazine.

Vaping research

National Cancer Institute awarded \$15 million to a consortium of 10

international academic institutions to assess the likely impact of policies regulating tobacco products; **Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute** will use \$2.63 million to examine consumer choice of vaporized nicotine products over conventional cigarettes, led by Warren Bickel.

Altavista assured

Standard Insurance Co. has announced plans to open an office in Altavista, employing about 200 people by 2019.

Zoom

Bristol Hotel will undergo a \$20 million

reconstruction to convert to a boutique hotel with a goal of opening in time for the August 2017 race at Bristol Motor Speedway.

Economic feeder

Performance Livestock and Feed Co. is investing more than \$4 million to establish a feed production operation in Henry County; the expansion is expected

to create about 30 jobs.

Steel away

Virginia Forge Co., a steel processing plant in Buchanan employing about 70, is planning to cease operations by the end of the year; as a merger with another MFC Group company in Pennsylvania has been reported.

Compiled by Tom Field

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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 blog, also available by link at vbFRONT.com.



Virginia Tech

Warren Bickel, VTC Behavioral Health Research



To touch the top >

Executive Summary:

Crimpers Climbing Gym in Christiansburg—designed for the novice and the experienced—is attracting more enthusiasts with its expanding options for the active lifestyle.

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

As long-time climbers, John Johnson and his wife Danielle Goodspeed would finish a workout at a climbing gym wondering, “How could we do it better?” They got the chance to find out when “our jobs left us” and they were faced with a decision – work elsewhere, or “do something crazy” like start their own business. They chose the latter and haven’t looked back.

Johnson, a Blacksburg native, has a back-



ground in broadcasting while Goodspeed, of New York, has been a dancer, chemist, and artistic director. The couple met at a climbing gym so it was natural for them to follow this passion when the opportunity presented itself. They researched the concept and found it was ripe for success in the New River Valley. Johnson, a Certified Climbing Wall Instructor/Provider, wanted to bring indoor climbing to a place it would fit but that was not on the radar of existing

climbing gyms. He says that industry projections are for 15% growth, and the sport will possibly be included in the 2020 Olympics.

The couple opened Crimper's Climbing Gym four years ago in a former gymnastics facility on Central Avenue in Christiansburg. The existing building shell, combined with cheaper real estate in Christiansburg versus Blacksburg, influenced their decision on



location – which turned out to be suitable, located just eight miles from Virginia Tech and near many neighborhoods.

Crimper's goal is to provide a place for people to learn, practice, perform, and train in the sport of climbing. The gym offers myriad programs: birthday parties for youngsters; youth teams that receive directed guidance; workshops for indoor/outdoor climbing that include more intensive instruction and field trips to the New River Gorge; and yoga/Pilates, which use the body in similar ways to climbing, involving both the physical and mental.

Memberships are the bread and butter of the business. The bulk of the customer base, or the type of people who get into climbing, is the area's young professionals

and college students. However, Johnson emphasizes that climbing can be a lifetime sport, with his customers ranging from ages five to 70-ish.

"My husband and I have been active members of the gym for several years. We love Crimper's Climbing Gym and have seen it grow in popularity not only with college students but families and community members. It is a great place to learn the fundamental types of climbing. Many gyms my husband and I have been to focus on brute strength and not much technique or style to send (get up to the top) a route. Crimper's is different; here you are required not to just use strength but technique and accuracy to succeed completing harder and harder routes," Renee Rippe of Radford says.

Concurs Elizabeth East Stacy, a native of

out of control is the same as no control

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Christiansburg who now lives in Lexington, Kentucky, "My son has climbed for years in many places, and he has been to Crimpers a few times when visiting my parents. He says the staff is very friendly and helpful and that he learned techniques there he hadn't learned elsewhere."

Word of mouth works better than advertising, Johnson has discovered. He notes that indoor climbing is relatively new to this area so they still need to educate the public on the sport. To encourage that, Johnson gives members one guest pass per month to bring in new climbers. Crimper's is also beginning some outreach, such as participating in

Blacksburg's Summer Solstice Festival. Now with a staff of 12, Johnson has plans for expansion in both programs and the physical facility.

Johnson has been climbing for over 20 years and says it has been "life changing" for him. It can be a fulfilling niche for those who are not a good fit for traditional sports. Johnson says he likes to see the evolution climbing produces in his customers.

Member Andy Petersen shares the others' enthusiasm: "Crimpers is a great local place to sharpen your climbing skills and keep in shape." 



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