

Valley Business FRONT

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

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Getting On With Broadband

Katie Vest,
Citizens

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Our FRONTcover story this month is about the current hot topic issue of broadband access throughout our region. The picture on our cover looks like a long time ago in comparison to our subject. But is it? Even if you see the stringing of wires across wooden poles along roads and railroad tracks to a box of connectors jammed in some operator's station as a quaint visual from days long gone, the comparison of that operation to today's challenges are remarkably similar. We still have people who aren't connected, some who have limited connection or inadequate access to the existing infrastructure, and some who have broadband connection that still isn't enough, given their business or technological applications.

We crave connectivity. Even if we have to go through Lilly Tomlin's rather annoying "Ernestine" operator character portrayal, or Andy Griffith's end run around the day's gossip from "Sarah" just to speak to Mayberry's mayor. Ernestine and Sarah are still with us, both connecting us and holding us back, depending on whether your technology interests are best served by public, private, or some hybrid provider.

Where is all this going to take us? And who is going to pay for it?

Please hold. We'll connect you in five pages.

Tom Field

A Gallery Gathering

Our FRONTCover photo was taken at the Old Church Gallery in Floyd (www.oldchurchgallery.com) with its vintage telephone switch. Our FRONTcover model is Katie Vest (left), a 30+ year employee of Citizens (often still called the telephone co-op company); joined by Gallery director Catherine Pauley (sitting), executive vice president Lori Saltus and Emily Gruber of Citizens.





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A background image of a modern, multi-story building with stone and brick accents, arched windows, and a prominent entrance. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue gradient.

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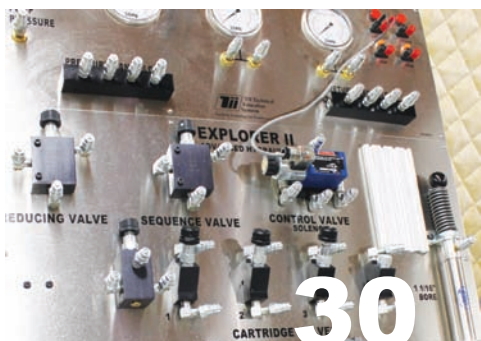
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Cover photography of Katie Vest by Tom Field.

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MARCH



Emily Alberts



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Mike Leigh



Nicholas Vaassen



Randolph Walker

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



Tom Field



Keith Finch



Rachael Garrity



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Anne Sampson



Kathy Surace

“”
Frumpy
Doesn't
sell

— Page 20

“”
That's a lot'ta lickin' and pickin'

— Page 25

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

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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Nanci Hardwick Aeroprobe (Tech/Industry)
George Kegley Retired (Seniors)
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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.

“”
The desire
to win is a
self-motivator
for most people

— Page 29

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Are We Getting Enough Fiber?

In July 2014, the Roanoke Valley Broadband Data Summary indicated that only 8% of the population in the Roanoke metropolitan area had access to fiber networks. Roanoke was positioned well behind the national average of 24%, and Roanoke ranked 7 out of 11 metro areas in Virginia with access to fiber. These unsatisfactory statistics led to the creation of the Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority (RVBA) and with it, the implementation of a 50-mile network in the Valley that will serve business parks, large institutions, government facilities and businesses.

"I am optimistic to finally see the light," says RVBA Executive Director, Frank Smith.

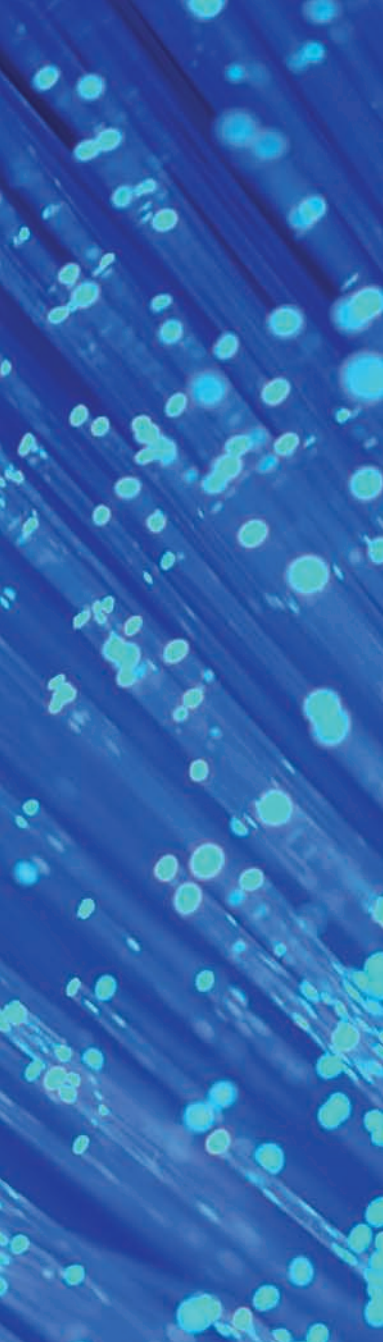
As the April 26th ribbon cutting ceremony at Blue Ridge PBS draws near, there are still some hesitations about the idea of a municipally maintained broadband infrastructure.

Ray LaMura, president of the Virginia Cable Telecommunications Association whose members include Shentel, Cox, Comcast and Metrocast, says the initiative has taken him by surprise. "We would rather see a public/private partnership that works with the providers that already exist in the area," LaMura says. "The population to be served by this new fiber network is already being served by the area's current providers of high speed broadband, who pay for and maintain the networks without public money. This is a waste of taxpayer money, the RVBA plan should not duplicate private sector infrastructure, but should focus on unserved communities."

The Future of Broadband >

Executive Summary:
Broadband access could be a public versus private versus hybrid issue; who provides the service (and who pays for it) is the prevailing question among stakeholders.

By Emily K. Alberts



Frank Smith, Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority

Muni-Money

The idea of using taxpayer resources to bring faster, more reliable internet speeds to the community is certainly not new. Municipal broadband networks have been gaining ground over the past 20 years, and the FCC's recent vote to preempt state laws that were preventing two cities from building out their own locally run broadband networks has set a major precedent for the country. Proponents for these "muni networks" or GONs (government-operated networks) say it will drive competition, improve service, and increase business.

Smith says it's no coincidence that after the RVBA's plan was approved, local providers began increasing their service offerings and introducing new technologies. "We are not out to compete with anyone, but we do hope to spur healthy cooperation," a term he says lies at the heart of an open-access framework.

From the Cox Communications perspective, Market Vice President of Roanoke Operations, Jeff Merritt, says he recently stood on top of Roanoke's Center in the Square to announce that Cox will begin offering 1 gigabit per second speeds to all residential customers.



Citizens

This new data product will be available in all of their new build properties, and for all of the new apartment complexes being constructed in the heart of downtown Roanoke. Cox will offer speeds of up to 1 gig via fiber to the premise, though Merritt says he's "not entirely sure what customers will do with it."

Serving Roanoke since 1997, Cox Communications has been building relationships and listening to its customers. "We know we are not the only providers in town, and we

Brief Glossary:

dark fiber

Unused fiber optic cable; usually installed in the anticipation of future use, leasing opportunity, or to save money from having to do it again.

5G

We're not there yet. For most public access, 4G is the fastest connectivity speed available for consumer access in mobile technology.

Bluetooth

A short range wireless connection, usually for digital devices such as computer and smartphone peripherals (mouse, keyboard, mic, speaker, etc.)

capping

Can also refer to "throttling"—it's the restriction of broadband service and downloading data to control traffic (as in peak volume) or to identify rate structures (higher users pay higher fees).

DSL

Digital Subscriber Line. Data distributed by fiber (glass or plastic) lines instead of copper.

Internet of Things

The collective network of devices that can share data and be remotely controlled over the internet (from computers to drone controllers to household appliances to light bulbs).

IP

Internet Protocol. A unique code assigned to every computer or device connected to the internet.

VOIP

Voice Over Internet Protocol. Using the internet for phone calls; used in standard telephone applications, but also with video applications like Skype.

WiFi

A standard for connecting devices using radio waves; most often via internet (called "hot spots" in public access areas).



Jeff Merritt, COX Communications

are already in a competitive environment. From a pricing perspective, we are already competitive," Merritt says. "We have definitely heard from our customers that broadband growth is big for them, so we are working to deliver that."

With hundreds of miles of fiber already running throughout Roanoke, Cox undoubtedly has a solid backbone in the area, and all of the infrastructure in place to maintain it.





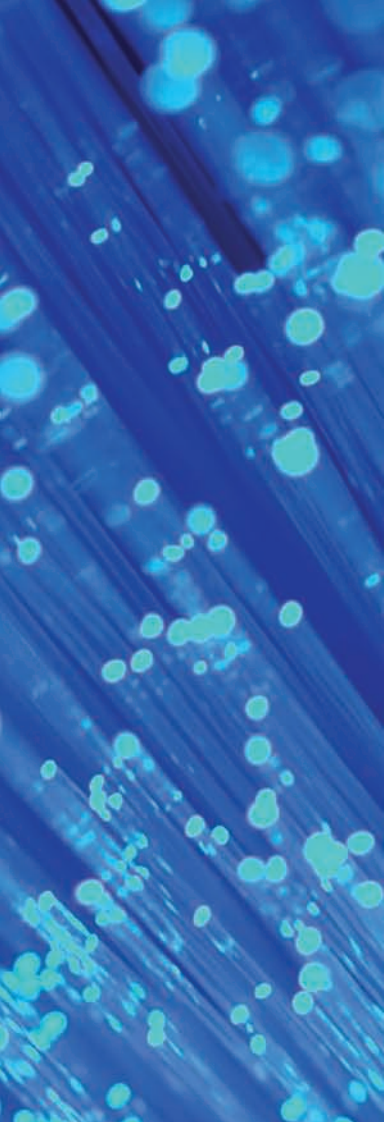
Citizens

Three's a crowd?

The Roanoke Valley Broadband Data Summary states that 55% of the nation has more than two providers to choose from, while only 11% of the Roanoke Valley has more than two providers to choose from. This lack of competition adversely affects price and service, but is the best solution really to pipe in expensive dark fiber funded on taxpayer dollars?

Interestingly enough, the RVBA's municipal broadband network project comes right on the heels of Citizens' recently completed \$11.5 million New River Valley – Regional Open Access Network project. The completed project placed 200 miles of fiber to provide broadband access for economic development, research, education, emergency response, and health care. The project meets the needs of core community institutions who have previously reported being unable to access high-speed, affordable broadband services.

According to Citizens' website, the project, along with Citizens' existing Open Access Fiber Network, extends over 438 miles and spans ten counties (Roanoke, Montgomery, Wythe, Pulaski, Floyd, Giles, Botetourt, Patrick, Carroll, Grayson), ten towns (Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Wytheville, Floyd, Pulaski, Dublin, Hillsville, Independence, Stuart, Pearisburg), and three cities (Salem, Radford, and Galax).



Citizens, a membership cooperative, has been serving Southwest Virginia for over 100 years and there is no arguing that they have withstood the test of time.

Another company with over a century-long lineage is Shentel, or the Shenendoah Telecommunications Company. Shentel specializes in providing advanced telecommunications services to rural markets in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. It is Shentel's mission to provide the same level of service in those communities that is expected in more urban areas.

Shentel has just announced a major network expansion that provides new state-of-the-art Ethernet, dark fiber, wavelength and Internet services to business, education, and healthcare customers as well as wireless carriers.

The expansion includes a significant investment in the company's mid-Atlantic fiber optic network — a uniquely flexible infrastructure designed to support speeds up to 100 gigabits per second. This technology allows customers to easily scale their data needs while Shentel assumes the burden of managing the high-speed optical bandwidth (www.shentel.com/news).

With such recent developments from these private-public partnerships, the question arises, could we be doing more at the local and state levels to let this type of growth flourish?



FRONT

Flight of the Concorde

After all, building a faster plane doesn't always mean passengers will be lining up to fly on it, especially if prices are prohibitive. In the case of the Concorde, for instance, rather than take measures to make flights more affordable and encourage the mass adoption of commercial air travel, France and Britain felt the need for speed. But who actually flew on the Concorde? Many viewed it as an upper-class flight experience reserved for the rich.

Meanwhile back in the US, the "Father of Airline Deregulation," Alfred Kahn, paved the way for low-cost airlines, and in a 2007 interview with USA Today, Kahn stated that "he wished he could have deregulated the telecommunications industry."

The RVBA's carrier-grade fiber with 1 GigE transport services exceeds \$5,000 per month for dedicated internet services. But Smith asserts that this level of service addresses "a particular need for connectivity that is synchronous (two way), not throttled and designed for industries processing terabytes and petabytes worth of information."

"The Roanoke Brain Study," Smith cites, "is part of a large-scale research endeavor at Roanoke's Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute, and would require this tier of service."

The road not taken

But maybe instead of a plane, we should hit the road for a better analogy. There are many advocates for GONs who feel that building an information highway should indeed fall within a local government's jurisdiction, just as building an asphalt highway would.

"Access to the Internet is rapidly becoming as important as the roads have long been," cites Christopher Mitchell of the Community Broadband Networks Initiative. "Few demand that local governments turn a profit on the roads they manage within three years of building them. It makes no more sense to make such a demand of community networks."

However, a physical road is far less complicated than the inner workings of a dynamic broadband network.

The RVBA has stated they are implementing a "Dig Once" policy, meaning they will put down the fiber tubing, sans the technology, whenever municipal workers dig up the earth/road for other projects, so it is ready to go for future use. This will greatly cut future costs.



Citizens



Dennis Reece, Citizens

The RVBA could have taken this "Dig Once" mentality further and agreed to lay the infrastructure, or what is known as "dumb pipes" that can then be purchased and managed by private companies, such as Google fiber. By aligning themselves with the traditional role of a municipality, they may have quelled the fears of citizens who are worried about the extended use of their tax payer dollars to fund the project.

Off the beaten bath

Dennis Reece, Chief Operations Officer & Assistant General Manager of Citizens, ascertains that in the history of GONs, there have been both successes and failures. "The RVBA is wise to focus on the business aspect of fiber networking, as opposed to the residential." Trying to build fiber to the home can cost thousands of dollars, yet residential customers aren't looking to pay much more than \$50 a month for high speed service.

Reece recognizes that bringing fiber to a dense area like downtown Roanoke is much easier than the "16 homes per square mile landscape" that Citizens serves. "As a co-op, we are going to find a way to make it happen. We have a different mentality, and we don't have to worry about paying our stockholders. We are doing this for the benefit of our members."

When asked about the political changes afoot, Reece says that "As a rural provider we stay focused on our

original mission to provide quality service to our traditional footprint. Today, pretty much 95% of the people we can provide service to receive broadband, and 98% of that footprint has it in some form."

The "Caution" signs

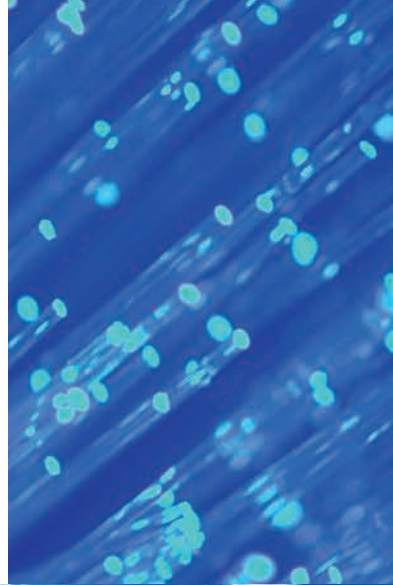
Ray LaMura has served as the president of the Virginia Cable Telecommunications Association for over ten years, and has remained nimble throughout all ten of them.

"We try to identify ways to get broadband to folks without it, and we think there is a better way to spend the money," LaMura says.

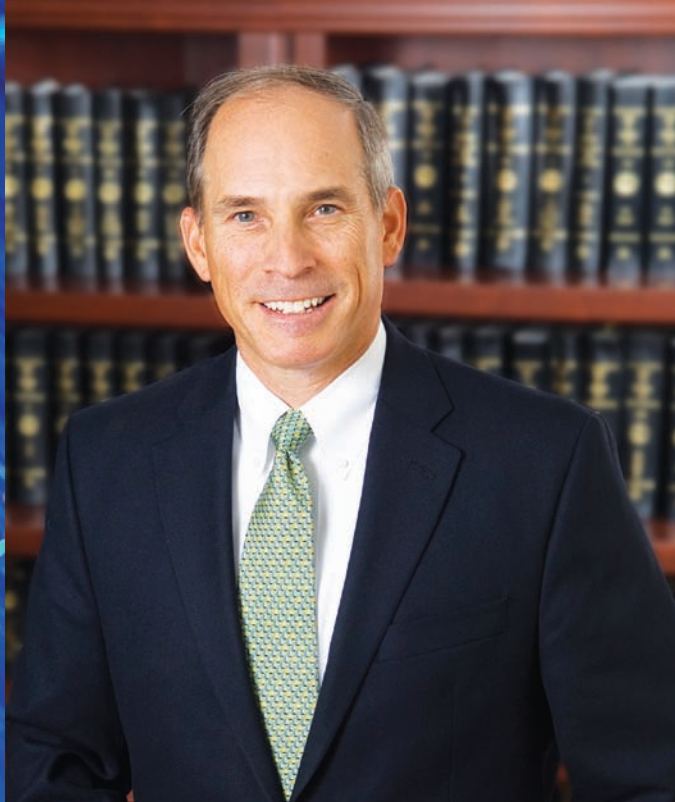
"We watched what happened in Bristol, VA— which has been laid out as the GON model and another example of the government using taxpayer dollars for broadband, where unserved customers remain unserved, and now people are going to jail. Today, there are such limited government resources and we must be wise to how and when they are used."

LaMura surmises that a lot of people have simply not asked the right questions, such as what resources will be used to operate, maintain and upgrade the system? What is the economic incentive?

"We can provide commercial customers speeds of up to 10 gigs," LaMura says. "Even 1 gig in a household is much faster than what most people use."



FRONT



Ray LaMura, Virginia Cable Telecommunications Association

LaMura says that in order to find creative ways to reach unserved populations, we need greater partnerships with local governments, and we need strategic plans.

“By identifying less dense areas and working with communities to draft adoption plans, we break down barriers and find ways to take care of everybody,” he says.

In certain communities within Richmond and Roanoke, high speed service runs right by the home, but people don’t take the service.

“We have created incentive opportunities for folks on free and reduced lunch programs to get broadband for \$10 a month. Suzy can do her homework, mom and dad can continue their education and pay bills. It is very frustrating to see taxpayer dollars doing what we have been trying so hard to do on our own.”

But, while LaMura sees a very real duplication of effort, Smith continues to see the light.

What’s down the road?

Frank Smith considers himself a public servant. “It is our obligation to serve,” Smith says. “We want to break even in six months, not six years. We did our market research, and we had carriers signing on from day one.”

The RVBA’s fiber network is happening. The core network will be completed by April 15th, with the laterals projected to be finished by the end of June.




Additional Sources:

- http://highspeedroanoke.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/broadband-timeline_final.pdf
- http://highspeedroanoke.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Roanoke_broadband_exec_summary_final.pdf

"We hope to partner with existing carriers as they grow to see us as an advantage, helping them get to places where they can't and vice versa," says Smith. "We are connecting all of the libraries in the city of Roanoke, fire stations, and we want to make sure we are serving underserved schools."

Smith is optimistic that by providing a more ubiquitous offering, the network will drive economic development and both retain and recruit more companies to the area.

"Our equipment has been approved by the Department of Defense for information assurance and security. We have a pretty healthy defense community here, but it's literally and figuratively under the radar, and we'd like to foster that community through partnership." Smith also hopes to forge partnerships with Internet2, Virginia Tech, and possibly PBS.

So while fifty miles of taxpayer funded fiber may be hard to digest, regardless of how you see it, the star city is truly moving forward at the speed of light. 





Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

One way to consider what passes for an appropriate degree of casual wear at work is to observe some of our major corporations in major cities.

How casual >

Recently I perused the Wall Street Journal's online series called Style in the Office, which showcases employee attire at workplaces predominantly in NYC, such as Mastercard, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, NPR, Simon & Schuster, and the New York Public Library, to name just a few.

Interestingly, what they had most in common is the wide range of styles and levels of formal-to-casual dress within each workplace.

According to the WSJ, at Mastercard "Millennials now make up 38% of the Purchase, N.Y.-based company's global workforce, a trend that—along with MasterCard's increased focus on technology—is helping to shift office style." Indeed, the majority of the workplace fashions are very casual and individual.


Typically, I found that even when the company described their dress code as professional, employees tended to give their outfits a casual spin. An architectural firm, Richard Meier & Partners Architects, had the most elegant work wear outfits because their color palette was mostly black, white or gray with splashes of color, lending an understated yet chic look to their office wear.

Even credit card company American Express had a surprisingly open attitude toward self-expression in work attire.

Gabrielle Giglio, EVP of Global Resources at American Express, noted, "It is our responsibility to make sure people feel, especially with the millennial population, that you don't need to have a certain look." Accordingly, she dresses in bright pantsuits that show her individuality instead of dressing conservatively like their Goldman Sachs neighbors.

Neha Kulkarni, Director of Global New Product Development and formerly with Facebook, says that American Express wants to "maintain their professionalism but in an edgy, fun way."

In addition, Mary Ann Fitzmaurice Reilly, SVP for Customer Marketing & Engagement at American Express, explained that dressing up is not always the ideal. Reilly once asked an employee not to wear a tie every day. "Sometimes you can be overdressed for work, where you look too stuffy and you don't look approachable," she said. "I think approachable is important."

Like it or not, casual attire is firmly entrenched in the majority of our country's workplaces. This knowledge reassures me that Roanoke is not too casual compared to workers in bigger cities. However, we need to remain vigilant. Jeans, t-shirts and comfortable footwear may be universal, but the key is to keep the look crisp, clean and cutting edge — because frumpy doesn't sell. 

Questions or comments? Email Kathy@peacockimage.com

What's up with up speak? >

Let's talk about up speak. Up speak occurs when the speaker raises the voice at the end of a sentence. The trait has become more widespread among young woman, although men do it too. Women who speak this way could be viewed as less serious, less authoritative, and perhaps less intelligent. Not very fair, is it? But could this way of speaking hinder a young person's career?


In my business protocol seminars, designed to help participants present themselves with confidence and authority, I stress the importance of proper speech, tone, and grammar. Author John Baldoni, an internationally recognized leadership consultant wrote "For a young woman climbing the career ladder, how you sound will influence—rightly or wrongly—how you are perceived. (And the same applies to men.)"

Baldoni: "The sound of one's voice is linked to one's presence. We expect our leaders to demonstrate it [presence]. The sound of one's voice is what creates the first impression. The male voice ... is the de facto standard to which both women and men are compared. Judged by this standard, up speak is a killer."

Journalist Jessica Grose, when interviewing an older man for *Businessweek*, was told that "she sounded like his granddaughter." This was not meant as a compliment! "That was the first moment I felt [my voice] was hurting my career beyond just irritating a couple listeners," Grose told *Fresh Air's* Terry Gross. She did seek help from a speech coach, but stopped because "I felt like it was blunting my emotional range."

Back to Baldoni: "If you think or have been told that your voice is distracting due to up speak, work with a voice coach ... you are not changing you. You are modifying your vocalization so your inner self is projected credibly."

Dr. Penny Eckert, of Stanford University, thinks upspeak may have a generational aspect. She said, "I was shocked the first time I heard this style on NPR. I thought, 'How can this person be talking like this on the radio?' Then I played it for my students. I said, 'How does she sound?' They said, 'Good, authoritative.' And that was when I knew that I had a problem ... that I was not a part of the generation that understood what that style means. There's been a change and those of us who are bothered by some of these features are probably just getting old."

Which begs the question: Will young up speaking professionals hinder their prospects with potential employers who are usually "older?" Well, sounding like a grandchild certainly won't project confidence and authority! 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
It's not just what you say but how you say it that can impact one's perception of your competence and credibility.

Big Lick Entertainment's vice president Kelly Scott (left) and president JD Sutphin.

Instagram



Big Lick Entertainment
Roanoke, VA



Having a great time with @biglicker
#BigLickEntertainment #RoanokeVA
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Pleasing the people >

Executive Summary:

Big Lick Entertainment has taken the stage... in a dynamic way, and in only 18 months.

By Tom Field

"It's like opening a business—for one day."

Who describes his job or his business in that way? Every time you're doing the job you're called to do, it's like opening up a new business each time? Now that... would take some energy.

Meet Roanoke's Energizer Bunny.

JD Sutphin is founder and president of Big Lick Entertainment. I'm having a Manhattan at one of Roanoke's finest local establishments (that to this day, still remains a secret to many), and in walks JD. There's very few people here this brisk Tuesday afternoon. And yet they all know him. It's funny, because I picked the bar precisely for its solitude. Before I even finish recommending our bartender's expert skills in mastering the Manhattan, my guest chimes, "yes, I'll have that."

In fifteen seconds, I have this JD guy sized up.

People know him. People like him. He likes to please those around him.

Talk about making your first impressions.

It's no wonder he's running what is arguably becoming one of the Star City's most recognizable event management companies. He's entertaining, well spoken, knows what's going on, seems to know what people want, a real song-and-dance man, and again... the people pleaser.

If you're an engaged participant in the Roanoke Valley, whether from your

entertainment!!!

/A

All photos courtesy of Big Lick Entertainment



business, your social network, or your circle of family or friends who just like to attend events, chances are good you've been served by Big Lick Entertainment.

You can thank one of those "you can do it" seminars for that. I'm not kidding. JD Sutphin was always entertaining. He worked in the local radio scene, from unpaid intern to DJ to marketing director. A happy enough guy who enjoyed creating happy environments, especially between the music he played on

the air and his own band playing out all over town (Low Low Chariot). But one day, just like that, he hit the flipside.

"CityWorks (X)po 2014 was a turnaround for me," JD says.

He made a business decision in about the same amount of time it takes a DJ to choose the next song. The conference (targeting all people who want to improve the local community, but with special



emphasis on millennials) turned out to be the launching spot of what JD knew he really loved: the entertainment and events business. That October day was just a year and a half ago; and today, Big Lick Entertainment has grown to manage community crowd-pleasers as diverse as Big Lick Downtown Countdown, Big Lick BurgerFest, Big Lick Oktoberfest, Big Lick KidFest, Big Lick Beer Fest, Big Lick Cocktail Classic and Flat Pickin' Fridays at Daleville Town Center.

That's a lot'ta lickin' and pickin'.

Big Lick Entertainment also manages private, corporate, and other music events; but it is certainly most visible on its main stage for the Valley's public festival-like gatherings. The company employs three, including co-founder Kelly Scott, Brian Brady, and a dozen or so part timers.

And less you think JD's experience is only all about the party scene, he's mindful of



a larger demographic, married and with a five-month old son (one of the reasons he produced KidFest); and the community service at large.

"I think people find an emotional connection to Big Lick that they don't find with the others," JD says. "I relate more to the guy or gal who wrote the song, versus the cover band."

JD's business model is very much in tune with non-profits as most of the public events serve as benefit fundraisers; and he's very interested in the mission of keeping young people here in the Roanoke Valley.

"Get up," he says, succinctly. "People who complain about there being nothing to do here... are typing behind their



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computers or sitting in their chairs.”

When it comes to soliciting help for events, JD says he likes hiring people “out of jobs they don’t like.”

And as far as his event operations feeling like you’re opening up a new business each time?

“That’s because the amount of variables [for each one] is astronomical,” he says.

Until now, I thought the Energizer Bunny was a furry little pink rabbit running back and forth banging his drum. I’m ashamed to admit I hope my favorite little dark secluded bar here doesn’t get to know JD too well. I might not find a seat next time. 

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Bridging the Gap >


The Roanoke and New River Valleys have a problem, and everyone knows about it. It is talked about in many different ways, but it always boils down to this: our most educated and energetic residents are often temporary. Despite our low cost of living, our outdoor amenities and our growing downtown scenes, the region's students are typically transient and are in a hurry to move on to greener pastures.

Over the past couple of years, I've seen professionals and consultants diagnose this problem - and generally, the same conclusion is drawn: it's a communication issue. The students are not appropriately and consistently reached by the area's businesses and organizations. Some do internships or take on part time employment, but this is often looked at as a box to check rather than a gateway to employment.

Last year, a group of young professionals banded together to attempt to provide a solution. They created eXperience, a two-day conference marketed to students and local young professionals, which exposed them to the options and opportunities for local employment and success.

In its first year, eXperience attempted to solve a very tricky problem a new way: they brought the executives and decision makers from local successful companies to a room full of millennials, gave them food and drink, and simply requested that they talk to one another. They organized short presentations that exposed hiring processes and local job openings. They encouraged networking by providing space and entertainment. It was a successful first year in that people enjoyed themselves and a new annual event was born.

2016's eXperience will feel the same, but will have a slightly sharper focus. The group took what worked from the previous year and fine-tuned it, adding more weight to those elements that got the most positive feedback. As a local young professional, this event is important to me. I am not looking for a job, but I am very interested in this region's attempts at exposing professional opportunities to those ambitious people who are just starting out.

In a broader perspective, it is encouraging to see a group of people coming together to bridge the gap between the current leadership of the region and those who will make up our next generation of leaders. eXperience is not the cure, but it is absolutely a step in the right direction. It creates positive press for the region, it is fun, and it connects two groups of people who would otherwise not have the opportunity. The more events like eXperience we offer, the more likely we are, as a region, to retain smart people. 

Young Professionals

By Ariel Lev

Executive Summary:
Keeping our young people here is one big goal for eXperience—a two-day conference in Roanoke.


Measuring matters >

If you made any goals or resolutions for this year, you've now been working on them for about two months. Perhaps this year you want to increase your margins, reduce customer lead time, or lose some weight. How's your progress? Are you on track?

According to various studies, the success rate of goals and resolutions is in the range of 8-30%. There are many contributing factors to this low success rate, such as the need for your goals to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-sensitive). But the creation of SMART goals is not enough. A detailed plan of action should be created, and progress should be measured.

"What gets measured, gets done" is an often heard phrase. Measurement not only provides the feedback you need to make sure you are on track to achieving your goals, but it also contributes to the completion of the goal itself. In other words, the act of measuring and tracking a goal, such as customer lead time reduction, can help your lead times go down. This occurs for a few reasons.

- Measurement tells you if progress is being made. To achieve your goals, changes must occur, and those changes may or may not be having an impact on your goal. Measurement provides the feedback you need to determine if your actions have been effective.
- Measurement motivates the team. The desire to achieve a personal best goal, or surpass others at work, can be enhanced by measurement. Although many might not admit it, the desire to win is a self-motivator for most people.
- Measurement holds you (or others) accountable. I frequently hear from business leaders and HR professionals that they want their employees to be more accountable. By using the concrete data that comes from measurement, you can coach your team on the impact of their actions and help them achieve greater success.

Despite all the benefits from measurement and tracking, you must be careful in your selections of what to measure. Track too many items and you lose focus from information overload. Track too few items and other results may suffer (inventory might increase while reducing customer lead times.) Measure only what you need, and ensure your metrics are balanced and aligned to your strategic initiatives. 



Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:
Achieving your goals is much more feasible if you measure all along the way.



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A hydraulic trainer in the industrial maintenance training room



all photos: Randolph Walker

Zenith Barrett, director of business engagement, in a computer lab

Credentials for hospitality and health care jobs >

Executive Summary:

Already known for serving people with disabilities, Goodwill aims to put people to work in competitive jobs with two new credentialing programs.

By Randolph Walker

New hires come with risks. No employer likes to invest in training a new employee, only to find that he or she isn't going to work out.

Now employers in the hospitality and health care fields will have a more qualified pool to draw from, thanks to two new credentialing programs at Goodwill.

Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, headquartered in Roanoke, serves 31

counties and 13 cities in Western Virginia, ranging from Rockingham County to Grayson County. The nonprofit is known for providing employment to the disabled, but also trains and places non-disabled workers in competitive environments.

In January, Goodwill of the Valleys launched two new credentialing programs. GoodCare is a health training program funded by a Health Profession Opportunity Grant from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. The one-year grant for \$2,567,650 is renewable for up to four years based on outcomes.

The grant will provide support services, life skills, education, training, and assistance to help job-seekers launch careers in the health care industry. Part of the Affordable Care Act, the program is targeted to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other poor and near-poor individuals. There is no cost to students, but class size is limited.

Training will be provided in partnership with seven community colleges: Virginia Western (Roanoke), Dabney S. Lancaster





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Goodwill

Instructor David Parks with students in the industrial maintenance lab

(Clifton Forge), Blue Ridge (Weyers Cave), Central Virginia (Lynchburg), Piedmont Virginia (Charlottesville), New River (Dublin), and Wytheville. Students start learning clinical skills, like taking blood pressure, in a room equipped with beds and mannequins at Goodwill's sprawling Jobs Campus on Melrose Avenue.

Zenith Barrett, Goodwill's director of business engagement, says Goodwill expects to serve 125 individuals throughout its service area with the GoodCare grant.

Goodwill's other new credentialing program is in hospitality. "It's a four-week training where individuals are being credentialed

in START," Barrett says. START (Skills, Tasks, And Results Training) is a curriculum developed by the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute. Goodwill also offers the ServSafe food preparation course. Students learn how to keep lodging guest rooms clean, safe, and maintained; how to succeed as a food service professional in a dining facility; and how to prepare and serve food safely. Part of the training happens in a mock hotel suite at the Jobs Campus equipped with guest room and restaurant furniture and fixtures.

Health care and hospitality are the latest additions to Goodwill's training programs. The nonprofit already offers two programs




Mock hotel room



Students Kalisa Dawes (left) and Charneice Davis simulate taking blood pressure on a mannequin in a CNA certification class at Goodwill's Jobs Campus on Melrose Avenue

in partnership with Virginia Western Community College: billing and coding, and industrial maintenance.

The latest crop of students will seek to go out and join a workforce that already includes many Goodwill "graduates." In 2015, Goodwill placed 4,261 people in competitive jobs and helped 837 people gain industry-recognized credentials. 

FACT: Referrals to Goodwill's training programs come through its website

(www.goodwillvalleys.com), the Virginia Workforce Center at Crossroads Mall, the 2-1-1 Virginia information and referral line, school systems, social services, and word of mouth.

FACT: Goodwill Industries International, based in Rockville, Maryland, is the umbrella over 165 independent, community-based Goodwills in the United States and Canada. Goodwill offers training, employment, credentialing and financial services for disabled, non-disabled and low-income individuals.



Mock restaurant



The Accidental Partnership >

He'd retired from the construction industry years before, but he still had the fire in his eyes. "How is it conceivable that I could be sued for this?" he said, waving the summons that the sheriff had just served upon him while he was at home playing with his grandchildren. "All I did was loan that idiot money, for heaven's sake!"

Our client explained that he had been loaning money interest-free to a friend who built spec houses. Our client would visit the site of each proposed home, take a look at the proposed house plans, and then decide whether to fund the house. When the house sold, the friend would pay back the loan and also would give our client thirty percent of the profit on the sale. They had been doing this for years.

"So how was I supposed to know that he took out a line of credit last year?" said our client. "And now the idiot's gone bankrupt, and the bank wants me to pay it off? That's ludicrous!"

I looked at the documents he'd brought. "The bank is saying that you and he had a general partnership, that you were his partner."

"I just loaned that idiot the money!" he said.

"Well, legally when two or more people get together to carry on a business for profit, that makes them partners, whether they actually intended to form a partnership or not," I said.

"That idiot was the one carrying on the business," he said. "He built the houses. I just loaned him the money."

"Not exactly," I said. "You did approve the location and blueprints for each new house."

"I was just trying to protect my investment," he said.

"Still, that probably gave you enough control over the business to make you a partner," I said. "And what's more, you were sharing profits. That's the most important feature of a partnership."

"The profits were just part of his payment to me for the loan!" he said.

"Well, he did pay you back in full for each loan," I said. "And you took your thirty percent of the profits on top of that. I think a court would be likely to agree with the bank that you were sharing profits."

"That damn bank!" he spluttered. "How on earth can they come after me for the line of credit that idiot took out? I didn't know a thing about it."

Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

Executive Summary:
It's usually wise to never enter into a business or share profits with someone without first creating a corporation or LLC.

P E R S P E C T I V E S

"Any of the partners has the power to enter into a legally binding obligation on behalf of the partnership," I said. "So when you form a partnership, you're essentially agreeing that any of the other partners can sign contracts that bind you too."

"Well, I suppose it's not too bad," he said. "At the moment I've only got about \$20,000 in this deal. That idiot still owes me that much on the last house. This bank is asking for \$300,000, but I'm just going to walk away."


"Unfortunately you probably won't be able to do that either," I said. "When you start a business, a partnership is the worst structure you can choose. A big reason why is that there is no limitation to your potential liability."

"You mean there's no maximum amount I'm liable for?" he said.

"Right," I said. "With other types of business entities, like corporations, LLCs and limited partnerships, your maximum liability usually is limited to the amount that you've invested in the business. With a general partnership, however — which is the default, and which you seem to have accidentally created here — any creditor of the business can come after your personal assets."

"And what if I refuse to pay?" he said.

"Then they can get a judgment against you," I said. "And then they can garnish your wages, or clean out your bank accounts, or send the sheriff to your house to take your furniture..."

In the end our client was able to pacify the bank by putting up some of his other properties as collateral for a bridge loan, which gave him time to sell his friend's spec houses and pay off most of the debt. After that, he made certain never to enter into a new business — and certainly never to share profits with anyone — without first creating an LLC or a corporation to carry on the business. 

Note: *facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn't legal advice—you should consult a lawyer before entering into a new business venture, preparing a partnership agreement, forming an LLC or a corporation, etc.*



With other types of business entities, like corporations, LLCs and limited partnerships, your maximum liability usually is limited to the amount that you've invested in the business. With a general partnership, however — which is the default — any creditor of the business can come after your personal assets.

Shark Bite

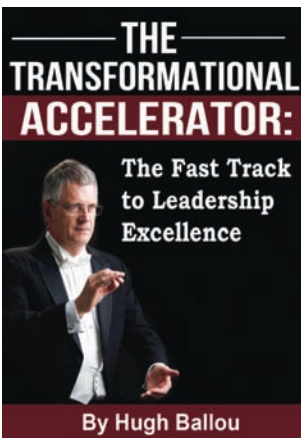
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Change conductor >

Executive Summary:

Hugh Ballou's SynerVision enterprise helps leaders change and improve; like making beautiful music match the conductor's intentions.

By Rachael Garrity

"Motivation" is a word and a world that all too often bespeaks flamboyant personalities in politician-white shirts (with teeth to match). What may have begun as a creditable idea eventually founders under a focus that is more presentation than content, and a couple of books, a series of TED talks and a covey of consulting gigs later, the next new management mogul of the millennium shoulders this one aside.

Every now and again, though, an individual breaks that mold, bringing a meld of theory and practice that prompts measurable change in the culture of organizations, be they corporate, charitable or community-based. Hugh Ballou is just such a man.

In a word. . .well, no, a word won't work. Ballou insists he is not a consultant, not a coach. Change agent comes close, but that's two words. Strategist is his term of choice, but even that requires a lead-in. He prefers "Transformational Leadership Strategist™."

It all began, interestingly enough, during Ballou's career as a musical conductor. There, too, the title is more than a little lacking. Ballou worked in large churches, where he managed not only the music program, but the entire range of administrative processes. He was for all intents

and purposes the chief operating officer. With far more in his portfolio than the Sunday morning service and the Easter cantata (albeit those were formidable enough with large choirs and a full orchestra involved), he began to realize that what makes a successful conductor makes a successful leader in all sorts of arenas.

"Most leaders have a hard time discerning that what happens in a culture is a direction reflection of them," he explains. "Organizational change happens day-to-day. There are four what I have called "pillars" in the process:

1. The plan – the equivalent of a conductor's musical score
2. Relationships, made strong by a protocol that defines how people are expected to perform. (Ballou specifically suggests supplanting job descriptions with role responsibilities and job expectations.)
3. A rehearsal that hones how systems work
4. The ability to value the "rest." In music, that's the space between notes. In organizations, it's the place in which one finds clarity. A sort of management equivalent of the spaces in ikebana flower designs.

"You clearly define the outcome, set up the collaborative structure and get out of the way," he concludes.

It was in 2007 that someone "put me on a stage and made me face the audience," says a man who had clearly mastered the maestro's back-to-the-audience stance. What began then has evolved now into a multi-platform enterprise known as "SynerVision®," with the compelling

tagline "Effective Leadership Isn't Optional." There is a thriving publishing arm, with both print and online products and services, a foundation and an international educational program that includes workshops, consultations (Ballou will not engage with less than a year-long contract, to assure adequate room for transformation.) and speaking engagements. Clients now extend through four continents. A recent tour, quite typical in its reach, took Ballou to 16 cities.


Whew! The obvious question: "Do you have a life?"

He grins, "A life and a wife. We are here because of her work in leading the music program at Blacksburg Methodist Church. And we are assiduously focused on balance – for time, for health, for our relationship."

So back to those words:

Coach – "I don't give advice; I ask questions."

Consultant – "Ditto. Plus the fact that since my core premise is that one cannot change other people, only oneself, I can hardly be in a business that purports to change others. I heard the statement once that when orchestra members respect a conductor, they play what he or she intends. When they don't, they play what he or she conducts."

And is there a life event other than that 2007 turnabout to face the audience that prompted him to take up his pallet and paint the larger picture? He doesn't hesitate. "I was in the audience in Atlanta, close enough to see him sweat, when Martin Luther King described his dream. That you don't forget." 

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It is encouraging to see a group of people coming together to bridge the gap between the current leadership of the region and those who will make up our next generation of leaders

— Page 28

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On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:

Always question authority because authority could be wrong, whether intentional or not.

Wait, what?... >

We're walking out of the house, and my daughter Lauren is singing a song. It's a familiar tune, sounds pretty good.

Out of the blue, her older sister, Hayley, interrupts.

"Wait, what?..." she implores.

"Huh?" Lauren replies.

"Did you just sing 'and we pray that our universe may one day be destroyed?'"

"Huh? I don't know," Lauren says sheepishly. She then hums it back, a few seconds pass, and she speaks.

"Umm... yeah, I guess I did."

"Good lord, Lauren," Hayley says. "It's 'we pray that all unity may one day be restored.'"

Two things.

One, I'm fairly certain my youngest daughter doesn't really want to see the world blown up. I kind of had the notion we encouraged our kids to enjoy life and appreciate its beauty.


Two, I didn't even notice what Lauren was singing. In fact, Lauren herself didn't even notice what she was singing. (She's loves acting in Glenvar's high school theatre, and I think she has that talent where actors can deliver the line they're given in full character mode, regardless of content. Somewhere along the line, she heard the wrong string of words from the popular Christian church and summer camp song, "We Are One in the Spirit" or misinterpreted them in rather drastic fashion.)

Lauren was singing what can only be described as the complete opposite of the original intention of the lyrics.

But mistakes, misinterpretations, and in fact, downright untruths are not as bad a problem... if we have good listeners around to catch them.

We need good song and scriptwriters, politicians and business leaders who can speak eloquently and deliver truths and insights in a way that might possibly unite us as one in the spirit. But frankly, for all the creative and inspiring souls out there who can truly move us—I'll take ten good listeners for each one.

Someone PLEASE stand up and simply say, "Wait, what...?" against all the rhetoric.

Two words could prevent the total destruction of our universe as we know it. 

Letters

Sweet

I had to drop you a note to tell you what a great cover and article about Baylee's Best Chocolates! A great small local business and great treatment!

Nancy Griggs
Roanoke



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

“”
That was the first time I felt
[my voice] was hurting my career
— Page 21

“”
Someone please stand up and
simply say, ‘Wait, what...?’
— Page 42

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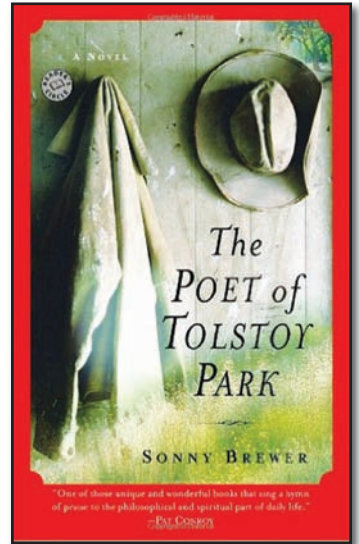
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Books @ the FRONT >

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



Dying to live

Historical fiction is a genre that most often focuses on a person, family or event of note, so that the reader essentially “fleshes out” what he or she may already know about the subject(s). In *The Poet of Tolstoy Park* (Ballentine; 2005), Sonny Brewer writes of a man, unknown to most people outside the community of Fairhope, AL, and renders a story that is quietly universal in its impact.

The subject is Henry Stuart, the date the early part of the 20th century. Given the diagnosis that his tuberculosis is terminal but that a warmer climate might help, Stuart, a widower with two adult sons, decides against such recommended places as San Diego and moves instead to Fairhope. The author is a bookstore owner in Fairhope, so the fact that it also has been the home to the likes of Clarence Darrow and Upton Sinclair, is not all he knows of the area and its people.

Prompted by a decision to live what he has learned from a lifelong reading of the philosophy of Leo Tolstoy, Stuart gives his only pair of shoes (he's dispensed with the trappings of his Idaho life, to the confusion and discomfort of his sons) to the baggage handler on the ferry that he takes to Fairhope. He buys acreage, finds strong connection to the local community despite his hermit-like existence and begins a new life that bespeaks a mixture of courage, determination and, in the end, hope. From

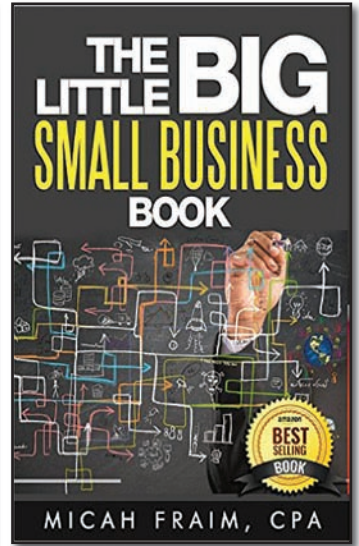
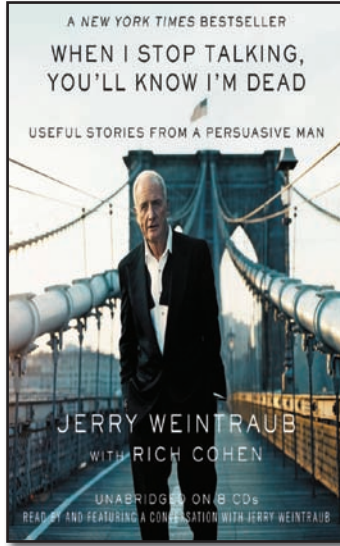
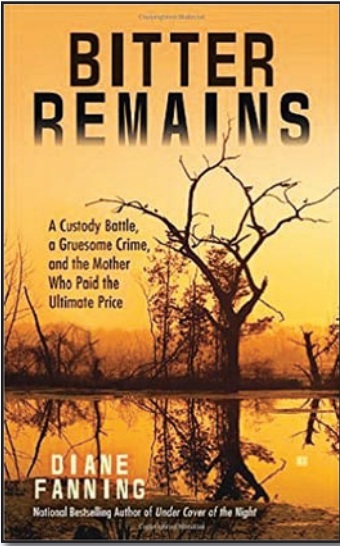
what was essentially a decision to learn how to die springs a lesson on how to live. Tolstoy wrote: “Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.” This book is a stirring tribute to one man who heard that message and responded.

—Rachael Garrity

Psychochiller

Bedford, VA resident and New York Times best-selling author, Diane Fanning's latest true crime, *Bitter Remains* (Berkley; 2016), details the life and death of a young mother of two at the hands of a psychopath husband and his sociopath wife. During a bitter custody battle, the couple lure the young woman to their apartment on the premise of giving her full custody. There they killed and dismembered her body. After packing the body parts into several large ice coolers, they drove from North Carolina to Texas to dispose of the remains assuming that alligators will remove all traces. The arrest and twin trials make for suspenseful reading. Once again, Fanning's focus on the victim hits the reader's emotions.

This tale uncovers the motives and psychopathy of the murderers. The husband and father of the two children is a leech on society, pretending to work while spending all of his wife's money. The wife wants to erase the mother of his children. Three



children, the two between the murder victim and her husband and the one between husband and wife are left orphans.

I recommend reading this book with the lights on. It's chilling and yet somehow seductive. I couldn't put it down.

—Betsy Ashton

The art of the deal

I'd never heard of Jerry Weintraub until I saw his steely eyes glaring at me from the Barnes and Noble bookshelf.

"Useful stories from a persuasive man" was the sub headline. I grabbed the book, *When I Stop Talking You'll Know I'm Dead* (Twelve; 2010), and read those 252 pages faster than any other 252 pages I've ever read.

I'm convinced: He is the most persuasive man to ever live.

Author Rich Cohen takes us through Jerry's life ranging from getting the rights to take Elvis on tour for \$1m when Jerry had \$0 to his name, to producing Frank Sinatra's famous "Main Event" at Madison Square Gardens, to discovering and launching, then divorcing from, the magical career of John Denver.

This book is a book on the art of perception, negotiation, creativity. Jerry was a master at saying whatever it takes to get big things

done fast — only to figure out how to make those things actually happen after the fact.

—Nathan Latka

User friendly

Micah Fraim's book *The Little Big Small Business Book* (self published; 2015) is a great help to those just starting out their business. He has a great way of speaking about finances and business to the average person. When it comes to businesses and their money (and accounting), sometimes it can be overwhelming with not only all the information, but to get it done right so you don't pay for it later! Micah is obviously an expert in his field and I hope he shares more advice in the future! Small business owners like myself can really benefit from reading this and gain knowledge about the steps you have to take for your future.

—Liz Long

(The reviewers: Rachael Garrity is a FRONT contributor and owner of Penworthy, a New River Valley-based publications services and consulting firm; Betsy Ashton is a Smith Mountain Lake author of *Mad Max Unintended Consequences* and *Uncharted Territory*; Nathan Latka is an entrepreneur and business developer in Blacksburg; Liz Long is an indie author and small business owner in Roanoke.)



Courtesy of United Way of Montgomery, Radford & Floyd

Kids on court >

United Way of Montgomery, Radford & Floyd held its annual Kid's Day event on Feb. 6; where 150 youth and their chaperones cheered Virginia Tech men's basketball team at Cassell Coliseum.



Commercial conversation >

AAF Roanoke advertising club held its traditional Super Bowl Television Commercial Review Panel on Feb. 10, featuring professional representatives from the media, including **Erin Brookshier** (television; WSL5 10); **Jonathan Carlin** (new media; SuperCarlinBrothers); **Joanne Anderson** (print; New River Valley Magazine); **Greg Roberts** (radio; WFIR Greg Roberts Live); and moderated by **JD Sutphin** of Big Lick Entertainment.

FRONT 'N ABOUT



Curio cabinet >

The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center announced its new designation as part of Hilton's Curio brand of upscale properties; this will be the first in Virginia; Hilton Worldwide president and CEO **Chris Nassetta**, general manager **Gary Walton**, Virginia Tech president **Timothy Sands**, and Roanoke City mayor **David Bowers** delivered the news at a press conference on Feb. 10.



Three checks for youth ed >

Cox Communications presented \$125,000 in grants through its Cox Charities Program to support youth education; 2015-16 recipients in Roanoke included Apple Ridge Farms, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Virginia, and Family Services of Roanoke Valley; Cox Virginia vice president of operations **Jeff Merritt** (second from left) is joined by the non-profit representatives.



Donation in aisle 20k >

Kroger Mid-Atlantic Division presented a check of more than \$20,000 to **Feeding America Southwest Virginia** on Feb. 11 through its *Bringing Hope to the Table* program; manager Rick Ramsuer of the Bonsack store hands check to Feeding America's Pamela Irvine.

Courtship >

Opera Roanoke held a cocktail reception at Roanoke's Shenandoah Club on Feb. 11 to thank patrons and report on fundraising efforts (plus a matching \$100,000 challenge by June 30); the event featured singing of **Scott Williamson** and **Amy Cofield Williamson**, including selections from the upcoming *La Traviata* on April 8 and 10.



Dan Smith



Pat Jarrett

Aww, shucks >

Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program pairs master artists with gifted apprentices to learn traditional art forms; sisters **Deborah Pratt** and **Clementine Macon** face off in an oyster-shucking contest at a showcase (next one coming up May 15 at the Foundation's new partner, Ash Lawn-Highland historic home of James Monroe in Charlottesville).

FRONT 'N ABOUT



V-day payday >

United Way of Montgomery, Radford and Floyd hosted its fifth annual formal fundraiser with a Valentine's in Vegas event on Feb. 13 at the German Club Manor in Blacksburg, raising over \$12,000; sponsors included CrossFit 460, above.



Check for senior services >

Foundation for Roanoke Valley awarded over \$250,000 in grants to services for the elderly as part of its Special Interest Grants program; **Robyn Dobyms**, Botetourt Resource Center; **Pam McAdams** and **Ann Hodges**, Local Office on Aging; **Duane Smith** and **Jamice Rudd**, Joint Resident Council; **Bill Loope** and **Peggy Morrison**, STEP; **Sam Levy** and **Maureen Best** with LEAP for Local Good; and **Diane Kelly** with Mental Health America accept check.

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



Apgar

Angie Apgar has been promoted to vice president, mortgage sales manager in Roanoke at BNC Bank.

Charles Equi has joined as director at Brown Edwards Roanoke office.

Mikki Barranco has joined as commercial banking associate, and **Mary Hoback** has joined as loan operations specialist at HomeTown Bank.

Kevin Meade has been named Virginia Region president of BNC Bank, following the retirement of Ellis Gutshall on March 31.



Hack

Nancy Hack is heading up HomeTown Private Wealth, a new investment division of HomeTown Bank.

Sheryl Crawford became a financial advisor with the Roanoke practice

of The Myrias Group, Ameriprise Financial Services.

Elicha Johnson has joined as an accounting assistant at Rutherford / Marsh & McLennan Agency.

Joe Crandall has joined as training recruiting specialist at Don Lilly Agency of Mutual of Omaha.

LEGAL FRONT

Patice Holland and **Daniel Sarrell** have been named principals at Woods Rogers.

Hyatt Shirkey has joined as an associate, civil litigation and criminal defense at CooleySublett.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Sean Horne has been appointed executive vice president to the board of directors of Balzer and Associates, Inc.

Jim Cox and **Pete McKnight** have been inducted into the Roanoke Regional Home Builders Association Hall of Fame.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT

Michael Shifflett has been named executive chef at Virginia's



Shifflett

Community Resources.

Robert Strong has been named manager of Oakey's Funeral Service & Crematory Vinton Chapel.

Peer Segelke has been appointed chief executive officer of Lawrence Companies Inc.



Adams

Natural Bridge Park.

Lindy Adams has been named president of System 4 Advertising Agency.



Ingram

Jason Ingram has been appointed senior vice president, human resources and corporate compliance at Friendship Retirement Community.

Kara Hooper has joined as master aesthetician; **Abbie Sanders** as licensed nail technician; and **Angela Addison** as massage therapist at Innovations Salon and Day Spa in Blacksburg.

Jamie Snead has joined as director of advocacy at DePaul

EDUCATION FRONT



Bowers

Michael Bowers has been hired as the first faculty member, an assistant professor at Virginia Tech's proposed School of Neuroscience.



Sumpter



Byron

Brad Sumpter has been named director of information technology;



Sullivan



Taylor



Hart

Paula Byron has been named director of marketing and communications for College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences; **Jay Sullivan** has been named head of Department of

Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation; **Don Taylor** has been named interim dean of College of Engineering; **Natalie Hart** has been named principal gifts officer at Virginia Tech.



Polfelt

Ted Polfelt, a culinary arts instructor at Virginia Western Community College, was named 2016 Chef of the Year, Southeast Region,

by the American Culinary Federation.

William "Will" Dudley has been named president of Washington & Lee University.

Ben Irving has been named director of operations for Botetourt County Public Schools.

been named principal marketing officer at the Taubman Museum of Art.

Heather Gearhart has been named ambassador for Alzheimer's Association of Central and Western Virginia.

MUNICIPAL FRONTS

Donald Butzer has been appointed Catawba Magisterial District representative on the Roanoke County Planning Commission.

Compiled by Tom Field

CULTURE FRONT

Pat Bruce has been recognized by American Cancer Society with the 2015 Look Good Feel Better Sunrise Award.

Sunny Nelson has



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VT's Marc Edwards and students assemble water testing kits for Flint, MI.

Flintstones in crisis

Virginia Tech's civil and environmental engineering programs received national attention in the Flint, Michigan water study involving lead and contaminants in the city's municipal water supply.

Boxing up

Arkay Packaging Corp. in Botetourt County has announced an \$11 million expansion, covering equipment and operations and potentially 50 new jobs.

Sports on air

WPLY 610AM and **97.3FM** in Roanoke (98.5 FM in Lynchburg), a new sports radio station from the Wheeler

Broadcasting group, began broadcasting at the end of January, featuring national sports personalities Dan Patrick, Rich Eisen, and Colin Cowherd.

Rocky Mount pediatrics

Carilion Clinic has opened a Children's Pediatric Medicine clinic in Rocky Mount.

New report card

Interactive Achievement, a Roanoke education software company, has been acquired by California-based PowerSchool Group.

Keys to workouts

RaesWear apparel in Martinsville won

the \$50,000 grand prize from the Under Armour Future Show Innovation Challenge; the company designs athletic wear with waistbands that let you store personal items such as keys, wallets, phones.

Development site

City of Roanoke has updated its website for economic development at www.bizroanoke.com.

To market advice

VT KnowledgeWorks at Virginia Tech's Corporate Research Center has introduced a "Pathways to Innovation" program, where researchers can submit a one-page abstract, followed by a private consultation with an innovator on moving

scientific developments toward the commercial product stage.

Channel changer

Texas-based **Nexstar Media Group** has signed its agreement to buy Richmond-based Media General pending approval; a reported \$4.6 billion value, resulting in 171 television stations in about 100 markets; the deal trumped previous negotiations between Media General and Meredith Corp.

X out of the square

Roanoke's **CityWorks (X)Po** for 2016 (the community engagement conference's 6th annual event) has announced its change of venue



CityWorks (X)po

from downtown Roanoke to the Grandin Village neighborhood (historic Grandin Theatre and Grandin CoLab); held October 6 – 8; see

cityworksexpo.com for details.

Let the games begin

Virginia Commonwealth

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.

Games has opened its registration at www.commonwealthgames.org for its 60+ sports (main games run July 22–24 in Lynchburg at Liberty University).

Floyd's good looks

Eye Candy Optical eyewear has opened

in Floyd at The Station shopping center.

Leading in leadership

OpX Solutions in Roanoke, an affiliated partner of Leadership Management International, received two Leadership Excellence Awards: Best Global / International

SPORTS radio



WPLY 610AM 97.3FM ROANOKE | 98.5FM LYNCHBURG

THE HERD

WITH **COLIN COWHERD**

**MONDAY-FRIDAY
3PM-6PM**





Carilion Clinic

Carilion Wellness at VT/CRC

Program and the Innovation in Development of Leadership at the LEAD2016 conference in Nashville, TN.

March 16 giveathon

Foundation for Roanoke Valley has announced Roanoke Valley Gives, noting March 16 as a

valley-wide fundraising initiative where residents donate money to favorite local charities over the 24-hour period; information available at www.foundationforroanokevalley.org.

replacing an existing fitness center and expecting to open by April.

Coal credit

Virginia's **coal tax credit**, set to expire at the end of 2016, has passed a vote for extension to January 2022 by Senate vote on Feb. 15; a move designed to slow the decline of the coal industry in Virginia and related job losses.

Movin' on up

Wells Fargo is moving its main Roanoke branch on Jefferson Street to the Wells Fargo Tower; a relocation affecting nearly 100 employees.

CRC fit

Carilion Clinic has announced plans to open a wellness / fitness center at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center in Blacksburg;

Civic center browsing

Cox Communication customers attending events at Roanoke's **Berglund Center** now have free access to



Roanoke Valley Gives

WiFi hotspots; using their Cox ID and password to log in.

Water cooler fill up

Ethos Technologies has added Pure Water Technology (purified water supplier for employees) to its product and service lineup, as the exclusive marketing distributorship for Southwest Virginia.

Dogs back again

Salvage Dawgs, the reality show on DIY Network featuring Roanoke's **Black Dog Salvage** and owners Robert Kulp and Mike Whiteside, opened its season five premier at the end of February.

Cast out

Orvis (retail outfitter) has opened a new outlet store at its distribution center in Roanoke at the Blue Hills Centre for Industry & Technology park.

Socially motivated

Heyo social media in Blacksburg has been sold to Votigo, another peripheral applications developer servicing Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, blogs and mobile platforms; Heyo founder Nathan Latka appeared on FRONTcover; December 2011.

Compiled by Tom Field



Nathan Latka

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.

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Milan

TOBACCONISTS

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Milan
TOBACCONISTS



David and Renee Meyer, owners of Milan Tobacconists

A place for the aficionado >

Executive Summary:

As Roanoke's oldest pipe and cigar shop, Milan Tobacconists attracts the most loyal customers and longstanding patrons.

By Anne Sampson

The fragrance of tobacco is evident as soon as the door opens at 309 South Jefferson

Street in Roanoke. This is Milan Tobacconists, a 104-year-old Roanoke tradition, owed by David and Renée Meyer.

The Meyers bought the business from Renée's parents, Don and Miriam Roy, who bought it from the Milan brothers, sons of founder J.H. Milan, in 1994. The business moved to its current location in 2008.

"Renée worked with her father in his tobacco shop in Florida," says David, "and I've always smoked and appreciated good cigars. We were very interested in taking over the business."

The well-lit space is lined with floor-to-ceiling



The second floor houses a private club, complete with wifi, flat screen, pool table and humidified lockers.



David Meyer measures a custom blend tobacco.

displays of cigars, humidors, lighters and accessories and pipes. In the back is a walk-in humidor where customers help themselves to their favorite premium cigars. Behind the granite counter in the front of the store are shelves lined with gallon jars of loose tobacco.

"These are custom blends," says David. "They're unique to us; you won't find them anywhere else. Some of them date back to 1912."

Tobacco leaves are fermented like grapes,

he explains. The longer they're aged, the smoother the flavor. While consumers understand that wines from one vineyard can differ from year to year, they expect consistency from tobacco, so blends are constantly tinkered with to maintain that consistency.

Although cigar and pipe smokers come in all ages and from all backgrounds, Milan's typical customers are between 30 and 60, with one woman smoker for every 20 or so men. Millennials are represented as well, such as Roanoke







Zachary Carney lights his pipe at his regular spot.

College senior Zachary Carney.


"This is my regular set-up," he says, lighting his pipe. "It's my homework stop."

On the second floor is Commonwealth Cigar Club, the only private cigar club in Virginia. Members enjoy wifi, a flat screen TV, billiards, humidified lockers and a continental ambiance of dark wood and leather. A special license from the state permits them to BYOB, with mixers and ice provided by Milan. David and Renée live on the third floor, accessible via the circa 1925 elevator, complete with

original brass fittings and folding gate.

International mail order rounds out Milan's business, shipping to Japan, France, Italy, Australia and more. Occasionally mail order customers will stop in the store to meet David and Renée in person.

"Cigars and pipes are like a hobby, like wine," says David. "There's a social aspect, and it's a healthier option than cigarettes."

"You can enjoy a cigar for \$2 or as much as \$40. You can get set up with a pipe for \$60 and then tobacco is not expensive. There's something for everyone." 



Colorful cigar boxes are prized

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Define the outcome, set up the structure, and get out of the way

— Page 38



When you start a business, a partnership is the worst structure you can choose

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