

Yes, it's *the*
List!

our best of
business 2008

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

\$3 • Vol I: ISSUE 3 • DECEMBER 08



the ²
economies
of
Floyd

talkin'
**HORSE
SENSE**

Who's on it?

THE **FRONT**List

In these uncertain times,

IT MAY BE COMFORTING TO KNOW, BAUERFINANCIAL, ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S LEADING BANK RATING SERVICES, HAS AWARDED VALLEY BANK A 4-STAR RATING FOR CAPITALIZATION AND STABILITY.



Valley Bank has money to lend and offers very attractive rates on business loans, consumer loans, home equity and mortgage loans.

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MyBank**

myvalleybank.com

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342-BANK (2265)



WELCOME to the FRONT

Here we find ourselves at the end of the year. A strange year indeed. Topsy turvy economy. National election. Battles abroad with big questions. So much happened. Many still don't know what to make of it, and are ready to move on.

To toss the salad a little more, we decided to start a magazine. We really didn't think much about the economic environment, and were somewhat surprised when that seemed to be the main focus from television, radio and other print publications as they announced our arrival.

"Why now?"

"A new publication is launching—even though we're in the midst of a downturn?"

Hmmm. Did we not notice the climate?

Our position was—and remains—one of common sense, as far as we're concerned. We know it's rough out there. We know the state of the media is uncertain and people already have so many choices and are moving in all directions.

But we see you looking for something better. You still want to know what's going on. And you want that picture delivered in a certain way. That's what we're here to do. Our intention and hope is that in your estimation—we're in the FRONT.

Tom Field

Dan Smith

Designing a future for Southwest Virginia tourism.



At Spectrum Design, we consider it an honor to have been involved in the design of some of our region's most notable buildings.

Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway will be a LEED-certified, iconic structure inspired by the spirit of vernacular Southwest Virginia architecture. The building will utilize contemporary design techniques that will simultaneously pay homage to the region's history and its future.



SPECTRUM DESIGN
architects | engineers

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FINANCIAL POLL

Crashing banks: affecting you a lot, not that much, or you just don't know, yet?

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "FINANCIAL POLL" in subject line

RETAIL POLL

Will your business spend more, less, or about the same for the upcoming holiday season?

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "RETAIL POLL" in subject line

LEGAL POLL

A law student asks what the fastest growing practice area is. What would you tell him/her?

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "LEGAL POLL" in subject line

RECREATION POLL

What is the single greatest sports team in the history of southwestern Virginia?

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "RECREATION POLL" in subject line

WELLNESS POLL

Universal health care:

Yes, no, or perhaps?

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "WELLNESS POLL" in subject line

EDUCATION POLL

Should the State of Virginia lower tuition at public institutions by increasing taxes?

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "EDUCATION POLL" in subject line

TECH / INDUSTRY POLL

In the current economy, is staffing your workforce more difficult, less difficult, or about the same?

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "TECH / INDUSTRY POLL" in subject line

CULTURE POLL

Ampitheatres: love 'em, hate 'em, or make little difference?

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "CULTURE POLL" in subject line

DEVELOPMENT POLL

"Urban sprawl" in your town: out of hand, or not so bad?

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "DEVELOPMENT POLL" in subject line

Here are all our poll questions for October / November / December 2008 for each industry FRONT. Results will be published in January.



Valley Business FRONT

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our best of business

The FRONT List 2008

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the ² economies
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Floyd
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Cover photograph by
Greg Vaughn Photography

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NOVEMBER



Rod Belcher



Anne Clelland



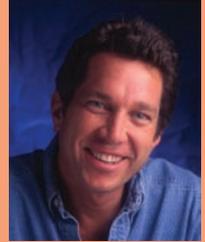
Rachael Garrity



Becky Hepler



Kathy Surace



Greg Vaughn

Editorial Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of 16 diverse business professionals, who will meet as a group periodically during the 18 months of the first board's service. It will turn over every year and a half.

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

ER CONTRIBUTORS



Jane Dalier



Donna Dilley



Jill Elswick



Tom Field



Anita Fiebaugh



Paulette Jayabalan



Gene Marrano



John Montgomery



Don Simmons Jr



Dan Smith



Alison Weaver



Lori White

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 52.

2008 / 09 Members

- Nancy Agee** Carilion
- Laura Bradford** Claire V
- Warner Dalhouse** retired banker, community activist
- Cory Donovan** NewVa Technology Council
- Nanci Hardwick** Schultz-Creehan
- Ed Hall** Hall Associates
- George Kegley** retired journalist, community activist
- Terri Jones** Access PR
- Cynthia Lawrence** Design Marketing
- Stuart Mease** Roanoke City
- Mary Miller** Interactive Design & Development
- Bill Rakes** Gentry, Locke, Rakes and Moore
- Court Rosen** Walnut Creek Development, Roanoke City Council
- Jay Turner** J.M. Turner Construction
- Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners
- John Williamson** RGC Resources

“Oh, you thought the cone shape was natural?” — Page 48

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.



Our FRONT cover models, Marilyn Burrows and Ed Murphy (sans headgear)

By Dan Smith

Executive Summary:
The first ever FRONTList—
 a compilation of leading
 businesses and significant
 activities impacting our
 region.



The Hancock

THE FRONTList

Any list of the “best” of anything begins and ends with subjectivity. That said, selecting winners for our FRONTList 2008, The Best of Business, was delicate, touchy, challenging, sometimes difficult, often fun and always informative.

We went about this in the same way we go about everything: we asked our editorial advisory board for suggestions in these 30-plus categories and added suggestions from 30 other respected business people. Then we sat down and made the decisions, since it’s our magazine and, ultimately, we’re responsible for its content.

Here’s what we came up with:

Executive FRONTLeader (Male)

Ed Murphy, Carilion.
 Bold, innovative, controversial. Has led Carilion through mergers, acquisitions and an educational initiative that could have profound and lasting impact on the entire region. This guy knows no fear.

Also in the FRONT

We need them here because several executives have had good years. **John Williamson** of Roanoke Gas is smart, innovative, generous and a mentor for a generation of business leaders. Luna’s **Kent Murphy** continues to lead one of the most aggressive high tech companies in the state; **Neil Wilkin** has led Optical Cable from the brink of destruction to profitability and he’s done it with style; **Joe Meredith** continues to make a statement at the Corporate Research Center; **Victor Ianello** of Synchrony continues to outgrow facilities, develop and diversify.

Executive FRONTLeader (Female)

Marilyn Burrows, Cox.
 Leads one of the most forward-looking companies in the region. Cox is heavily involved in the community, deeply committed to maintaining a diverse workforce and has a corporate culture based on service excellence.

Also in the FRONT

Beth Doughty of the Roanoke Regional Partnership will always be in the mix, as will **Nancy Agee** at Carilion, who is smart, smart, smart. **Mary Miller** at IDD in Blacksburg is having a breakout year and **Joyce Waugh** will be splendid as the new director of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce. **Nancy Gray** of Hollins University is giving the stuffy college president a makeover with her innovation, generosity, and plain good sense. Claire V’s **Laura Bradford Godfrey** is in the top with her generosity of spirit, humanity and good business ideas.

2008 BEST OF BUSINESS

Business Deal FRONTLeader

The **Hancock** is the way a public-private partnership should work, with Roanoke City investing \$500,000 into a private venture to make the transformation of this stately old building into a modern, attractive icon of downtown living. The city's investment in the Ed Walker project turned what would likely have been expensive condominiums into affordable rental units for the foreseeable future and helped give downtown living a new dimension, one that is distinctly young urban professional (or Yuppier, as it was called in distant days).

Also in the FRONT

Optical Cable's acquisition of SMP, which puts it in an excellent position to grow even more.

Definitely NOT in the front

As the Worst Business Deal, Slate Hill is a good start, but most of these are deals that weren't made. Slate Hill is ugly, stupid, wasteful and generally reviled. But all those buildings sitting empty in downtown Roanoke (beginning with Heironimus) are a tragedy and, fact is, if the owners were willing to deal, the buyers and developers are willing to talk. So, get with it, fellas.

Company Board of Directors FRONTLeader

HomeTown Bank. This one's an all-star team of banking and business knowledge and it almost has to be these days in this business.

Board Chairman/Chairwoman FRONTLeader

Warner Dalhouse. There are some good ones, some very good ones, but there's only one Warner Dalhouse, the very personification of the Energizer Bunny. He's a retired banker, though "retired" is a word he can't even spell.

Also in the FRONT

Ray Smoot of the Virginia Tech Foundation; **George Cartledge** of Grand Piano; **Bill Rakes** of Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore; **Lynn Meyer** of the Roanoke Symphony; **Bob Lawson**, retired banker.

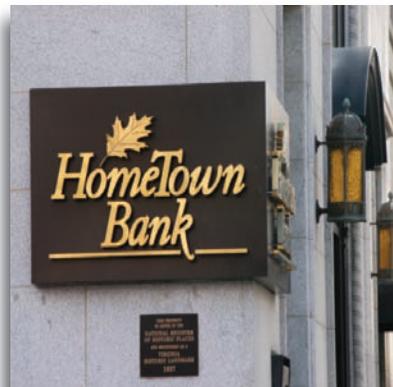
Non-Profit Board of Directors FRONTLeader

Taubman Art Museum. It steered the fund-raising, construction, opening and marketing of a \$66 million art museum in a small Southern city and did it without a glitch (unless you count Wachovia folding and taking its money back). Quite an accomplishment.

Who Made The List >

(FRONTLeaders only—read the story for the complete list... or see Page 46)

Advance Auto
Arts Council of the Blue Ridge
Berglund
Bicycle
Blue 5
Blue Ridge Copier
Blue Ridge Country
Marilyn Burrows
Carilion
Cox
Warner Dalhouse
Davidsons
Frances Kahn
Hall & Associates
The Hancock
HSMM/AECOM
Hollins University
HomeTown Bank
The Homestead
Hotel Roanoke
The Inn at Virginia Tech
Jefferson Center
Luna
Ed Murphy
NRCC
North Cross School
Novozymes
Oakey's Funeral Service
Raleigh Court
Rocky Mount Town Council
Salem Red Sox
Schaal Catering
Staples
The Summit
TAP
Taubman Art Museum
Valley Bank
VWCC
Woods Rogers



HomeTown Bank



Oakey's Funeral Service



TAP



not Rocky Mount



Blue 5

Family Business FRONTLeader

Oakey's Funeral Service, throughout the region. Old, established, respected.

Also in the FRONT

Ewing Cabinet in Blacksburg. Small company comprised of father/son/mother/daughter-in-law team. The men do construction/remodeling of the spaces in the home.

The women design and do custom design for kitchen/home/bath, etc. Also **Boxley Block** and **Breakell Inc.**

Non-Profit FRONTLeader

Total Action Against Poverty (TAP) gets our vote for best run non profit.. TAP is 40 years old and still one of the most thoughtful, innovative non-profits in existence. It runs like a business. A serious business. It is also the very model of a vital community organization that knows you can't always lean on the government.

Also in the FRONT

Clean Valley Council, which is quietly efficient, important and an organization with true impact on how we live.

Free Clinic of the New River Valley is one of the state's oldest (27 years), largest and best managed.

Local Government FRONTLeader

Rocky Mount Town Council. Several years ago, Rocky Mount moved from redneck backwater to 20th Century progressive. In the last year or two, it has joined the 21st Century and is quite a nice little town with a heck of a future, a great library and at least one dandy restaurant.

Definitely NOT in the front

Worst Local Government? **Boones Mill Town Council.** Same county, different planet. We could get into the speed trap and the guns at council meetings, but we won't. No need to encourage them.

Business Lunch FRONTLeader

Blue Five gets our Best Restaurant for a Business Lunch. Kerry Hurley's bistro operates in the best tradition of the local watering hole, while serving a large and diverse customer base. Blue Five sits smack dab in the middle of Roanoke government and media operations, the way a great restaurant would in a good film noir. Featuring some of the best blues around, it also has a solid menu.

Also in the FRONT

On the Rise Bakery. has a great pizza for that office meeting that lasts through lunch. It's meatless and you won't need to nap after eating it. Order a day ahead. Also, widely popular, **202** in Roanoke, **Backstreet Restaurant** in Blacksburg, **Brambleton Deli**, and **Metro** in Roanoke.

Dining Entertainment FRONTLeader

The Summit, we find, is the Best Restaurant to Impress a Client. This Christiansburg landmark is steeped in elegance and would rank high even if the food wasn't so hot. But it's superb. More than 50 wines, nouveau continental cuisine (Mediterranean, Italian, Indian, continental). Take a client here and he will expect excellence from you in other things, as well, so be careful.

Workplace FRONTLeader

Hollins University is a great place to work. These lovely, competent people work their buns off, but walk through the campus some day and look at the happy faces—the same faces year after year. The employees care about the students and their jobs—and it shows.



The Summit

Catering FRONTLeader

Jim Schaal Catering in Roanoke. A relative new comer that has taken the region by storm. Good food, good service, fair price. Not much more to ask.

Valley Business FRONT covers nine industry fronts each month. The following list presents the FRONTLeaders in each sector:



Jim Schaal Catering

Meeting Facility FRONTLeader

Here, we have a three-way tie. **Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center**, **The Inn at Virginia Tech**, **Jefferson Center**. Each has much to recommend it and if one's booked the date of your seminar/conference/meeting, try one of the others. They're superb.

Financial FRONTLeader

Valley Bank edges a highly competitive field as Best Bank for Small Business. Often mentioned by grateful entrepreneurs whose business was started with a ValleyBank loan. It's the small banks right now that are left to make those loans and most are stable and quite good at this end of the business market. VB stands out.



Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center

Customer Service FRONTLeader

Blue Ridge Copier. All these years in business and no complaints with the Better Business Bureau. You call. They come. Their equipment may be more costly, but you get super service.

Also in the FRONT

If your needs exceed what a small bank can handle, **Bank of America** remains a cool drink of water in the acrid sludge that big banking has become. Honest, smart, conservative and very, very Southern. Just what you want in a bank.



ValleyBank



Woods Rogers



Carilion



Luna



Novozymes

Legal FRONTleader

Woods Rogers, the Roanoke-grown firm founded in 1893 has a strong business practice and edged out our pool of full service firms.

Also in the FRONT

Given the diversity of specialization required by businesses throughout the region, **Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore**, **LeClair Ryan**, and **Sands Anderson** all came in as strong contenders for comprehensive legal support to corporations large and small.

Wellness FRONTleader

Carilion wins Best Health Care Company. Biggest, boldest and best led, this non-profit organization has taken some solid, often unfair hits from the news media, but it continues to serve a large area of the western part of the state, often treating uninsured patients not welcome elsewhere. Where would we be without Carilion?

Also in the FRONT

Your health care and well-being begins with personal fitness. The **Roanoke Athletic Club** and **Botetourt Athletic Club** (RAC/ BAC) clearly lead the field as advanced fitness centers serving today's busy professionals.

Tech / Industry FRONTleader (Technology)

Luna. In an area where there is a lot of competition, Luna looms over the region like a benevolent role model. Started in the stimulating entrepreneurial environs of Blacksburg, Luna has grown upward and outward, gone public, established itself in depressed areas (Danville, for example) and generally set an example of corporate responsibility and innovation.

Also in the FRONT

ADMMicro in Salem has been splashy with its new contracts. **Mailtrust** in Blacksburg is, according to one voter, "the 800-pound gorilla in Web hosting" and it went public this year, creating 100 new jobs. Somewhat of a sub-category, our Best Company to Work on Your Computers goes to **Entre**. It's the oldest in the region (about 25 years), and one of the most capable. A service company in the best sense. Also mentioned in frequency, is **CSS** in Christiansburg, standing out in a solid group of contenders.

(Manufacturing)

Novozymes Biologicals jumps ahead of the pack as Best Manufacturing Company. Innovative, involved, green and a good place to work. Has grown almost exponentially and is a national/international player.

Also in the FRONT

Virginia Prosthetics in Roanoke is a small miracle of a company that has been around for 40+ years and has adapted its products with changing technology.

(Communications)

Cox (Communications, Business Services, Cable,... whatever you call it or whichever entity you deal with) gets our award for Best Communications Service. Who else? Service. Service. Service. What it's all about.

Development FRONT Leader (Builder)

HSMM in Roanoke is our top award in the combined fields of Construction, Architecture & Engineering. Biggest, oldest, widest service area, most prestigious jobs. Hard to argue this one because HSMM is in another category. Note: Old timers need to remember, the "new" firm's name is HSMM/AECOM (until the moniker gets changed again).

Also in the FRONT

An area full of quality companies. **Spectrum's** projects speak for themselves. Environmentally sensitive, built on excellence and innovation; **Rife + Wood Architects**, small and strong, gets good projects and does well with them; **Building Specialists** is Bob Fetzler's baby and it reflects his basic goodness; **Architectural Alternatives** in Blacksburg is solid, something of a role model; **J.M. Turner Construction** gets big jobs for a reason; **Breakell** gets the most press because of its environmentalism, but it can also build a building with anybody.

(Real Estate)

Hall & Associates (commercial). Big. Old. Best known for good reason. **MKB** (residential). In a crowded field, this one stands out as a steady hand with a great, long track record.

(Neighborhood)

Raleigh Court. South Roanoke got a vote or two, in the Star City, but there really wasn't any competition here because Raleigh Court is what we all want a neighborhood to be. Positively Rockwellian. Walk tree-lined sidewalks to the movies and have a pizza and ice cream before and after.

Also in the FRONT

North Salem neighborhood. Just off the market area actually (Broad Street to Langhorne Place) Salemites call it "North". Another "Mayberry-esque" tree-lined setting, gorgeous mix of small and large non-cookie-cutter homes all in walking distance of Main Street, the market, pharmacy, shops, restaurants, pubs, the bank and post office.

Retail FRONT Leader (Specialty Product)

Advance Auto. OK, it's slowly leaving us and our feelings are hurt, but you can't say this is not an excellent company. Hasn't been one of us since Nicklaus Taubman let it go, but it's still here—at least in body. Advance's customer service (installing wipers and batteries, loaning tools, giving advice) is superior.



Cox Business Services



Hall & Associates



Raleigh Court



Advance Auto Parts



Davidson's



Frances Kahn



Berglund



Salem Red Sox

(Business Clothing)

It's **Davidson's** for men; **Frances Kahn** for Women. Men rarely complain that there's no place to buy good business clothing, but women do. Frances Kahn answers the call. At a price. But, hey, for business, it's an investment.

Also in the FRONT

Meg's & Garrett's in Radford is in the running because it is active, thoughtful and responsive to clientele.

(Office Supplies)

Staples. Not much of a choice here. Go with the Big Box 'cause it has the stuff and has it cheap.

(Automobile Dealers)

Berglund in Roanoke wins our Best Place to Buy a Company Vehicle. Has been at it for a very long time and knows the landscape.

Also in the FRONT

Duncan Automotive Group and **Shelor** in Christiansburg are both big, diverse and professional; **West Motor Sales** has just been sold, but it has great cars.

Recreation FRONTLeader (Sports)

The Salem Avalanche (now the **Salem Red Sox** in 2009) is the definitive leader for sports in the region. One look at the sponsors is proof of the strong business connection. A night at the ballfield in Salem is also inexpensive, a great setting, clean, and a positive All-American experience for friends, work, and family.

(Getaways)

The Homestead is our Best Weekend Getaway. If for nothing more than the massage and the quiet. Elegant, beautiful, restful.

Also in the FRONT

The variety of bicycle/hiking rails-to-trails paths in this end of the state, especially **Huckleberry** in Blacksburg and the **Virginia Creeper** (almost all downhill for 36 miles) near Abingdon; white-water rafting on the **New and Gauley rivers** (for Type A personalities). Virtually any location on the **Blue Ridge Parkway** always graces the list (and is our favorite source for scenes on a calendar at bookstores all over the world).

Also in the FRONT

Ok, they're more than a "getaway", but we got a lot of votes for out-of-region vacation destinations, too. Business people have broad visions when it comes to what's considered a "getaway." Ireland, Costa Rica, France, New York City, Pinehurst, Buford, S.C., Bar Harbor, Maine, Las Vegas, and a variety of others more and less exotic. The sadly telling destination, though: "Who gets vacations?" asked by several responders.

(Product)

The **Bicycle** gets our Best Recreational Product. At a time when Baby Boomers are heading companies, aging and getting fat, the trend toward the bike is welcome. Check the demographics of the riders on the greenways and rails-to-trails byways.

Education FRONTLeader

The Community College System is the Best Place to Educate/Train Your Workers. Not much to argue here.

Virginia Western Community College and **New River Community College** began as alternatives to college and now serve as entryway programs like the highly sought engineering degree at Virginia Tech. The community colleges have developed a sensitive ear for the needs of the business community at every level and have developed programs—both general and specific—to serve those needs. It's not just an alternative any more; it's a necessity.

North Cross School is our FRONTLeader for Educating Your Children (high school or college). Just look at what the graduates are doing, how many finish college (all of them at least attend) and their contributions to business and their greater communities.

Also in the FRONT

Roanoke Higher Education Center (RHEC) was cited frequently (housing 15 or so college programs); along with **Salem High School**, **Blacksburg High**, and... **Virginia Tech**, no doubt.

Culture FRONTLeader

The **Arts Council of the Blue Ridge** gets our Best Cultural Organization award. If there was any doubt, "40 Days and 40 Nights" erased it. New Director **Laura Rawlings** has done the impossible, made us forget—or at least not cry about losing—Susan Jennings.

Also in the FRONT

Center in the Square ranks very, very high with all its different offerings—placing history, science, theatre, and arts all in one convenient location. Home to seven non-profits and "five levels of cultural inspiration" as they aptly put it.

And One More "Totally Random" FRONTLeader...

Blue Ridge Country gets our vote for Best Publication. In a region where you can count the good ones on one hand, Editor **Cara Modisett's** imprint stands out. Knows what it is, does what it does best.

Also in the FRONT

Some other notables are **The Roanoker**, **New River Valley Magazine** (edited by **Joanne Anderson**, a real pro) and, when it has its hands on a story that needs a professional, accomplished reporter, **The Roanoke Times**.

Definitely NOT in the front

The **Roanoke Star-Sentinel**. The responses were nearly unanimous and generally for the same reason. The **Star Sentinel** is seen as an unprofessional little paper obsessed with "that other newspaper." It had a good premise: a conservative voice in a sea of moderate and liberal media outlets. It just won't grow up to be real. (The vote was taken, by the way, before veteran **Gene Marrano** was hired as editor. Let's hope he makes a difference.) 



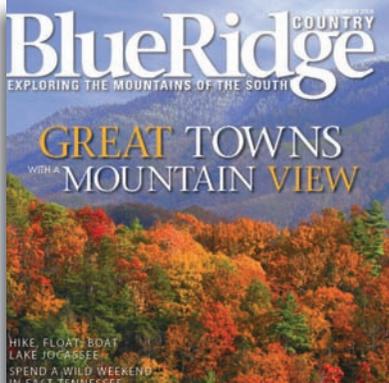
bicycle



Virginia Western Community College



North Cross School



Blue Ridge Country Magazine



all photos: Don Simmons, Dan Smith; all art: Tom Field

In a

A tale of two economies >

By Don Simmons Jr.

Executive Summary:
Floyd County increasingly balances tourism with agriculture as it moves into the 21st Century.

John Blackwell doesn't worry himself with efforts to revitalize downtown Floyd. He cares more about the price of milk. Wholesale, that is. The 62-year-old still operates the family dairy farm—on which he was born.

Jack Wall's first contact with Floyd County was working on a farm—an early 1970s commune, really. He and others raised their own food and livestock and worked odd jobs to pay the utility bills.

While Blackwell "scrapes by" on the family farm, Wall operates a \$20 million a year company and recently invested \$2.5 million in the Floyd Hotel. It's a downtown jewel with 14 rooms that features floors, furniture and art all made and purchased in Floyd County. It has also become something of a must-see for anybody interested in ecology-friendly construction.

Is there some friction between the two camps? A little, maybe. But in reality both are too busy with their own operations. What Blackwell preserves is part of what inspired Wall and others to invest heavily in downtown Floyd in the past few years.



TELEPHONE



TELEVISION



INTERNET



CELLULAR

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 **Citizens**

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www.citizens.coop

place called Floyd

Floyd's unique time capsule is a function of its isolation. Though it's situated between Roanoke and Blacksburg, the county is only approachable from tiny highways U.S. 8 and U.S. 221. They're both too small to support any big industries and the idea of opening them up for through traffic is something neither Wall nor Blackwell support.

Floyd County, it seems, is destined to remain a beautiful farm dotted collection of rolling hills and mountain views with a downtown and cultural history that continue to draw more and more travelers to visit—and leave—the area.

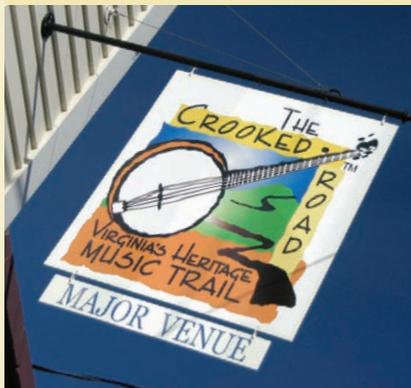
The outer edges have seen increasing residential development, 2,030 homes or trailers in the past 10 years. But most are staying clustered toward Montgomery County. And many of those folks are typically ones who enjoy visiting and spending in the town's many antique and artisan shops.

The county's 829 farms in 2002 produced more than \$32 million in livestock and crops.

Floyd county's farms have followed the pattern of many agricultural areas. Because they are so labor intensive, large dairy operations are giving way to beef cattle or tree farms or more creative explorations like free-range chicken ranches combined with their own egg and bakery shops.

Today there are about 1,000 milk cows, versus 11,500 beef cattle. Either way the county remains a wonderful break of serenity—an escape from the frantic traffic of Roanoke and Christiansburg.

"Floyd is blessed with people who love the county," says Wall. "Of course there are different political persuasions, but those of us investing in downtown are betting on the area's beauty and the creativity of its people."



Above: Signs adorning Floyd County reflect economic diversity.

Below: The Black Twig Pickers rouse up the dancers at a Friday Night Jamboree at the Floyd Country Store, which draws close to 20,000 visitors a year to downtown.





Above: Microphones await the next Jamboree. **Top Center:** Perhaps the most opened and closed door in the town of Floyd. **Top Right:** All kinds of chairs—for all kinds of people—to be entertained at Floyd Country Store. **Far Right Middle:** The Floyd Barber Shop sign reflecting downtown buildings. **Bottom Center:** Homespun, yet creative operations are springing up all over the country, like this farm-goods shop on US 221, featuring eggs from free range chickens that roost across the road.

Floyd's \$1 million downtown revitalization project, in which individual business owners invested their money to help land a Community Development Block Grant, got rolling quickly with about 90 percent participation. It also includes a \$300,000 revolving loan fund, encouraging more employment and housing for low-to-moderate income residents.

The whole thing got started about five years ago. The town and county had been hit hard and had languished after clothing manufacturers Donkenny and Crosscreek closed their plants, leaving several hundred folks out of work. But a new crop of people with money and a love for the town's quiet, down-home feel began moving their businesses here.

Several also bought downtown buildings that were falling into disrepair and began making renovations. About five years ago they formed a partnership, began working on a revitalization plan and now they've seen it through, though several new projects have just begun.

The result is a town with several eateries and music venues, art and antique shops, a computer shop, a farmer supply store, a drug store, a Food Lion and a Hardee's.

Below: John Blackwell still operates the family farm on which he was born.

The Floyd Country Store alone, famous for its Friday Night Jamboree which has been featured in the Washington Post





and New York Times, now draws close to 20,000 visitors a year. Owner Woody Crenshaw, who purchased the already well-known old-time dance spot in 2005, recently completed a renovation and expansion that maintains the spirit of the old store while expanding products and hours.

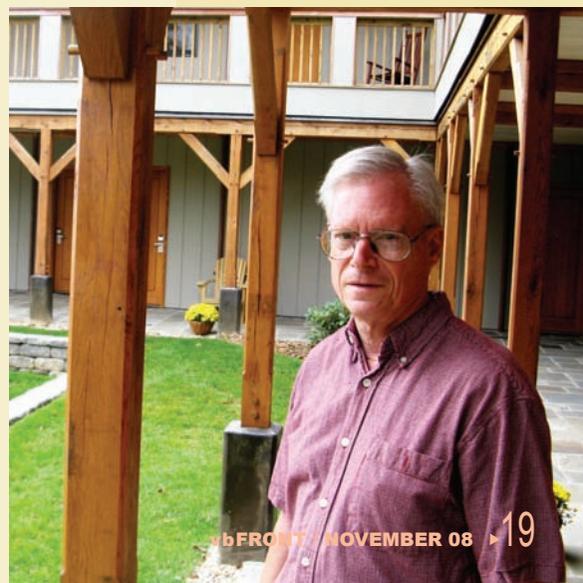
Crenshaw has invested well more than \$1 million in downtown Floyd since he moved his lighting business there in 1989. He has invested around half a million in construction work this year alone.

"Floyd has become a model for small town economic development," says Crenshaw, who regularly travels to other localities to help other communities shape similar projects. "Any vibrant county needs a strong town center. I think what we're trying to do is bring the town back to what it was in the early 1960s, a place with repair shops, places to chat, eat and shop—a place we can all be proud of. It wasn't that long ago you couldn't even buy a pair of socks downtown."

Back on the farm, John Blackwell and his farm hands take a break after the morning milking. "My newest tractor, I bought in the early 1970s," he says. "My truck is a '79. The money just ain't there. You scrape by but as for making a good living, like the folks moving in, no way."



Below: Jack Wall has spent more than \$2.5 million buying and renovating the Floyd Hotel. The hotel has 14 rooms that feature local themes and have been furnished and decorated by local shops and artists.





Above: Plenty to choose from in Floyd Country Store.
 Below: A barber not named Floyd clips a regular customer.
 Below Right: Floyd streetscape.

With the price of fertilizer for hay and corn expected to go from \$900 a ton to \$1,600 a ton next year, it's hard to keep up when you get about \$1.50 a gallon for milk that costs \$4 a gallon in the store.

"I figure we'll eventually sell out. Land's around \$10,000 an acre now. Twenty years ago it was \$2,000," says Blackwell. "It's a way of life. It's a home. But I can't today tell my grandkids they ought to get into agriculture." 



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Cutting the rug >

He ain't Floyd the Barber, but he is Floyd's barber.

On a crisp November Friday evening, Gerald Dollarhite kicks back in his solitary barber's chair waiting on customers while a few old-timers pick bluegrass tunes in the back of the shop.



I love Floyd.
There's plenty of
good people and
good music.

—Gerald Dollarhite

Locals nod and say howdy. Timid tourists look through the large plate glass window, smiling and pointing, perhaps thinking they're seeing a modern-day Floyd the Barber of "Andy Griffith" fame. The brave ones venture inside.

"I get all kinds of folks asking if this is the original," laughs Floyd ... uh ... Dollarhite. "Of course that's down in North Carolina, but it's still fun."

In the two years since he took over Floyd's only "barber" shop, Dollarhite has cut many a stranger's head of hair. But most of his customers are local.

"Business has increased 50 percent since last year," he says from his front-row view of the many ongoing renovations in downtown. "Some of the old-timers like the changes, some don't. But customers or not, it's fun being in downtown Floyd on a Friday night."

The barber shop itself is 63 years old and has had only two barbers: Alton Weddle and Ralph Hayden. The shower stall from yesteryear was removed during renovations last year. An old sign for Wildroot cream oil hair tonic still hangs on the wall.

"Yeah, in those days you could get a shower, shave and a cut and be ready for Friday night, all right," says Dollarhite, a native. "I love Floyd. There's plenty of good people and good music."

—Don Simmons Jr.



The office party: Just enjoy it >

Holidays are here and so are office parties. Done properly, office parties can be a force for good will between management and employees. Office parties are particularly important in companies that have just downsized. Some rules for management to have a successful event are listed below:

- The party should be held in a comfortable location with good food and drink.
- Each member of the management team should be present.
- Management should circulate vigorously and attempt to speak with the guests.
- The CEO should give a short speech (5 to 10 minutes maximum) thanking the employees for their hard work and dedication in the past year.
- Senior managers should not lose sight of their responsibilities as hosts. Some companies insist on every car having a designated driver chosen beforehand if alcohol is being served. Be prepared to have taxis ready to take anyone home who should not be driving and who has no other way home.

The employee should follow the guidelines listed below in order to be well-behaved:

- RSVP to the event coordinator by the date requested.
- Dress your best for an evening party. The company party is not an occasion for a woman to wear something 'risque'. If the party is during the day, wear something nicer than usual on party day.
- Leave behind work related discussions.
- Circulate and meet one another's spouses and families.
- The perfect guest remembers to thank the hosts for the event.

The holiday office party is not the time to press your supervisor for a raise, to lodge a grievance, complain about the food, or have more than one or two drinks. The party is the time to help everyone else have a good time and to be of good cheer.

Happy Holidays! 

Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

Executive Summary:

Attendees and hosts can follow some basic guidelines to ensure the best party over this holiday season.

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Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:
Our newest advice column. Got a personal problem at work? Get to "The Heart of It" by e-mailing your question to: theheartofit@handshake.com

Address conflict as an equal >

Dear Anne: I've been afraid of snakes since I was kid. I mentioned this to a co-worker and I've found a fake snake in my desk drawer every few weeks. The co-worker thinks it's funny when I jump in my chair, barely suppressing a scream. I'm beginning to resent the co-worker and dread going to work.

Dear Jump: Using your fear of snakes against you very likely gives your co-worker a sense of power over you. In both personal and professional relationships, answers to these questions apply: "Do you want to be right or do you want to be close?" and "How willing are you to work with this person to resolve a conflict—and vice versa?" A co-worker seeking the upper-hand is likely to prefer a one-up position and to thwart attempts to address conflicts as equals. One way to test the waters is to ask the co-worker privately and directly, "What is the reason you're doing this?" To the co-worker's response, a reply of "I want it stopped," may suffice.

The Heart of It: Most work conflicts involve three steps:

- 1) addressing the conflict with the co-worker,
- 2) mediating the conflict through a supervisor, and
- 3) deciding whether or not the lack of change, or the type or amount of change, merits you staying in the position or leaving it. 



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The art of the fashion buy >

When Rusty Lester goes on a buying trip for Frances Kahn, he takes the road less traveled by other boutique owners in the region. Frances Kahn is an upscale women's boutique that sells designer fashions in the Roanoke, Richmond, and Virginia Beach markets.

Although many boutique buyers go to apparel markets in Atlanta or Dallas, buying for a store that carries haute couture designer labels involves several trips to New York City yearly to visit designer showrooms and view their latest collections.

Lester began his career as a buyer in 1971 when he joined Rich's Department store in Atlanta. His education in buying included a 16-week executive training program, after which he learned the ropes by trial and error. He must have learned well since, after a stint in his family's business in Danville, he opened his first Frances Kahn store in Lynchburg in 1977. This year he celebrates 25 years of business at the store here in Roanoke, which he opened in 1983.

Rusty sees little difference between the styles he shows in his Roanoke store and those he carries in Richmond and Virginia Beach. "Our customer wants to be current," he says. "At Frances Kahn we have everything they have in New York, but we have it all in one place. We help our customers understand the new fashion trends and what will work for them."

Lester's customers range in age from 30 to 75. He listens carefully to what they request in clothing. However, he says, "Fashion, like art and architecture, has to change. Our customers count on us to move forward and give them a futuristic view of fashion." The Frances Kahn philosophy is that it does not so much buy what customer say they want, but rather what they think customers will like and what they need to be current. The shop carries several well-known lines but shows a lot of Giorgio Armani and Lafayette 148. Lafayette 148 is half the price of Armani, yet still of excellent quality and design.

The fabrics used in the clothing at Frances Kahn are primarily from Italy, with construction taking place in Italy or China. From the point of ordering a line of clothing to delivery of the garments takes four to six months.

Frances Kahn uses trunk shows, wherein a sales rep shows a designer's complete collection for the season before the collection is available to the public. Those attending can purchase or order items during the event. This gives customers the ability to choose clothes in the colors and fabrics they prefers. Trunk shows are open to the public and usually advertised.

Rusty Lester believes that buying fashions is an art form: "You can acquire it and hone it, and your natural talents can be enhanced, but it helps to be born with taste and style." 



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
At Frances Kahn, buying just the right blend of fashions gives a global feel to a local shop.



You can acquire it and hone it, and your natural talents can be enhanced, but it helps to be born with taste and style.

—Rusty Lester

Advance Auto Parts >

Fiscal years to end-December
2007 2006 2005

Compiled by Paulette Jayabalan

Overview:

Advance Auto Parts (NYSE: AAP; www.advanceautoparts.com) is the second-largest automotive aftermarket retailer in the United States, based on sales and store count. The Roanoke-based company is a member of the Fortune 500, and it has been named by Forbes Magazine as the best-managed company in the retail sector in 2005.

Advance Auto operates more than 3,000 stores in 40 continental states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and employs more than 43,000 people. It sells automotive parts, accessories, batteries, and maintenance items, and gives customers access to thousands of parts that are available on a same-day or overnight basis.

It operates in two reportable segments: Advance Auto Parts (AAP) and Autopart International (AI).

Value

(Data as of 11/21/08; Source: www.businessweek.com)

Exchange:	NYSE
Price per share of common stock:	\$26.57
Change	up \$0.79 (+3.06%)
Volume	1.6 million shares
52 Week High	\$45.52 (09/02/08)
52 Week Low	\$24.03 (11/21/08)
Market Capitalization	\$2.5 billion
EPS (diluted)	\$2.58
PE Ratio	10.3
Shares of common stock outstanding:	94.7 million
Dividend	\$0.24

Performance Record

(Dollars in thousands except for per share data)

	2007	2006
Operating Income	63,547	64,085
Net Income	238.3	231.3
Basic earnings per share	0.35	0.34
Diluted earnings per share	0.35	0.33
Total Revenue	4,844.4	4,616.5
Total Assets	2,682.7	2,805.6
Long Term Debt		
Obligation	1,781.8	1,651.8

Book Value per share (mrq) 1.17
Price / Book (mrq) 2.31
Most recent quarter: 10/04/08; Source: Yahoo Finance)

Weighted-average shares:

Basic	103,826	106,129	108,318
Diluted	104,654	107,124	109,987
Stockholder Equity	1,023,795	1,030,854	

Unaudited Third Quarter Performance

(Source: Advance Auto: in thousands except per share)

	October 2007	October 2008
Net Sales (millions)	1,187,952	1,158,043
Operating Income	95,897	100,379
Net Income	56,155	59,040
Diluted Earnings/Share	0.59	0.57
Total Revenue	1,198	1,168
Total Assets	3,008,259	2,805,566
Long-Term Debt Obligation	470,494	433,774

Directors (as of March 24, 2008)

Name	Age	Title
Darren R. Jackson	43	President, CEO, director
Kevin P. Freeland	50	Executive VP
Elwyn G. Murray III	41	Executive VP, Officer
Michael A. Norona	44	Executive VP, CFO, Sec
Jimmie L. Wade	53	Executive VP, Officer
Keith A. Oreson	51	Senior VP, HR

Executive Compensation

Name	Total Annual Compensation
Darren R. Jackson	---
John C. Brouillard	\$784,625
Michael O. Moore	\$391,763
Jimmie L. Wade	\$496,449
Elwyn G. Murray III	\$457,584
Paul W. Klasing	\$369,632
Michael N. Coppola	\$285,578
David B. Mueller	\$148,849

Price Range of Common Stock as reported by NYSE

	Fiscal Year end-December			
	2007		2006	
	High	Low	High	Low
First Quarter	40.80	34.90	45.50	38.35
Second Quarter	43.62	39.22	42.30	28.40
Third Quarter	40.15	29.51	35.31	27.65
Fourth Quarter	40.73	31.53	38.58	34.01

As of February 25, 2008, there were 406 holders of record of common stock. On October 29, 2008, the Company's Board of Directors declared a regular quarterly cash dividend of six cents per share to be paid on January 9, 2009 to stockholders of record as of December 26, 2008. The closing price of Advance Auto's common stock on November 21, 2008 was \$26.57, up \$0.79 on a volume of 1.6 million shares.



Bikers get a tax break >

Executive Summary:

Here's a break you can use to encourage your employees to be healthier and to contribute to the environment.

By Dave Henry

One of the lesser known parts of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 is legislation that gives businesses a small tax break for reimbursing bicycle commuters.

Effective Jan. 1, 2009, employers may offset the costs of bicycle purchase, improvement, repair, and storage at the rate of \$20 per

month if the employees use a bike to get to work. Based on how the employer chooses to offer the benefits, the employee may bring receipts to be reimbursed, may sign up for regular monthly payments, or devise some sort of voucher system with their employer.

This is a great tax credit for bicycle friendly communities. With all the bike trails in the New River and Roanoke Valleys, this is a great incentive to get people off the roads, and on to the trails.

In addition to the green aspect of the legislation, it could also help employers reduce health claims and improve productivity by having their employees get some great exercise. 

(Dave Henry is with Jackson Hewitt Tax Service in Christiansburg, jacksonhewitt1328@gmail.com)



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Liberty's faux Supreme Court

Lori White

The law school that couldn't... did >

Executive Summary:

At Jerry Falwell U. the law school is performing at levels only the chief of all of us could have predicted.

By Lori White

Psst ... have you heard? Since opening the doors of its law school in 2004, Liberty University's law program has swiftly climbed the ranks to become one of the top ranked programs in Virginia and among the top five percent programs nationwide?

Liberty stunned the legal world in 2007 with a bar passage rate of 89.1 percent and absolutely rocked it in 2008 with a rate of 94.4 percent, second only to the University of Virginia which holds a 96.8 percent pass rate for 2008.

Mat Staver, dean of Liberty's School of Law, says that this is "unheard of." According to Staver, most schools achieve a 40 percent pass rate when they are brand new, struggle for several years to achieve the 70 percent mark and rarely break 80 percent even when fully established.

The reaction to the success of Liberty's law program has been gratifying. No one can quite believe the evidence of their eyes, and yet it is there, indisputable. "Many predicted it would be a second rate school," Staver remembers, "but Dr. [Jerry] Falwell said if it was Christian it ought to be better." The late Jerry Falwell is the founder of Liberty and the law school.

"The program is unparalleled and has a bright future," says Staver. "It has caused a lot of law schools to look at us and what we're doing and actually somewhat pattern their own programs after ours." Another law school in Virginia recently transformed its third year program to be a model of Liberty's, says Staver.

What are they doing that is so amazing?

What is the secret of the Liberty Law program's success?



According to Staver, the first aspect of the law program's success is its distinctively Christian character. This quality can be seen predominantly in the Foundations of Law course that all students are required to take, and which ultimately reflects one of the fundamental constructs of the program.

Those constructs say that "law is an all-encompassing creation of God. It is something that we all interact with and are governed by every day of our lives, no matter the profession ... every law is either going to have a good or bad application depending on the foundation upon which it is based. We want to make sure that the foundation is consistent with history and transcendent principles ..."

The second aspect of the program's success is the "practical nuts and bolts of law" that the program strives to incorporate through its lawyering skills curriculum. It is more, Staver relates, than most law students ever receive in law school because it more than just theory. It is practical application along with the substance of law.

Throughout this curriculum, when students learn about wills, they actually write a will. When they learn about property law, they contract a sale. When they learn about civil procedure, they contract a complaint, and so forth. It is very similar to the training that doctors, counselors, and teachers go through prior to becoming certified for their positions.

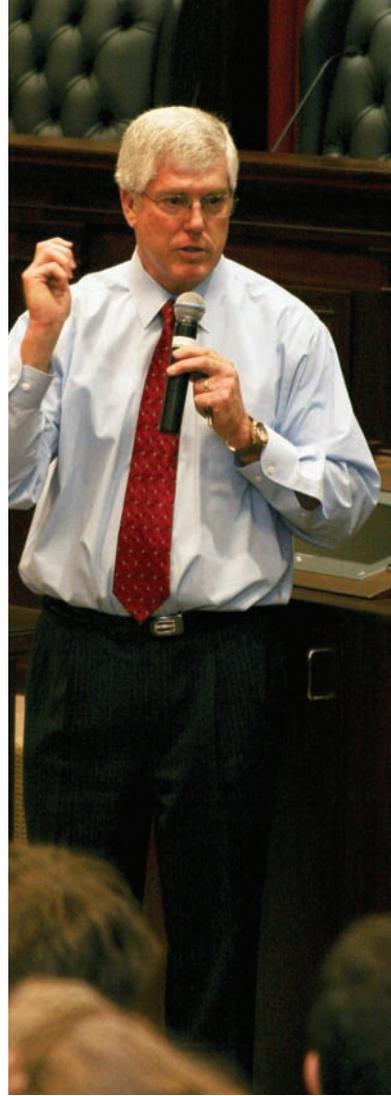
Another contributing factor to the success of the program is the facilities, among the best in the country, with Staver being given free rein for design. One of the highlights of the facilities is the Supreme Courtroom, an exact replica of our nation's Supreme Courtroom, down to the sizing of the bench and the seating accommodations for 330 and 70 additional media. Mock trials and similar proceedings are held in this room, giving students a feel for what it would be like in the real setting.

Students are selected for the program based on a combination of LSAT and GPA scores and a mission minded orientation. The kinds

We're interested in the person who has a calling and a passion to enter the field of law.

—Matt Staver

of students in the program have very interesting and diverse backgrounds. Some are straight from college, while others are mid-career shifts, like a former teacher, veterinarian, and soldier, Nancy Cave, graduating in 2009, is a West Point graduate who served in the Iraq war.



Matt Staver

Lori White

"We know that a person is more than an LSAT and a GPA," Staver says. "We're interested in the person who has a calling and a passion to enter the field of law, to use law as a fulcrum for good, to transform ethics in the corporate arena, transform education, transform the courts, and transform the legislators in the halls of Congress." 



David Beidler

Gene Marrano

Still, both parties need to know where they stand legally when there is a dispute over the physical condition of a rented house or apartment, the conduct of tenants, etc. Beidler is a registered lobbyist with the state and requests changes to the Virginia Residential Landlord-Tenant Act as he and other attorneys see the need.

Knowing landlord/tenant rights >

Executive Summary:

David Beidler of Legal Aid is in the business of defending tenants usually, but he offers up some advice for both sides here.

By Gene Marrano

Tenants, be sure to pay the rent to someone—even the courts—while you haggle with a landlord. Property owners, know your responsibilities and the limits of what you can or cannot do. It's not as easy as just turning off the electricity or dumping someone's belongings on the street.

That advice is from David D. Beidler, an attorney with the Roanoke Valley's Legal Aid Society for more than 20 years.

Beidler works out of an office on Campbell Avenue in Roanoke. At a seminar on landlord/tenants rights, staged by the Roanoke Regional Housing Network earlier this year, he said that some property owners "quite frankly are slum lords." Most landlords are not, however, said the Antioch University School of Law (D.C.) graduate, who typically represents tenants in cases that reach the court system.

Q: *What's the earliest a landlord can get rid of a tenant?*

A: It depends on what the problem is. If its for nonpayment of rent the earliest that the landlord can start some sort of proceedings before filing a court case is five days, after the non-payment of rent. (Beidler says landlords can send a five-day pay-or-quit notice at that point, stating that the rent is past due. It is still likely to take 30 days if the courts get involved, although landlord-tenant disputes are expedited within the legal system.)

Q: *Is it true that legally landlords cannot turn off utilities in most cases, trying to force a tenant out?*

A: That's correct [if used] as a means of retaliation. If electricity gets turned off because of non-payment that's a different issue, for which the landlord or tenant could be liable, depending on who is supposed to pay for it.

Q: *Do some landlords not know what they can do legally?*

A: Most seasoned landlords know what their responsibilities are today. There's enough public information now that landlords have had the opportunity to become aware. Given that, some landlords knowing the law, intentionally disobey the law. We see that, we know it and often the judges will recognize it. In the general population most landlords probably follow the law. (Beidler is typically dealing with tenant clients at the lower end of the

economic scale, in rented housing where there may be more problems.)

Q: *What's the 21/30 rule about and how is it used?*

A: When there's been a material breach of the lease or a violation of the Virginia Residential Landlord-Tenant Act, which is the primary body of landlord-tenant law in Virginia, either [party] can send a written notice to the other side stating what the breach or violation is, asking the other side to correct that ... within 21 days, or the lease will terminate in 30 days.

That's used if the side against whom the breach was made wants to terminate the lease as a last resort—after making a reasonable effort to get the problem remedied. (What may start as an informal request to a tenant to turn down the music at night, says Beidler, can escalate to something like a 21/30-day notice.)

Q: *Should tenants keep on paying the rent while embroiled in a dispute with their landlord?*

A: That is generally the case. However, if the tenant is facing a problem with the landlord like a material violation of the lease [that is] affecting health and safety, they do



If the landlord is in the business, the landlord should know his business...

—David Beidler

have one other option, a court process... commonly known among tenants as "rent escrow," a lawsuit against the landlord. When that happens the tenant can then start paying rent [to] the court within five days. It's a process the tenant can use as leverage against a recalcitrant landlord. Most landlords are in the business of making money. (Beidler says the money paid to the court could still go to the landlord if a judge finds in their favor.)

Q: *Is it fair to say that property owners who rent houses, duplexes or apartments to others need to know the full extent of the law?*

A: If a landlord is in the business, the landlord should know his business when talking about something as fundamental as housing, [especially] as tenuous as renting can be. It's just so essential. 

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Surviving the 'white-knuckle years' >

Executive Summary:

Mark Kennedy's dream of owning his own business—placing dental personnel—was finally a reality. Then 9/11 happened and things started to unravel.

By Alison Weaver

Mark Kennedy's path to becoming an award-winning entrepreneur was rocky to say the least.

The journey began on a red-eye flight back from the West Coast when he realized he was tired. Tired of the traveling, tired of missing out on his kids' lives. The New York native had come to the Roanoke Valley to work for Medeco as a marketing manager and the company was bought by the Swedish company ASSA ABLOY.

While attending a conference in Sweden, Kennedy says, "I looked around [at the higher ups] and everyone was Swedish. And I wasn't." Feeling his advancement opportunities were limited while his travel schedule was growing, he took a job in Charlotte as vice president of IT staffing.

Kennedy enjoyed the staffing part of the position but the job didn't work out. He returned to Roanoke, where his family's home had never sold. He decided the time was perfect to pursue his dream of being a business owner.

In January 2001, he launched a head-hunter service for primarily technology-based jobs. He set up shop on Hershberger Road beneath an Executive Talent Search sign. That was the first snag: "We'd have people walk in wanting to dance and sing for us," he says. "You'd think with 20 years of marketing, I would have picked a better name."



Mark Kennedy

Dan Smith

“ ”

We'd have people walk in wanting to dance and sing for us. You'd think with 20 years of marketing, I would have picked a better name.

—Mark Kennedy

He switched to using just the company's initials, ETS, and the business was soon booming. After nine months, he'd hired three employees and was way ahead of plan.

Then 9/11 happened.

Overnight, about \$250,000 in ETS business evaporated as the American economy reeled. The on-going slump forced him to begin letting people go.

"2002, '03, '04 were white-knuckle years," Kennedy says.

Collectors were calling, and he had to wrestle with making his home mortgage payment or meeting payroll. "I'm fortunate



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- *Sudden abnormal sweating*
- *Shortness of breath*
- *Dizziness*
- *Fainting*
- *Nausea*

For more information on the Chest Pain Center and the Heart Alert™ program, call 540-266-6000 or 800-422-8482.

www.carilionclinic.com



that my wife [Sharon] didn't strangle me over those first few years."

A neighboring business owner, dentist Greg Hughes, stopped by and asked if Kennedy could find a dentist to join his practice.



Gary Harris

Dan Smith

He found out which ones were happy in the big city now, but who might want to relocate to a smaller community to raise a family in three or four years. He carefully logged information about where they were from, where their spouses were from, knowing many people eventually return to their hometowns.

Kennedy and his steadily growing staff—now numbering 15—slowly built a formidable database of contacts. So formidable that ETS Dental has only one national competitor. "I'm absolutely blessed with some great people," he says of his employees. "They just get better and better."

Kennedy began researching and discovered that "there was no dominant force for recruiting dentists." He also found out, "It's a tough business to get into. I took me 1,350 calls to make a placement."

And the future of dental recruiting gets brighter and brighter. Of about 153,000 dentists in the country, one-third are older than 55. You do the math. 

All that work paid a small side dividend recently when ETS won the Business-To-Business Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year award. Kennedy began talking to dental students, to military dentists and to those who needed to begin thinking about selling their practices when they retired.

Below: ETS office; Carl Guthrie in foreground

Dan Smith





My goal was a replacement facility that was also an economic driver...

—James Tyler

Drawing of Carilion Giles Community Hospital

A hospital as economic development >

Executive Summary:

'It's an air freshener, it's a floor wax, it's a dessert topping ...' OK, 'Saturday Night Live' skits aside, Giles Community Hospital will be a lot of things to a lot of people.

By Becky Hepler

The new Carilion Giles Community Hospital that broke ground recently is the community development equivalent of the daily double. County Administrator Chris McKlarney paraphrased a popular ad, "Bringing a modern medical facility and more jobs to the county—you can't put a price on it!"

That was the intent of Hospital Administrator James Tyler: "The hospital had just celebrated its 59th birthday and while the building was in good repair, it just didn't have the infrastructure and updating everything was cost prohibitive. My goal was a replacement facility that was also an economic driver for the county."

The hospital will sit on 26 acres of a 130-acre tract that the Giles Industrial Authority owns and leases to the hospital. Plans are for a medical office building and Giles Dialysis Facility eventually.

"The remaining acreage is in a development plan that sees one to two medical office buildings, maybe a nursing or assisted living facility, an area of commercial development, plus single- and multi-family housing development," says Pearisburg Town Manager Ken Vittum.

The new hospital retains its Critical Access designation, conferred by Medicare on facilities in rural, underserved areas. It offers a significant advantage for reimbursement.

The building will increase in size from 65,000 square feet to 85,000 square feet, but the building will retain 25 beds, all in private rooms.

The increase in size will mean an increase in the kind and quality of services that the hospital offers. The intensive care area will increase from three to four beds, the emergency room from five to nine examining areas. Nuclear medicine will be added for the first time. The hospital hopes to add stereotactic breast biopsy, a much more accurate procedure for dealing with breast cancer.

Much of the other equipment will be upgraded, for example the CT scanner will be the 64-slice variety, rather than the current dual slice model. All the equipment will be digital. "It will be a state-of-the-art hospital," says Tyler.

The design was provided by Architectural Alternatives of Blacksburg. While the project is not seeking a LEED certification, Bob Rogers, head architect of the firm, says that many of the regular design practices are green enough to promote higher levels of sustainability and improved energy conservation.

Carilion has brought in the international construction firm Skanska, which has worked on several other Carilion projects, to be the main contractor for the two-year, \$50 million project, but Vittum says many of the subcontractors will be local people sharing in the project. 



Simon Kaczor and Shafagh Ganjikia with Gabriel and Isabel

Dan Smith

Pushing for a new neighborhood playground >

Executive Summary:

A Roanoke software company has a novel idea about how to get its social goals accomplished, bring in new business and solve your technical problems.

By Jill Elswick

Roanoke entrepreneurs Shafagh Ganjikia and Simon Kaczor run a business that helps build better software programs for companies and now they want companies to help them build a better playground for their two children, ages 5 and 3.

The couple owns custom software firm Prognosoft in Roanoke. They moved to Roanoke from Montreal in 1999 and live near Grandin Road, where playground options are scarce and inconvenient.

"Every time we want to take the kids to the playground, we have to walk all the way down to Virginia Heights School [at the intersection of Memorial Avenue and Grandin Road]," says Ganjikia.

Ganjikia and Kaczor would like the new playground to be built in a field near the intersection of Grandin Road and Avenel Ave. The playground would be for students of all ages, including those attending Patrick Henry High School and Raleigh Court Elementary School. Its open space could be used for marching band practice.

The new playground would cost about \$30,000 to build and would replace a smaller one at Raleigh Court Elementary.

"They have an itty-bitsy playground at the top of the hill," says Ganjikia. "There is no room to grow."

From now through January, Prognosoft is donating up to 200 hours of its time to solve the technology problems of local businesses. The problem could be anything, as long as it takes no more than 40 hours to solve. The firm expects companies to ask for help with Web sites, software applications, and server integrations. "Bring us your most challenging IT problem," reads the Prognosoft flyer for the effort.

"Let us surprise you," says Ganjikia.

If the companies are happy with the outcome, they'll be asked to donate to a fund for building the new playground. As a guideline for donations, Prognosoft will present an invoice showing the

amount it would have cost for the services.

The playground plans still have to meet approval from Curt Baker, deputy superintendent at Roanoke City Public Schools, but the leadership committee at Raleigh Court Elementary School has given a thumbs-up to the idea. Meanwhile, Ganjikia is trying to garner community support for the playground through a survey.

Ganjikia founded Prognosoft in 2002. The company has clients in the United States and Canada. The number of employees it has varies, depending on what contracts are active, but is generally fewer than nine.

Ganjikia's background is in physics and biomedical engineering, while Kaczor's is in engineering. Prognosoft specializes in probabilistic analysis, which uses mathematics to model uncertainty in real-world situations. Such analysis can help a business figure out what kind of profit it is likely to make in the next five years, for example.

"We want to start leveraging a more mathematical approach to software development," says Kaczor.



Prognosoft's Simon Kaczor and Shafagh Ganjikia

Jill Elswick

To that end, Prognosoft developers use functional programming languages such as Erlang to achieve more with less. The company also favors the relatively new application Ruby on Rails as a framework to build Web applications. "In days, you can build something that otherwise would take months in Java," says Kaczor.

Knowing how to save a client time and money by being a specialist is key to the success of any niche business, in Kaczor's view.

"Adam Smith, in *The Wealth of Nations*, basically said nations become more wealthy if you do what you specialize in," says Kaczor. "Don't do things you're bad at. Don't do things you're average at. Do things you're best at and offer that to others." 

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The money's a mouse-click away >

Executive Summary:

Blacksburg's Click and Pledge has the goal of making that money available to your company, non-profit, candidate as quickly and as easily as possible.

By Rod Belcher

It's an election year and that means many voted with their checkbooks, making donations to the political campaign of their choice.

As the presidential campaign has shown us, there is a huge demand on-line for campaign supporters to be able to make quick and easy contributions.

The future of fund-raising is in having a vital on-line presence and a way to change that mouse click into money.

In the era when everything from a movie to a Thanksgiving turkey can be purchased online, there was a need for a way for organizations to reach out across the Internet and make donating as easy as ordering a pizza.

Click and Pledge of Blacksburg has pioneered a software system to give organizations the ability to raise money online and has experienced unprecedented growth and success by sticking to the analog business model of listening to customers and giving them what they want.

"The idea is defined by the people using it," says Click and Pledge President/CEO Kami Razvan. "You truly don't design in the dark. You design what the customer needs."

The growth of Click and Pledge is a perfect example of the 46-year old Razvan's philosophy. The idea for an on-line



Click and Pledge President/CEO Kami Razvan with

fundraising program came about in 2002, when Razvan produced the original Click and Pledge system for The United Way of Montgomery, Radford and Floyd.

Originally designed as a fundraising tool for non-profits, Razvan soon found other types of organizations had needs for gathering on-line donations, too. So he went back to the drawing board and developed a series of new turnkey tools for the system, giving agencies added freedom to pick and choose what they needed.

For example, organizations that provided premiums, like public radio stations, could have the ability to let donors choose their premium as they contribute. The system also evolved to work for political campaigns, which required meticulous record-keeping and tracking of all donations as well as superior security.

The clients asked, the company listened. "The only way to truly grow a software company is by responding to the customer's needs," Razvan says. "We don't have a huge



marketing director Jim Barney

Dan Smith



You truly don't design in the dark. You design what the customer needs.

—Kami Razvan

to more than 7000 customers in 45 countries and expanding business internationally into London and Canada. The company has gone from responsibility for \$100,000 in contributions its first year, to millions of dollars annually, six years latter, Razvan says.

advertising budget; our number one source of advertising is word of mouth."

And the buzz has been good, says Marketing Director Jim Barney. This philosophy of delivery of "Software as a service" has led to Click and Pledge

This year, Razvan rolled out the third iteration of his company's software, called Trio. The system continues to evolve and change with the demands of Click and Pledge's growing community of clients, looking to give them the options, to solve the problems they might not even have thought of yet. 



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Joe Miller

Dan Smith

The greening of Joe Miller >

By Dan Smith

The green bug didn't so much bite or sting Joe Miller as it gnawed on him a little at a time until he woke up one morning and found himself full into the concept of environmental sensitivity. And it didn't just happen yesterday. Twenty years ago, he was talking publicly about clustering homes, reusing materials, building smaller houses.

He doesn't have to talk so much or so loud in 2008 as he talked in 1998. He's being asked by his customers these days what can be done to make these expensive new homes of theirs fit into a delicate world. He's looking for ways to move families into 1,200 or 2,400 square feet—comfortably—rather than 6,000 to 8,000 square feet.

"Before LEED and EarthCraft [which are green building certifications] we were building houses that collected rainwater, used sustainable products, employed spray insulation, a lot of stuff we do now to certify. There's been a change in our way of thinking," he says.

These days, he's taking building waste—and there is a great deal of it with the rehab jobs—and recycling as much of it as possible. Wood goes to Roanoke's trash depot where it is turned into mulch; drywall is ground up and reused; metal is purchased by the Roanoke Recycling Center (some of it at

Name: Joe Miller
Age: 51
Company: E.J. Miller Construction
Position: Owner
Location: Roanoke
Member: U.S. Green Building Council
How He Got Here: Joe's grandpa, E.N. Miller, founded a small home building business in 1949, turning it over to his son, E.J. Miller (Joe's dad), in 1965. Joe worked for the company since he was 15, got his civil engineering degree from Virginia Tech, and then asked his dad to wait a bit on his retirement announcement in 1987, so he could get an MBA from William & Mary. Joe took over and had been running the company since.

Family: Met his wife, Betty (Boo), while in graduate school. She runs the office. They have daughters 20, 17 and 11. Joe also has three sisters. "My dog is male," he grins.

premium prices). "More than 50 percent of the waste is recyclable," he says. Some of the metal is so desirable that thieves are stealing it and selling it.

All this has come later than Joe would have predicted. "There's no reason we can't or shouldn't" be environmentally sensitive, he says. "Most of the work's not any more expensive. As an industry, we can do things better than we do. There's a certain level that ought to be standard and there's a level above that, of course."

Joe says that 20 years ago, he regularly had breakfast with a Salem developer (whom he did not name) who "challenged me to build smaller houses. He talked about compact houses that were affordable and worked for families. I'm seeing more and more of that. Some of these [large] houses are insane."

He builds them, though, because "we deliver the product that people demand. When people change those demands, we do that." And the time's coming. He sees it clearly. 

Work Spaces

Bright, modern law firm (now) >

Executive Summary:

This long-time downtown Roanoke law firm found an irresistible space in a rehabbed former department store and furniture sales store. It's working nicely.



By Jill Elswick

Downtown Roanoke has always been the setting for the offices of law firm Glenn, Feldmann, Darby & Goodlatte, the firm launching in the historic State and City building more than 50 years ago. It later moved to the Shenandoah Building on First Street, then to First Campbell Square, where

"This location gave us a unique opportunity," says attorney David Tenzer. "We had been looking to make a move, and were committed to downtown."

Tenzer says the firm's first-floor location shows a "physical connection" to downtown. The firm, he says, did not want to be at the top of a high-rise building but rather to be part of the "energy" of downtown.



the Miller & Rhoads department store used to be. All those buildings are within a rock's throw of each other.

In August, GFD&G moved to the newly-renovated and high profile Hancock Building on Campbell Avenue with its art deco façade.

"For so long, business activity was centered in and along City Market," says Tenzer. "Look what's happening as downtown expands. Downtown is moving out and Campbell Avenue is a big part of that."

Dan Smith



all photos: Dan Smith; art: Tom Field

Interior designer Cameron Harris helped Glenn, Feldmann, Darby & Goodlatte pull in elements of art deco design into its workspace. The reception area, for example, blends metal and wood in its counters and light fixtures. Its color scheme incorporates browns and tans from the building façade. Colorful abstract art by local artists adorns the walls.

connections and CAT5e wiring. A centralized file area in the middle of the firm aggregates files so that "anyone can get to any file in the most efficient and convenient way," says Tenzer. Copiers, scanners, and shredders are also located in that area.

Natural light flows into the law firm through windows on the perimeter offices. Cut-through "holes" let light shine into the interior of the firm.

"We wanted light to come into all parts of the firm, and these great windows give us a chance to do that," says attorney Maryellen Goodlatte. "Lawyers are along the edge and staff are in the middle. We cut through holes to let light shine in. It brightens the interior of the space."

"Even the library has light coming into it," Goodlatte continues. "It's much more collaborative, much more collegial. No longer the big massive room with volumes gathering dust."

The new workspace was designed to be inviting. High, drywall ceilings help the space feel free and open. A large



The firm's interior contains both traditional and modern elements.

"We've always used the highest level of technology," says Tenzer. Each seated place at the firm's new conference table contains a flip-up panel empowered with data

lunchroom has many workers eating lunch at the firm rather than having to go out.

"When people are here, they're happy," says Tenzer. "When they're happier, they tend to be more productive. They tend to stay a little longer." 

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*Jeannie Brown, HR Manager
 Freight Car America*

SITUATION: Freight Car America needed to hire a large number of welders to meet a need for increased rail car production.

SOLUTION: Virginia Western, along with Freight Car America, custom designed a 2-week welding course to train individuals in basic GMAW welding skills, safety and math. Partnering with the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) to fund the program and Goodwill Industries of the Valleys to help locate participants, within 3 weeks of the program's conception, students were in the lab learning to weld. Two weeks later, students were prepared and began their new careers in welding.



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Tommy Hendrix

Dan Smith

Managing property gains complexity >

Executive Summary:

The old boys have traded in their pickup trucks and tool sets for negotiating savvy, computer skills and a deep knowledge of how things work in real estate.

By Gene Marrano

Hall Associates in Roanoke offers a wide range of service that include real estate sales, accounting services and office leasing, but one of the more challenging facets of its business is commercial property management.

Hall manages 9.8 million square feet of property, mostly in this half of Virginia, including the new Virginia Tech Foundation building in Blacksburg, downtown Roanoke's Center in the Square and the Pheasant Ridge retirement center in South Roanoke.

Hall handles building security remotely, watching properties in Blacksburg from the home office in Roanoke, for example.

"Everything's computerized and clearly more complicated," says Vice President of Operations Roger Elkin. "The old days where the building guy pulled up in a pickup truck with some tools in the back are gone."

There are fires to put out every day, says Elkin; for example, the car that hit a rental property recently in Salem. "When you have that many square feet, something's going to go wrong. Every day there are property management calls that are somewhat crisis-oriented," says Elkin.

These buildings are major investments for their clients, so Hall employees work closely with owners on a wide variety of issues, even specifying ways to conserve energy.

The director of facility management for Hall is Tommy Hendrix, who handles a variety of tasks like discussions and negotiations with property owners, making sure bills get paid, getting contractors on site as needed and day to day maintenance supervision. There are fires to put out for sure, but he aims to be as proactive as possible, creating maintenance programs that will keep those crises to a minimum.

It revolves to an extent, though, around how much money he can get people to spend: "You have owners with different investment goals," says Hendrix. "You have to make sure these maintenance plans match their objectives. If the owner doesn't want to spend [large] amounts of money for whatever reason it does no good to create the program."

Hendrix oversees management on many older projects; for new buildings Hall has contracted to manage, he prefers to be in on the ground floor, making suggestions even as the plans are being drawn up. It makes life easier down the road.

"I firmly believe that if most architects had to maintain the buildings they design [it] would change the way they design them."

Hendrix has been spending plenty of time at Center in the Square lately, as that arts icon in downtown Roanoke gets ready to split up the old art museum space among several tenants.

A mechanical engineer by trade, Hendrix has been in the property management business for about eight years. He oversees 25 properties on a regular basis.

His biggest challenge? "Trying to keep everything in focus. Each owner is a little bit different. Because of that each property is run a little bit differently." 



Joe's Trees rests in Simmonsville, 20 miles from New Castle [www.joestrees.com]

Virginia's Christmas tree champion >

Executive Summary:

Sue Bostic inherited more than a Christmas tree farm from her late father. She also got a good dose of his passion for the perfect tree.

By Anita Firebaugh

It's those championship trophies that motivate Sue Bostic. Must be... because the money's not so great.

For the third time in eight years, a champion Fraser fir from her Joe's Trees, hidden in the far reaches Craig County, will grace

the Virginia governor's mansion in Richmond over the holidays.

Sue owns the company her father—Joe Sublett—started as a 4H project in the 1960s. He died 20 years later and she eventually took over from her mother. She's

now a veteran of the business, a past president of the Virginia Christmas Tree Growers Association and the Virginia Grand Champion award winner for 2008. Her Fraser fir submission earned second place in the 2008 National Christmas Tree contest.

Bostic, who's 40 but looks like a high school basketball player, raises 150,000 trees on 170 acres and operates a cut your own retail operation and a wholesale business. She works the tree farm with the help of one full-time employee and seasonal workers.

Bostic's specialty is the exotic Concolor fir, which smells like a tangerine when the needles are crushed. She was the first in Virginia to raise the tree commercially and remains one of the few growers in the state.

She hired Sue Huffman to make wreaths first thing when she took over in 1993. Huffman, a certified florist, has won the National Wreath Grand Championships four times since 2000. She swept the awards this year, winning first place in both decorated and undecorated wreaths.

A Christmas tree can take 10 years to reach harvest height, so Bostic invests in her future every spring. In 2007, drought killed 95 percent of her seedlings; this year she had to double plant to make up for the loss.

Summer means tree trimming (oh, you thought that cone shape was natural?) and Bostic brings in a crew of shearers to give her Christmas trees that special touch.



Sue Bostic



Dan Smith

A crew of 15 harvesters arrives in early November. It takes a month to cut and bale trees for wholesale orders.

Joe's Trees annually sells about 6,000 trees wholesale. Bostic advertises her retail business in newspaper tree listings but otherwise relies on referrals.

Joe Sublett annually sold about 250 retail trees. Now Sue sells about 1,500 through the choose-and-cut operation.

She works the farm full time but she calls Christmas tree farming a break-even business. Labor, fertilizer, equipment such as a tree shaker and a tree baler, buildings, taxes and other farm expenses take a bite out of profits.

Her farm is isolated, so her employees, who are not local, travel some distance. This summer the farm used 100 gallons of gas a week, a fact that Sue is considering.

Artificial trees are the business' main competition. Lately she has noticed a societal change that has younger adults purchasing no tree at all, she says a little wistfully. For now, though, she travels her acreage in that big truck,

surveying her paradise and stopping every once in a while to enjoy the trophies. 





Raz Rags owners Zella McPherson and Regina Quesenberry

Chuck Herron

Consignment, conschmeiment! >

Executive Summary:

OK, so the very word 'consignment' carries baggage. In this case, a bit of experience and market savvy make the baggage Gucci.

By Rachael Garrity

Holiday shopping—be it for gifts or glitz—is going to be a challenge for some of us this year, but New River Valley residents have a leg up. Nestled in the corner of the Fairlawn shopping center on Lee Highway just outside Radford is Raz Rags.

Yes, technically speaking it is a consignment store, but veteran retail gurus Zella McPherson and Regina Quesenberry have added the kind of zing that makes a shopper forget that it's not possible to say, "This is a great suede coat. Do you have it in a smaller size?"

"Frankly, it was a combination of experience in this market and awareness of the economic clouds on the horizon that put us here," Zella explains. Having owned three boutiques in the past, one in Tulsa, and two in Christiansburg (All That Glitters and Zella's), Zella already has a loyal clientele.

"That's another way this store is different," she adds. "My customers still look to me for wardrobe consultation, not a standard part of consignment shopping. And, candidly, it's fun to have the extra challenge of finding it within what we have, rather than knowing I can order things in their special size or color."

It was while Regina was working in Zella's in Christiansburg, which included a consignment section, that the two women began to see that upscale clothing had a definite appeal for New River customers. At the same time—and even before the dramatic events of this fall—many were price-conscious, so much so that the consignment section began to flourish.

When the duo—friends for 15 years—started to consider the idea of a shop that was principally consignment, they knew they needed to create a unique edge that would appeal to those same customers. Why stick with only clothing, they wondered. Buyers who like stylish clothes, most often also appreciate fine linens and decorative items. Even some new things (right now, it's jewelry) could add appeal.

The result is a shopping experience that has every appearance of a retail boutique, with



the welcome element of affordable prices. Regina, who once staffed the pro shop at Draper Valley Golf Club, where she is part owner, enlisted her daughter to help with some of the store décor. The two owners together craft the flower arrangements.

There is a year-round Christmas corner. The window displays change regularly and

call to mind a shop in the Kensington section of London. The merchandise has been carefully chosen to reflect not just one kind of taste—tweed and bling live side-by-side—but good quality, up-to-date style with no signs of wear. Ultimately, what you get is something unique that is valuable because of what it looks like, not what it costs. 

One out, one in on City Market >

Executive Summary:

Rita Bruffey will finally be able to chase her dream when Good Things on the Market closes at the end of the year.

By Dan Smith

When Rita Bruffey closes Good Things on the Market at the end of December a long-time goal will have been accomplished.

Even though Rita has loved being the smiling candy saleswoman of Roanoke City Market for 23 years, she has always been a reluctant business owner, responding more to her late husband, Tommy's, goals than to her goals for herself. Now, she says, "I'm tired. I want new adventures. I want to reinvent myself."

Rita Bruffey moved to Roanoke 23 years ago from Grundy when her husband at the time determined that the mining industry was no longer a profitable place to be. He set Rita up in the candy shop, something she wasn't sure she wanted to do.

She says it took "six or seven years" to learn the business, mostly because of that reluctance. But she always "loved the customers" and so she hung on. When



Good Things on the Market's Rita Bruffey

Dan Smith

Tommy died, she determined that she would leave at end of the current lease and that works out to December of this year.

Candy's been a good run for her, she insists. She talks about the regular customers who are her friends, visits from celebrities like Henry Winkler, Sally Struthers, Richard Simmons and Barbara Bush.

She talks fondly of being there with a chocolate treat for those having a bad day or for workers who want to take a block of fresh chocolate back to the office as a special treat for somebody.

Chocolate Paper recently moved in a few doors away, but Rita says its locating so near had absolutely nothing to do with the move. "I've been planning it for three years," she says, smiling. 

CONTRIBUTORS

Rod Belcher is a busy Roanoke-based freelance writer, whose work appears in state and regional publications. He is also a science fiction writer of some note. Web site: [www.rsbelcher.net]

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John Montgomery has lived in Roanoke for 40 years, and is the publisher of Play by Play, a local sports monthly. [jmonty@cox.net]

Don Simmons Jr. has been an award-winning journalist for 20 years. He is a Western Virginia native, but he and his wife lived in a Spanish neighborhood in New York City for five years. He is at ease jumping a subway turnstile as field dressing a deer. [don.c.simmons@hotmail.com]

Dan Smith is editor and co-owner of Valley Business FRONT. A native of Asheville, N.C., he has been a journalist for more than four decades. He spent 20 years as editor of the Blue Ridge Business Journal, and was Virginia's 2005 Small Business Journalist of the Year and has been nominated for the 2009 class of the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame. He has been nominated four times as the Roanoke Regional Chamber's Business Advocate of the Year (his wife, Christina, calls him the Advocate's Susan Lucci). He has won many journalism awards (writing, photography and design), several awards for Public Radio essays. He is married, has two grown children and a grandchild. [dsmith@vbFRONT.com]

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Lori Wray White is a freelance writer, photographer, and homebound instructor who revels in the freedom to do what she wants when she wants to do it. A former English teacher, she graduated with honors from Lynchburg College with a degree in English and a minor in writing. [hintonrae@msn.com]

NOTE: Look for this page of bios and contacts in each issue of the FRONT as Contributors change.



Alison Weaver

NOVEMBER 2008 > Contributor of the Month

Valley Business FRONT congratulates **Alison Weaver**, who receives the Publisher's Choice and Editor's Choice for our "Contributor of the Month" including a "One Who's in the FRONT" certificate and special gift.

Alison contributed several stories for the issue, including one on Legal Aid, and profile on Entre's Bart Wilner. But her report on Virginia Prosthetics ("The Ultimate Body Shop") was especially illustrative, and the catalyst for our award. If you missed it, you can read it online (November 08 issue) at vbFRONT.com

Valley Business FRONT currently manages a writing correspondent pool of approximately thirty freelance writers, columnists and feature contributors who are strongly connected to the regional coverage area. We are producing and co-sponsoring the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference on January 23-24 at Hollins University for writers at all levels who are interested in developing the craft. See Page 23 for information.

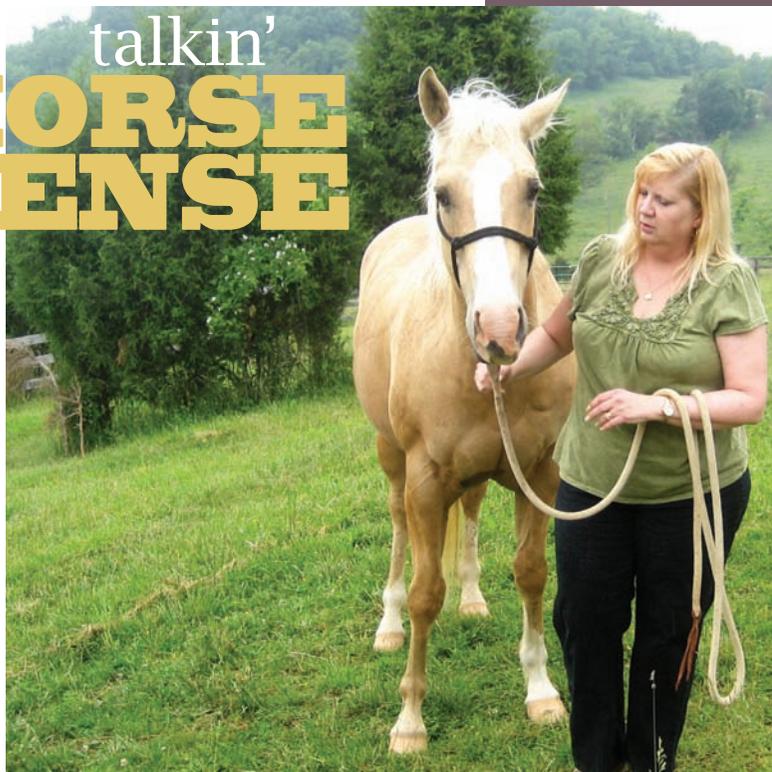
talkin'

HORSE
SENSE

“ ”

People are so capable of learning and if you break things down into baby steps so they can understand it, it's very doable.

—Sylvia Scott



Sylvia Scott with her office help

Becky Hepler

Here's natural horsemanship virtually >

Executive Summary:

If you're going to whisper to your horses as you train them, you can do it with e-mail.

By Becky Hepler

The Internet has changed the way many businesses operate, but who would have thought that you could train a horse virtually?

Sylvia Scott, one of the premier stars in the field of natural horsemanship, saw the Internet as a way to increase the exposure of this field and give her body a break. So, with the help of her husband, Darryl ("the technical genius of this family"), she put up the Web site to end all Web sites

and tends it daily, with the extra fillip of personal contact through e-mail.

Natural horsemanship is a way of training horses that involves understanding horse psychology and communications and using them in gentle, non-violent ways to make the horse into a pet and companion.

The movie "The Horse Whisperer" showcases this method of training. "Horses are prey animals," says Scott. "They're used to deferring to a leader who keeps a look out for the predator and generally takes care of the rest of the herd. If you can make yourself the leader, you control the horse with its blessing."

Scott came by this knowledge over a long time and when she moved to California in the 1980s, it was just as the natural horsemanship movement was taking off. She felt it was a good fit, being a psychology major in college.

She worked with different proponents within the movement, and formed her own ideas about how to teach the method. "It's as much about training the people as it is about training the horses," she says.

Scott's life was changing as she was forming her program. Two of her three children had graduated high school and the third one was willing to do her last year somewhere else. Darryl had wrapped up a career in Silicon Valley and was ready for a change and Sylvia was aware of the toll her job as a trainer was taking on her body. They decided to settle in Blacksburg where Sylvia would take her training in a new direction.

Scott had a tremendous advantage—her husband Darryl had always been in the fore of technology and marketing, working in video and with computers, and was instrumental in getting her on her current path. Together they made Scott's three-DVD set on the 12 steps of natural horsemanship, as well as a round-pen DVD. But Sylvia wanted a way to avoid the frustrations of no follow-up when learning through videos.

The answer was a Web site (www.NaturalHorseTraining.com), managed through a satellite Internet connection, that not only sells the videos, but provides additional resources. The page includes a directory of local service providers, such as veterinarians, trainers, farriers, horse transporters and even equine body workers.

The return(?) of the Red Sox >

For those of you laboring under the misconception that the Red Sox are coming to the Roanoke Valley—as the Salem Red Sox—for the first time next spring, let us clarify:

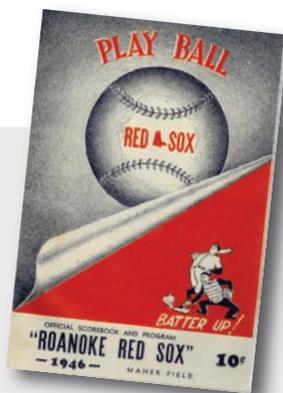
The Boston Red Sox had a Class B Piedmont League club called the Roanoke Red Sox 1943-1952 and the Roanoke Ro-Sox 1951-1953. They played at Maher Field, next door to Victory Stadium.

Roanoke won the pennant in 1946 (the year I was born; I have a game program dated a week after I entered the world) and 1947. The Roanoke & Salem Friends preceded these teams 1939-1942 with a sponsorship agreement with the Indians in 1940. That was the last time "Roanoke," "Salem" and "friends" all appeared in the same sentence.

The site is inclusive. "There's really no reason to reinvent the wheel," she says. "I'm always asking myself, 'How can I simplify this? Where are they struggling?'" That information then becomes a template for a Q & A." But when they need to, Scott's customers can e-mail her (Sylvia@NaturalHorseTraining.com) with their questions.

Scott's Web site gets 100,000 hits a month, she says. "People are so capable of learning and if you break things down into baby steps so they understand it, it's very doable," she says.

When Scott moved to Blacksburg, she and Darryl bought and built a small horse farm operation. She has the room, with extra stalls and a small apartment built into the barn/tack room area, to hold individual training events, where her clients come and bring their horses to her. But mostly, she works at her computer, usually in her pajamas, often helped by her two dogs and a cat, answering mail, processing orders, writing newsletters and updating the Web site. 



Roanoke's minor league baseball history goes all the way back to the Virginia League in 1894 and showed up variously as the Braves, Magicians and Tigers over the years prior to the entry into the Piedmont League in '43.

Now that we have that clear, let's offer a piece of advice to the new team owners: don't mess with the view no matter how strongly some of our resident idiots lobby for a Green Monster wall in left field. One of the truly outstanding features of Salem's beautiful ball park is its pristine view of the mountains. A large green wall does not alienate far more people than it would attract.

Now, about that dang over-loud P.A. system ...

—Dan Smith



Sports Club secretary John Montgomery
Maggie Drewry poses with guest speaker Jim Grobe, Wake Forest's football coach.

Business philosophy helps sports club >

Executive Summary:

The venerable Roanoke Valley Sports Club is not immune to the vagaries of the nation's economy, but it continues to thrive despite fewer members.

By John A. Montgomery

It's common knowledge that the 21st Century has not been a banner era for organization growth. Churches, clubs, civic and professional groups are, in general, suffering membership decline—in part because competition for extracurricular activities continues to grow, and in part because most people enjoy a little downtime to escape from the stressors of their jobs.

That often means spending at least some time alone.

The Roanoke Valley Sports Club is no anomaly in this regard; its membership rolls have dipped to about two-thirds of the 300 members it boasted a decade ago. Yet the organization continues to thrive, largely due to the implementation of basic principles that are innate to any successful business: its direction stays close to its mission and it doesn't spend more money than it takes in.

The Sports Club has no other stated purpose than to bring in prominent sports figures to

inform and entertain its members and to provide those members with the opportunity to enjoy the fellowship of sharing a meal. The group meets monthly, often—but not always—on the third Monday at 5:45 p.m. at the Salem Civic Center. A brief social precedes a buffet dinner, the sharing of announcements and a 45-minute address from the featured speaker, followed by a Q-and-A. Sports-related door prizes are distributed to close the meeting at 8 p.m.

Well-connected sports figures Dan Wooldridge (a longtime sports official), former college basketball coach Charlie Moir and Salem businessman Joe Thomas, Sr. were among those who founded the club in 1993. Each member is required to pay annual dues of \$30 (\$5 more than when the club started) and the cost of each meal, which runs \$12. The guest fee is \$20 a head.

Thus with an annual budget of about \$6,000 (200 times \$30), the club attracts the best speakers it can find. In an era when Duke basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski gets \$20,000, it can be a challenge to make the limited budget work. Despite that, the first four speakers this fall were Tech football coach Frank Beamer, UVA's Al Groh, College of Charleston basketball Bobby Cremins and former Hokie softball pitcher Angela Tincher. The club paid less than \$3,000 for the group.

Past speakers have included NFL players Tiki and Ronde Barber; basketball broadcaster Billy Packer; NBA veterans Alex English and Dell Curry; coaches Lefty Driesell and Lavell Edwards; ESPN analyst Dr. Jerry Punch; Heisman Trophy-winner Archie Griffin and Tech basketball coach Seth Greenberg. An event honoring locally-produced basketball player J.J. Redick was so large it was moved to the Hotel Roanoke and a recent pairing of Beamer and Groh together drew 270, nearly overflowing the civic center's community room.

(Those interested in joining the Roanoke Valley Sports Club should call Tom Marchi at 314-0831 for an application. Play By Play Publisher John Montgomery is president of the Sports Club.) 

Here's how it works best

Lynda Foster's advice often revolves around time management and constant marketing. Here's her "Top 5" list:

1. Be focused on **customer retention**. Make a list of the top 20 percent of customers that bring the most profit. Know everything you can about them and super serve them. It's cheaper to keep customers than to get new ones.
2. Be **visible** to your customers and your employees. If you own a small business you are the business brand. Be sure to focus your time on getting and keeping customers.
3. Be knowledgeable about your **numbers**. Know your profit margins on everything your company offers. Study your expenses and see whether you can save money on anything that is not directly connected to getting and keeping customers.
4. Be efficient and effective with your **time**. Make a master list of all the tasks that you focus on in a day, a week, a month. Make sure your time is spent on the highest priority items first.
5. Be sure you are doing something to **market** your business every day. Use inexpensive marketing tactics like networking, great follow up systems, public relations, corporate alliances, fliers, door hangers, personalized e-mails, etc. When doing mass marketing like advertising, be sure to track your results and do research on what your target market is listening to, reading, and watching.



Linda McNutt Foster



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Small Business on a fast track >

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary:

Lynda Foster has learned a lot about small business by owning several. Now she's passing on what she knows.

FastTraining.org has an unusual home base: the business training company is a year-old division of Mel Wheeler Inc., which is otherwise in the radio broadcasting business with stations like WFIR and K-92.

It's the brainchild of Lynda McNutt Foster, who once closed real estate loans, ran an ad agency and, with her first husband, built a successful pest extermination company from the ground up before selling out to Terminex International.

The Florida native grew up watching her parents, small business owners and artists, in action and always had a knack for growing firms. "Our youth was spent at the dinner table coming up with ads," recalls Foster, who went to work selling radio spots for Wheeler several years ago. She discovered while making calls around the Roanoke Valley that a lot of businesses needed help.

That's where FastTraining.org comes in: through a series of group seminars, one-on-one management sessions and marketing

programs, Foster offers up what she has learned after heading up several successful enterprises. She pitched the concept to company president Wheeler, and he gave her the green light.

Her "Synergy Sessions" consist of 12 classes over an eight-month period, for six live sessions that she teaches at Foodies in Roanoke and six teleclass conference calls. Those involved in a Synergy group are not direct competitors, meaning they may be more willing to share information on sales and marketing strategy via interactive exercises. Foster hopes to create "true corporate alliances" among the companies that take FastTraining courses.

Topics range from "Get Clients Now" to "Leveraging Your Time," and "More Cheap Marketing," priced at \$180 for all 12 sessions, paid up front so there is more buy-in from clients. SunTrust Bank and the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce Small Business Development Center are supporting FastTraining.org.

Foster has geared the Synergy Sessions towards small businesses in the region. With equipment and production help from Wheeler Broadcasting, she has also recorded a how-to CD that clients can listen to while driving. She kept the tracks short—eight minutes typically, in part as recognition of the shorter commutes common in the Roanoke Valley.

"In two hours they just don't network, they learn some type of new skill," says Foster. 



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Laura Rawlings has found her place >

Executive Summary:

The reviews are coming in for the Arts Council's director—a former singer, dancer, actress—and they're overwhelmingly positive.

By John Montgomery

The adage "I'm not from the Roanoke Valley but I got here as soon as I could" seems applicable for Laura Rawlings, who spent major life segments in a megalopolis environment on opposite coasts before finding nirvana in our part of the world.

Tired of gridlock, Rawlings took a drive down Interstate 81 and discovered her latest perch, moving here with her husband, Stuart, a technology teacher at Cave Spring Middle school and her mother, Ruth Wesson. Geographically, the region reminds the Rawlings of Carson City, Nev., where they lived before moving to Northern Virginia. When they learned the Blue Ridge Region offers symphony, ballet, theatre and other arts, they didn't look any further.

When Margarget Hunter Wade, the immediate successor to longtime Arts Council institution Susan Jennings, left the

position to move to Cox Communications, the organization's board of directors found its next leader in Rawlings—who was already making a name for herself with the Roanoke Symphony. So far, the match has been ideal.

"I believe in all of the arts and I'm passionate about what I do," says Rawlings, who has meshed intensity and talent as "a triple-threat ingénue" (singing, dancing and acting) on stage for much of her life. "I also think I have the ability to make connections," to match up organizations' needs with those who can fulfill them.

Says AC board president Susan Coptly, "Laura understands all of the things an arts council can do. She has pushed to get us involved in school programming. She's constantly putting on workshops, generating publicity. Laura recognizes the council is program-driven. We click."

Board member Stuart Mease, special projects coordinator for Roanoke, agrees. "She's very energetic and an organizational type of thinker. She's giving the council a fresh perspective at a time the [local arts] are exploding."

With a complement of two other full-time employees and two part-timers, Rawlings oversaw the implementation of "40 Days + 40 Nights" this past fall, the compendium of hundreds of arts and cultural events culminating in the Nov. 8 opening of the Taubman Museum of Art and the arts festival the same weekend. "It's really an example of what a local arts agency can do for a community," Rawlings says.

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In Brief

Name:	Laura Rawlings
Age:	48
Company:	The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge
Title:	Executive Director
Location:	Downtown Roanoke
Career Progression:	Los Angeles native; Arizona State University graduate; professional actress with more than 100 productions to her credit; worked in arts development in Nevada for 12 years; employed by National Endowment for the Arts in D.C. for five years; moved to the region in 2006; director of development for Roanoke Symphony for 15 months prior to accepting current position a year ago.
Community Involvement:	Supports activities of her 100+ member organizations.



Laura Rawlings

Dan Smith

"Laura's number one strength is her ability to leverage resources," says Dr. Susan Short, director of the Virginia Tech Roanoke Center and another AC board member. "She's extraordinary."

Rawlings seeks to embrace "all the disciplines," as she calls them, including performers and painters, writers and sculptors, organizations and individuals.

She's been involved with Virginia GEMS (the acronym for Give Experiences, Minimize Stuff), a new sustainable-eco-friendly-local arts and culture program that has been unveiled this holiday season. Partners in the program, which is sponsored by Appalachian Power, are offering consumers discounts ranging from 15 to 50 percent as an inducement for members of the community to purchase arts-related gifts.

"The Arts Council becomes a mechanism to package what the region has to offer and then promote it," says Rawlings. 



Laura understands all of the things an arts council can do... She's constantly putting on workshops, generating publicity. Laura recognized the council is program-driven.

—Susan Copty



Pat Wilhelms

Dan Smith

Made in heaven: Children, art, theater >

Executive Summary:

Pat Wilhelms didn't take her firing by Mill Mountain Theatre lying down. She got up, in fact, and counterpunched with a new children's theater at The Taubman.

By Dan Smith

Pat Wilhelms was, for 10 years, an actress, director and educator for Mill Mountain Theatre. A disagreement a few months ago left her without a job, just as summer camp for students was beginning. Not being one to sit around and grieve, Pat set about correcting the situation.

Wilhelms was named director of education and outreach at MMT in 2003 and began directing touring shows that reached over 25,000 students across the Commonwealth

annually. She worked with acting interns and headed the Centerpiece series.

From the parting of ways has emerged the Roanoke Children's Theatre at the Taubman Art Museum, an odd pairing of artistic disciplines that seems to be working. The FRONT asked her a few questions about the venture and here are her answers:

How did Roanoke Children's Theatre come about?

RCT came about when Mary Best Bova, Julie Forehand and I realized that Roanoke did not have a Children's Theatre, and yet we saw and heard the interest from the community to have theatrical programming specifically for 5-18 year olds and their families.

The Taubman Museum of Art has started a wonderful wave of arts opportunities in the Valley with new galleries, a new contemporary theatre company and now a Children's Theatre. We see RCT as a way to pull youth away from endless cell phone and computer use and offer an excuse for families to spend time together.

Where will it be physically located?

RCT will perform four different plays per calendar year in the black box theatre inside the Taubman Museum of Art. Year-round theatre classes will be taught in the auditorium. Both spaces are on the first floor.

Do you have partners or employees?

We have a paid staff of four professionals and we also have volunteers and a vibrant board of directors.

Who is the target audience?

Our target audience is 5-18 year olds, their families and their schools. We will offer "lunch and dinner theatre" to enjoy before or after the play as well as "talk-backs" with designers and cast members as a way

to expand the experience and make it a more meaningful and memorable event. Our shows will be cast with lots of youth and adults from our area as well as professional actors from outside of Roanoke.

Our daytime shows during the school year will allow local school districts the chance to see at least two art forms come together. Working with the Education Department at the Taubman Museum, we have created plan and fine arts guides for each play that will bring education, art and theatre all together under one roof.

What is the cost for your classes?

Our classes vary in price from \$130 for a six-week class that meets once each week to a 2-week camp that meets daily for \$475. Scholarships are available. 

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So now it's to the blogging >

My View

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

[fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

The adage “when the student is ready, the teacher will appear” is more timeworn than my creaky knees, but it’s held up a lot better than they have. For several years my friend and colleague Keith Ferrell, who’s not dramatically younger than I, but whose grasp of things sometimes is, has been urging me to write a blog. Stuart Mease, whose job is recruiting and retaining young professionals for the region and who is, indeed, dramatically younger than I, has echoed Keith on occasion, but I’d always rejoin, “Don’t you think it’s noisy enough out there without me, Stuart?”

As it turns out, maybe not. I’ve been blogging since Oct. 10—slightly more than one a day on average—and I have found that not only is there room for my voice, but that I’m having a blast doing it. (Yes, I’m aware on my blog address “editr” is not spelled the way my job title is spelled.)

The blog is a release on some days, a lark on others. Sometimes I’m writing hard news that I can’t force into print fast enough because we’re a monthly (those competitive instincts are like the Energizer bunny) and sometimes I’m sharing recipes for kill-you-in-a-minute foods like Southern collards or sausage gravy or turkey dressing. They’re all there and so’s the story about The Roanoke Times being taken off the market—12 hours before The Times ran it. Heh, heh, heh.

I’ve ranted about the technology around me conspiring to drive me to suicide (my computer guru Alicia Nash, says, “just breeeeeeeathe ...”) and been told that “it really is alive. Just treat the computer with respect and it will respond respectfully.” As if. Those blog rants have resulted in feedback. Not much practical information, but the very real feeling that—as they tell me in AA—“you’re not alone.”

My wife walks into the room and I’m sitting at my laptop clacking away and she just nods, turns on her heel and heads the other way. She knows. She even warned, “You know that machine will take over your life.” OK, so she has a point. But, hey, I get my exercise first and I don’t write past midnight. Most nights.

The other day I was talking to my upstairs work neighbor Bill Elliot, who runs Davis H. Elliot, about blogging and, knowing Bill to be a superior writer, I asked if he had a blog. Nope, he said, didn’t want one, either. It’d take too much time and could even be habit forming. He has a journal and that’s enough. I read some of it. Wish he’d blog it (to create a verb).



continued Page 64

And checking
it twice >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap
from the Pub

[ontapfrompub.blogspot.com]

I'm a listmaker.

Seldom is there not a scrap of paper in my pocket with scribbblings of six to a dozen or more tasks that *I have* to get done that day. My scrap of paper today, a folded over business card, still has three unfinished items (I just checked). They're not going to get done, and they'll move on over to tomorrow's scrap.

One day I'll get up the nerve to write a list of one. That's right—one item. Then, I'm a real champion for accomplishing my list! I often wonder if a list of one is the life of a retiree.

[Wednesday]

Bill: "What's up?"

Ed: "I'm going to the hardware store to pick up some flystrips."

[Thursday]

Ed: "Yesterday, I got some flystrips."

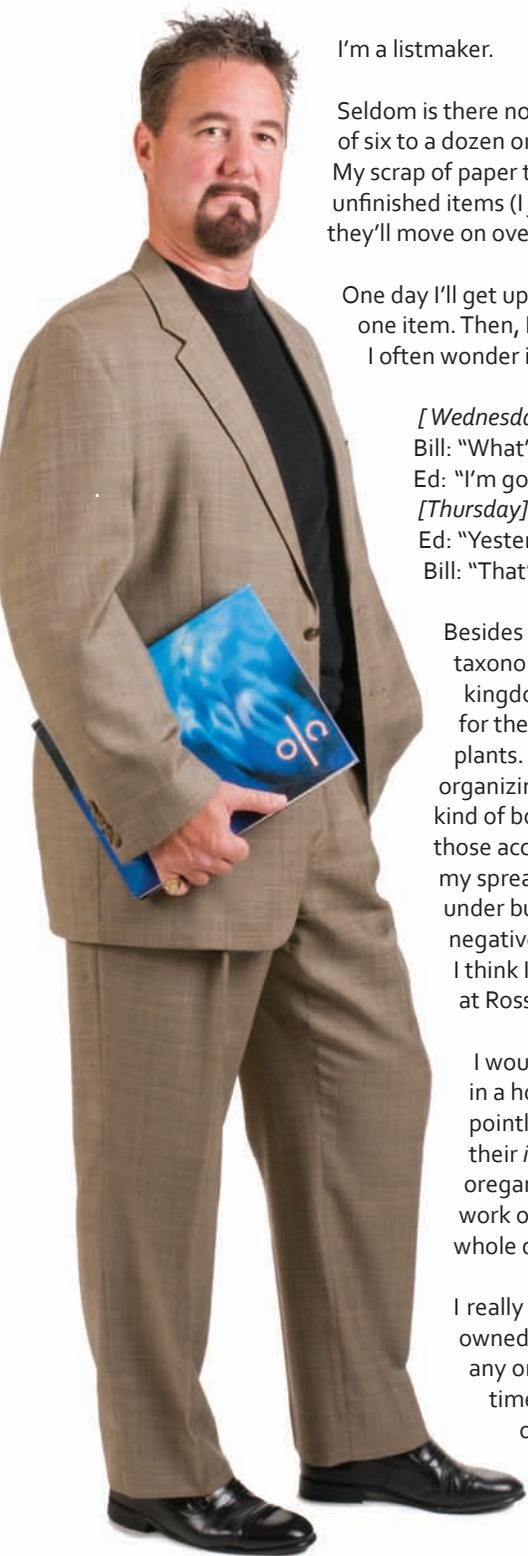
Bill: "That's cool."

Besides daily tasks, I make lists of everything. I'm not a taxonomist, though I think making the distinction between kingdoms and phylums is probably a good thing. Certainly for the animals... err, plants... or non-animals and non-plants. And I fully sympathize with Dewey's obsession with organizing libraries by decimals (though numbers alone are kind of boring). My own business general ledgers all have those account classifications CPA's love—but I still color-code my spreadsheets. I'd rather see my yellow section over or under budget by a real dollar amount than a positive or negative number beside line item C10-001-1401-4840-0305. I think I was the only person in America who didn't laugh at Ross Perot's charts.

I would organize our spices in the kitchen if I didn't live in a house of four other people, where it's absolutely pointless with all their habits, preferences, practices... their *individualities*. Now, if I can't find the blasted oregano, I just use something else. (Paprika doesn't really work out so well in spaghetti by the way—just gives the whole dish a pasty effect.)

I really like my *non*-typical lists. My personal list of cars I've owned (exactly 30). Why compile that? Because naming any one of those cars instantly transports me back to the time when I owned it. Try it yourself. Like hearing an old song (another list: Best Songs per genre and decade), you'll recall experiences, feelings, pleasures and pitfalls (P&P list). I have lists

continued Page 64



Smith / My View

from Page 62

I guess each of us has to, as my wife is constantly reminding me, follow his own paradigm. Still, I think the blog—coming as late as it did for me—is part of the paradigm I'm moving toward. It's change and I like change. It's expressing and I do an awful lot of that. It's social (read the blog on my brother's talk to a group of managers), political (I predicted Tom Periello's victory over Virgil Goode Oct. 26), business (I've done a bunch of those), history (read my piece on printing), sports (see the photo of the bag over my UT flag), cooking (see the recipes, but don't try this at home; it'll kill you), tools (the best leaf vacuum in America) and ... well, you get the idea.

There's a lot of variety in that and it's all put together using what I've learned doing this job for a long time, so the words are spelled right, the construction's pretty good and there are a lot of capital letters, periods, commas and other useful punctuation.

Mostly, though, it's what Keith told me it would be. He even wrote a story about it that was on the cover of our November issue. Bud Oakey, the lobbyist, said it was the first thing about social networking he ever read that he understood and that Keith had explained it so well that Bud's now a convert. Another paradigm gets moved. Another teacher appears because the student's ready.

Another person has an outlet for all those thoughts running around with nowhere else to go. 

Field / On Tap

from Page 62

of the over-rated ("actor" Kevin Costner) and the under-rated (country music's John Conlee). Deeply flawed people who still did great work (Woody Allen) and superior political parties that fail miserably on execution (Libertarian). People who sing like angels, but never had a good song (Charly McClain) and people who sing almost offensively, but have such good songs you love 'em (Tom Petty, Bob Dylan).

I haven't written a "bucket list" because listing experiences before you die would invariably slip over into the realm of fantasy—and too many of my items would be illegal. Besides, there is nothing more extraordinary than the ordinary. And I can *attain* those delights.

Naturally, being a *compartmentalist*, I'm a fan of published recognitions, like our FRONTList in this issue. Who can't at least look to see who's on this list? We had to hold back the horses to keep from filling up the whole magazine with our picks. But I think it's a good idea to do these features. *Why wouldn't* a local business publication recognize businesses that are serving the community? And yes, we called out a few underachievers. All the better if an underperformer becomes a top performer in another year. Many a crappy business has transformed into a preferred business (and vice versa). That's how and why a list should be used in the first place.

Is our list perfect? No. Why not? Because you didn't write it.

So, take it for what it's worth. Compare it to your own judgements. Engage in a little of your own *listful thinking* if the spirit moves you. It is that time of year, you know.

P.S. This month marks my 25th wedding anniversary. "Getting to Silver" wasn't something I ever put on a list. But still being hooked-up with that pretty, smiling, brown-eyed girl from Salem ('68 Chevy pickup was the vehicle at the time we met, by the way) will always be at the top of my most important list. Love ya', Emily Jane. [Ya' see? Now I can check off "saying something mushy in front of 45,000 readers" from my list of daring things to do.] 

Letters

To FRONT Finance Columnist Andy Hudick:

Everyone knows that I'm a worrier and when it comes to financial matters in unstable times I combat that by believing in having a plan, being in for the long haul and trusting you folks for directions. I figure if something needs to be done you will let us know. My other big defense is attempting to not read any financial articles and to not watch much in the way of news.

Unfortunately, in today's world that latter strategy only works limitedly. It's virtually impossible to not catch a headline or hear a comment—all of which are negative.

The media, be it the talking heads or the writers, are all intent on creating a catastrophe. Bad news sells. Each vies for more spectacular adjectives. To listen to these people causes one to want to chew through the restraints and leap from a tall window.

Most all of today's news is totally irresponsible, frequently inaccurate and it's all justified on "the public's right to know." Perhaps one day we'll come to our senses and realize that while the public has a right to know they don't necessarily have to know right now, at least not when the facts aren't all clear and certainly not when the people doing the reporting and editorializing don't have a good understanding of the subject.

Paul Cassel
Gray, Tenn.

Editor:

Since you left the Blue Ridge Business Journal I've been wondering "Where's the beef?" I found it when I read the first issue of FRONT. Not too much bun, loads of protein and just the right amount of 'sauce'.

Susan Stengel
Lynchburg

Editor:

Congratulations! 88 pages and a great website to boot. What a huge chunk you've bitten off. And to do so in such an economic downturn. I applaud your entrepreneurial spirit: "Yes we can." Remember Potty Economics?

Thurmond Andrew Horne
Norfolk
(Andrew Horne is the co-founder of the Blue Ridge Business Journal.)

Editor:

The article on blogs ("Blogging for Business" by Keith Ferrell, November, 2008 FRONT) explained things in a way I have been looking for. It was great.

Daniel G. Oakey
Richmond

Editor:

Certainly the FRONT is the crowning touch to your career. I like its slickness, its feel, its smell, its size, its content, the skills of its editor. A great job that is the result of an abundance of hard work and talent.

Bill Cochran
retired outdoors editor
(Bill Cochran recently became the first journalist to be voted into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame.)



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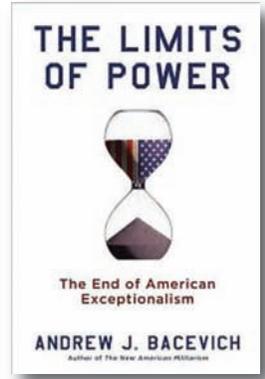
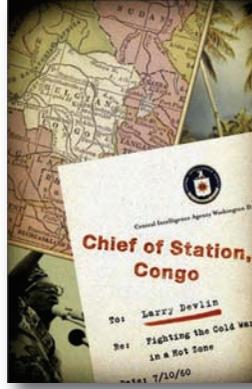
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Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our editor and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Each month, we will ask readers to submit two or three well-crafted paragraphs about a good book they've read lately (we don't read the bad books, thank you) and would like to recommend.



Spy vs. Spy

Until recently, nearly everything I thought I knew about the work of clandestine intelligence officers came from watching Patrick McGoochan in the old television show, "Secret Agent." Then I read Larry Devlin's memoir, *Chief of Station, Congo* (Public Affairs, \$26). It's not only a helluva gripping read, it's a sensational primer on intelligence work.

Devlin was the CIA's top spook in the Congo during much of the 1960s, and it's hard to imagine a more fascinating job. Consider that, at the time, the Soviet Union and United States were locked in the Cold War and both had ambitions for the continent of Africa.

So the book is chock full of spy-vs-spy hijinx, along with plenty of tense moments involving roadblocks, clandestine operations and midnight burglaries. You get the sense that Devlin risked a lot for his country; but you also get the sense that he loved every minute of the cloak-and-dagger work.

—Rex Bowman, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*,
Roanoke bureau

The lost democracy

Historians serve the world best when they hold up the mirror of reality to dispel the myths that lead societies astray. In his latest book, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (Henry Holt, \$24), Andrew Bacevich has delivered a sobering analysis that lays bare the failed and failing policies that reflect a dangerous abandonment of the American ideal.

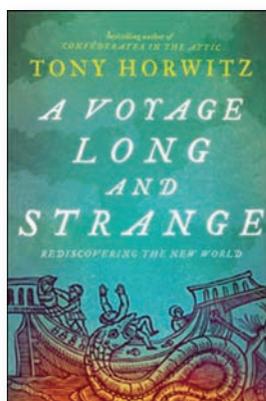
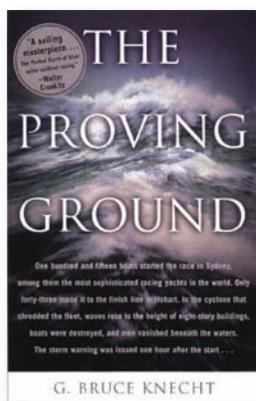
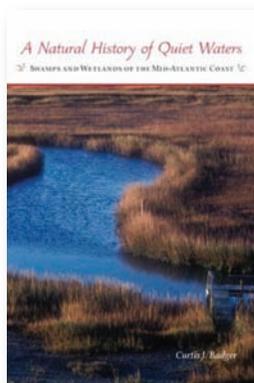
A career military officer and political conservative who now teaches history at Boston University, Bacevich brings a clear-eyed, coldly rational assessment of the errant course that has resulted in a 50-year trend toward the sense of America as the indestructible global Titan.

The United States, Bacevich writes, confronts a triple crisis at this critical historical juncture: a voracious consumer economy vulnerable to unprecedented global pressures; a government marked by an imperial presidency; and a crippled foreign policy born of a series of seemingly endless wars driven by an overconfident faith in military power.

"Yet if presidents have accrued too much power, if the Congress is feckless, if the national security bureaucracy is irretrievably broken, the American people have only themselves to blame," Bacevich writes. "They have allowed their democracy to be hijacked."

This short but compelling book offers readers a spine-stiffening call to take back their democracy.

—Tommy Denton, retired editorial page editor



Swamp thing

Curtis Badger is one of Virginia's finest nature writers, but his work hasn't received the recognition it merits. I consider his *Salt Tides: Cycles and Currents of Life Along the Coast* to be a nature classic.

His latest, *A Natural History of Quiet Waters: Swamps and Wetlands of the Mid-Atlantic Coast* (University of Virginia Press, \$22.95), is about his quest to purchase "50 acres of worthless swampland." What he and his wife, Lynn, discover: "Worthless swampland is now known in real estate circles as 'waterfront' and is priced accordingly."

Just what is so great about swamps? Badger admits they "are too wet for hiking and too woody for boating." Then he spends the rest of the book telling about their mystery and beauty and their purpose as nature's kidneys.

—Bill Cochran, www.billcochran.com

Ultimate test

Accomplished sailor and Wall Street Journal foreign correspondent G. Bruce Knecht's *The Proving Ground* (Little Brown, \$24.95; also in paperback) is the kind of nail-biting, teeth-grinding non-fiction that can turn a fiction lover's head. It's the tale of the 1998 Sidney (Australia) to Hobart yacht race that ended in a massive near-hurricane induced tragedy (43 of 115 boats at the starting line finished, with six dead sailors).

Knecht's prose is tight, insightful and suspenseful (something not necessarily anticipated from a Harvard MBA, but, hey,

he has two Pulitzer nominations)—revealing a depth in characters rare in a non-fiction work like this. Like so many of these "ultimate test" books, *Proving Ground* proves to be a good read, whether or not you're especially interested in the activity at the center, but I ask you: who could not be interested in sailing?

—Dan Smith, *FRONT* editor

New history

Tony Horwitz, who wrote the memorable *Confederates in the Attic* a few years ago, has re-focused his historic lens to a time in the distant past, a time that is vastly misunderstood by the very American ancestors who have good reason to know what the heck was going on with the discovery of their country. In *A Voyage Long and Strange* (Henry Holt, \$27.50), Horwitz—quite literally—travels the route of the discoverers of the New World, retracing their steps, much as he did in *Confederates*. What he finds, surprising both him and us, is a history that is far different from the one we've learned over the years.

It's a much more interesting history, one full of people like Eirik the Red's killer daughter (and we're not talking drop-dead gorgeous here) and places that have changed little since discovery (some, in fact, pretty much in the same state because they were not exactly Honolulu). Pulitzer-winner Horwitz's book is a revealing, entertaining and massively informing work that adds a little style and shape to a fascinating history that is all too often told in a dull monotone.

—DS



Young workers seeking greater pay in other sectors will likely continue to ignore the manufacturing industry, which—incorrectly—is viewed as a dirty, dangerous workplace from a bygone era.

—Kevin Creehan



Kevin Creehan

Dan Smith

The changing face of manufacturing >

Executive Summary:

The manufacturing workforce has bravely and determinedly compensated for many, many losses over recent decades. Can it continue to do so?

Kevin Creehan is the founding CEO of Schultz-Creehan Holdings in Blacksburg and is in charge of developing technologies in industrial engineering. He has been director of the Center for High Performance Manufacturing at Virginia Tech and is on the Virginia Manufacturing Advisory Council and is head of the Planning Committee for the 2008 Governor's Manufacturing Summit.

He has served on the National Science Foundation panel addressing issues related to manufacturing machines and equipment. He has a master's and Ph.D in industrial engineering at the University of Pittsburgh and was an all-state quarterback.

We talked to him about the state of manufacturing recently.

What's the state of manufacturing as we near the end of 2008?

The new global economy has jolted many industries, but none more so than manufacturing. Since peaking at over 190 million jobs in the late 1970s, the sector has lost over 50 million jobs, leaving it with fewer today than any point in the last half century. Yet, over the last 20 years, manufacturing output has amazingly doubled. This increase can be attributed to a substantial increase in the Productivity Index, which is a measure of the output per hour worked. Infusion of industrial engineering concepts like lean manufacturing, six-sigma, and others into modern manufacturing has fueled the growth in productivity, and perhaps hastened the employment reduction.

What's the labor situation?

With an aging manufacturing workforce and greater competition from low-cost labor countries abroad, the face of manufacturing in the U.S. will continue to change in the coming decade. Available manufacturing labor appears likely to continue declining in the next decade as younger workers choose other career pathways while older manufacturing employees depart the workforce. Young workers seeking greater pay in other sectors will likely continue

Guest Commentary

to ignore the manufacturing industry, which—incorrectly—is viewed as a dirty, dangerous workplace from a bygone era.

These trends in labor supply and demand must breed a new manufacturing model which allows for a more rewarding (intellectually and financially) career path for American workers while enabling American companies to compete in the global marketplace despite comparatively large labor and taxation costs.

You have talked about a new manufacturing model. Please explain.

Evidence suggests that this new manufacturing model is already beginning to take shape in the form of greater customization and highly engineered products.

While research and development expenditures as a percentage of GDP have remained flat over the last 25 years, industry has increased its share of R&D expenses dramatically, offsetting reduced government R&D expenditures.

The growth in industry-sponsored R&D has been largely a result of a substantial increase in new product development initiatives, spurred by the emergence of greater competition in the global economy. Free trade agreements have prompted U.S. companies to accelerate product development initiatives even further over the last decade.

New products are becoming the foundation upon which the new U.S. manufacturing model is being built. As the need for faster and better product development emerges, new tools, technologies, and systems must be developed and perfected to accelerate successful new product development in a more cost-effective manner. At this time though, no consensus has been reached on the most effective methodology for rapid, inexpensive development of new products.

Your conclusion?

From my perspective, the integration of time-tested industrial engineering concepts with emerging technologies and lean principles into the product development process has proven successful in reducing costs without sacrificing effectiveness or development time.

Our process of using six specific principles in tandem has had demonstrable positive effect: cross-functional teams, set-based concurrent engineering, coordinated materials and technology selection, “More r&D, less R&d” (i.e. more applied R&D), “Design for X” and customer/supplier involvement.

Consistently integrating these concepts has and will continue to lead to rapid, inexpensive, innovative developments across many manufacturing applications, and will aid in the acceleration of great product development successes. 

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FRONT 'N ABOUT



The AEC Green Living and Energy Expo at the Roanoke Civic Center in November drew more than 2,500 people, extensive news coverage and quite a few businesses that you might not expect to be involved in ecological pursuits. Top left: **Vickie Damico** of Breakell Inc., general contractor; Top Right: **Laura Wasko** of environmentally friendly flooring company Retellus; Middle: Eco-Realtor **Rob Clark** of MKB talks to **Pete Krull** of Krull and Company, an environmentally responsible financial services firm; At right: FRONT editor **Dan Smith** blogs, with his scooter parked behind him.

photo: Dan Smith, Pete Krull



Christina Koomen Smith (right) of the City of Roanoke interviews **Cricket Powell** of the Blue Ridge Business Journal during a **City Market Building Use Survey** in November. The city is trying to determine the best use for the building in the future.

photo: Dan Smith



Karen Chase

Dan Smith

Left brain, right brain >

Executive Summary:

Karen Chase's advertising/design agency is a marriage of what people generally consider conflicting skill sets. Here, there's perfect harmony.

By Alison Weaver

Karen Chase was a pre-law student shivering her way through University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada, when she had an epiphany: Why not move somewhere warm?

"I was miserable in the cold," she says.

Her father had been teaching at San Antonio College as part of a faculty exchange, and as Chase thumbed through the school's catalog, the thought of transferring came to her. She also met with a corporate lawyer and came to the realization that perhaps she wasn't the button-down type.

Taking a year off from school, Chase worked as a receptionist to save money for

a move to the U.S. One perk was that her work computer was loaded with drawing and design software. "I started fooling around with it, teaching myself," she recalls.

Although Chase had always excelled in left-brain courses such as math and history, apparently there was a talented right-brain side itching to be set free. She graduated from San Antonio College with an Advertising and Art degree and began working for a variety of design and advertising firms. At one point her concerned father asked, "Is there a problem why you can't keep a job?"

Chase says each job exposed her to new facets of advertising, and each came with a move up in title. In 1999, she saw an ad on Monster.com for a senior art director position at Rowe Furniture Co. in Salem and decided it was time for another change.

Chase soon was running Rowe's in-house creative department and then moved on to creative director positions with The O'Connor Group and Neathawk Dubuque & Packett. Married at the time, she transferred back to Texas with her husband in 2004.

She started her own design business in Dallas, and when her marriage dissolved, friends urged her to return to Virginia.

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Chase was ready for yet another change and “Roanoke felt like a place to come home to.”

Working with freelance copywriter Jim Dudley, Chase tackled TV campaigns and print ads for Lewis-Gale, culminating in their winning a “Best in Broadcast” award. “I got very lucky,” she says.

224 Design—the name comes from the Pantone shade of pink—has continued to thrive. This year, the Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce named her Micro Small Business of the Year.

The company appears to be the perfect marriage of Chase’s left brain/ right brain self. She has added copywriter, poet, pianist, photographer and children’s book author to her repertoire. And in her spare time, she’s writing a Broadway musical. 

In Brief

Name: Karen Chase
Age: 37
Company: 224 Design
Location: Roanoke
Founded: September, 2004
Employees: One
Community Service: Member of the Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce; judge for Advertising Federation; passionate advocate for Roanoke Valley SPCA
Family: Single but attached
Business Philosophy: “Create award-winning work that fits a client’s business at a fair price and have a good time doing it—both for them and for me.”

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Bud Oakey

Dan Smith

Navigating the halls of government >

Executive Summary:

Bud Oakey's family is in the funeral business. He's worked for the chamber of commerce, a law firm and now, he's lobbying for business. It all fits. It really does.

By Gene Marrano

Bud Oakey insists "lobbyist" is not a dirty word.

Helping firms navigate the governmental and political pitfalls in Virginia—and now nationwide—is what his company, Advantus Strategies LLC, is all about. Oakey, whose family is in the funeral home business, lives and works in Richmond most of the time when he's not traveling, but comes home to Roanoke on the weekends.

Advantus was created following Oakey's work as vice-president and lobbyist for the

Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce, where he traveled to the state capitol—especially when the General Assembly was in session—helping to make sure this part of the state secured its piece of the financial pie.

He helped found the Virginia West Legislative Coalition, figuring there was more strength in numbers when partnering with other central and southwestern Virginia chambers. "[That region] had enough senators and delegates in the legislature to pretty much stop anything," says Oakey. "You also had enough clout to start [legislation] because people supported their stuff. It works both ways."

According to its Web site (advantusstrategies.com), his firm "specializes in assisting and growing strategic business relationships with local, state, and federal governments, crisis public relations and influencing public policy issues impacting clients."

Overcoming barriers to interdepartmental communication—that Oakey says are unlike anything he has seen in the private sector—is one of the major obstacles Advantus helps clients deal with. Oakey's in Washington 5-6 days a month on average as well.

Oakey, who has lobbied since 1989, was closely identified with transportation issues

EXECUTIVE PROFILE



Why shouldn't these companies have representatives working for them?

—Bud Oakey

and he strongly supported routing the proposed I-73 through the Roanoke Valley, when at first it was slated to bypass the area. "Everybody else said I was crazy," he recalls. Oakey works with a handful of others who have extensive background in state government and legal circles.

What began as LeClair Ryan Oakey 10 years ago, focusing on local clients, became Advantus Strategies LLC five years ago after he spun off from the law firm. Oakey's time with the Regional Chamber found him working on the inside when it came to state government agencies, which led to a "very strong understanding," of how things work in Richmond.

Oakey focused more on the budget process than on legislation that might be introduced, figuring it was easier to bring home the pork via budget amendments.

Oakey's original business plan had him working with startups based at Virginia Tech that wanted to do business with state government, but he candidly admits that many could not afford his services. So he graduated to big-ticket corporations like Dell and Computer Associates "that have a committed state and local government profile do business with state government." Through a national network Advantus now has business relationships in 50 states.

Traditional lobbying represents about 22 percent of Oakey's business, with trade association management division (Virginia Funeral Directors is a client) and business-to-government services making up the rest.

B2G is not the same as regular lobbying, according to Oakey: "It's based off our understanding of government operations and having the relationship with key decision makers." Helping agencies keep up with technology changes by matching them with the right providers is a major focus.

Don't tell Bud Oakey that lobbyists are something to fear or be vilified: "I'm getting tired of hearing it. Why shouldn't these companies have representatives working for them?" 

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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Banking

Mary Harris has been named vice president of the Brookside Branch of Member One Federal Credit Union in Roanoke. **Diane Spilberg** has been named vice president of the Downtown Branch.

Patti Dickerson of SunTrust Bank Western Virginia in Roanoke has been named vice president of sales and marketing.

Consulting

Keith Cox is a new financial consultant with Wachovia Securities in Roanoke.

Shawn McMahon of Morgan Stanley in Roanoke has received his certified financial planner certification.

Tax Services

Dave Henry of Jackson Hewitt Tax Service in Christiansburg has earned the professional designation Enrolled Agent.

LEGAL FRONT

Frith Anderson & Peake in Roanoke has hired lawyers **Katherine Shuster** and **Carolyn Dietz**.

Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke has re-hired **Kevin W. Holt** as a partner (he had served as general counsel for a large

company) and has added two new attorneys; **Benjamin D. Byrd** and **Christen C. Church**.



Holt



Byrd



Church

WELLNESS FRONT

Eldercare

Tina Harrison of Richfield Recover & Care Center in Salem has been named Certified Nursing Assistant of the Year by the Virginia Health Care Association.

Plastic Surgery

Susan Gaylor has been named a master esthetician at The Medi Spa at Ridgewood Hill in Salem.

Retirement

Brandon Oakes Retirement Community in Roanoke has named **Mary Ann Craighead** as a marketing assistant.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Communications

David Bjurman-Birr has joined Mailtrust of Blacksburg as a senior manager of engineering and custom solutions.

LevelVision of Roanoke has hired **Larry Lux** as a VP of operations and **Bob Lang** as chief technology officer.



Jackson

John Jackson, former online editor of Roanoke.com/The Roanoke Times, has been named director of web communications at Virginia Tech.

Manufacturing

Brooks Food Group in Bedford has named **Bruce Deel** network administrator and **Tracy McConnell** director of quality assurance.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Architects / Engineers

Priscilla Morales has been named a process manager in Draper Aden's Blacksburg office.

Whitney Blankenship has been named a design technician and **Sharon Stacy Blackwell** a Web programmer at Anderson and Associates in Blacksburg.

Construction

Stanley G. Breakell, president of Breakell Inc. in Roanoke, has been presented the Elizabeth Cabell Dugdale Award for Conservation at the Virginia Museum of Natural History, an affiliate of the Smithsonian in Martinsville. The award is for outstanding work in conservation.



Breakell

Real Estate

Kit Hale, general manager of MKB in Roanoke, has been appointed by Gov. Tim Kaine to the Virginia Housing Development Authority's Board of Commissioners.



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Your Neighbor



Your Next Boss

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Catherine Daniel, principal broker for Prudential Waterfront Properties at Smith Mountain Lake has earned her Certified Real Estate Brokerage Manager Designation from the Council of Real Estate Brokerage Managers.

Poe & Cronk Real Estate Group in Roanoke has hired **Matt Huff** in commercial, industrial and investment properties. **Peter Ostaseski** has earned the Certified Investment Member designation.

Connie Hash of MKB Realtors in Salem has earned the accredited buyer representative manager designation.

David Stevens of Oakton has been named president/COO of Long & Foster Companies, which has offices throughout the region. **Susan Erickson** of the Blacksburg office has received the Accredited Staging Professional designation.

John Tuttle of SERVPRO has been appointed Vendor Director for the New River Valley Apartment Council.



Tuttle

RETAIL FRONT

Ralph Gonzalez has been named regional vice president at Advance Auto Parts in Roanoke.

RECREATION FRONT

Mickey Martin has been named club manager for the Willard Companies' Westlake Golf and Country Club.

EDUCATION FRONT

Sam Camden, associate director of human resources for student programs at Virginia Tech has been named to serve on the Alumni Board of Directors for Ferrum College.

CULTURE FRONT



Gandy

Suzanne N. Gandy has joined Downtown Roanoke, Inc., as marketing, PR and program manager. She was a marketing strategist for the recently founded Coalition for the Roanoke Market Building.

OTHER FRONTS

Advertising / PR

Ernest Delbuono of Neathawk Dubuque & Packett in Roanoke has been named to the ASIS International (security professionals) Crisis Management & Business Continuity Council.

Hospitality

Michelle Vann has been named director of housekeeping and **Johnny Cruz** has been named executive steward by the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center in Roanoke.

Services

Ann Custer, owner of WOW Organizing Services in Rocky Mount, has been accepted into the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO).

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Career FRONT

Sparks retires from Partnership >



Sparks

Phil Sparks, who led the Roanoke Valley and environs into the modern world of economic development, has retired as deputy director of the Roanoke Regional Economic Development Partnership. Sparks was in economic development for 24 years, which is roughly the age of the profession as it now

exists. He had been director of the partnership until late last year when Beth Doughty was brought in to lead the organization and he was reassigned.

Sparks, who was partly responsible for bringing a number of companies and jobs to the area (he estimates 3,000

jobs and \$500 million in investment), was also one of the primary developers of the New Century Venture Center. The center is a wildly successful small business incubator.

Sparks, who is 62, says his future plans are indefinite, but could include starting a small business.

More wine expertise >



Harper

Michael Harper has been promoted to Manager at Wine Gourmet in Roanoke. Harper is a 2007 graduate of Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Atlanta and a Certified Specialist of Wine. He joined Wine

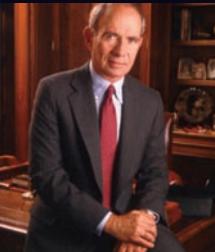
Gourmet in 2006 as a wine consultant.

Le Cordon Bleu in Atlanta is part of the original internationally famous cooking school based in Paris.

"As part of their program, I studied a

wide variety of cooking styles and techniques with emphasis on the French method," says Harper, who has lived in Virginia since 1972 (with the exception of a brief stay in Atlanta and a stint in the military).

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FRONT Notes

ADMMicro to fill J&J building

ADMMicro moved its corporate headquarters to the former Johnson & Johnson Innotech building near the Roanoke Regional Airport, occupying 30,000 square feet of the 146,000-square-foot building owned by Delta Dental of Virginia Dec. 1. ADMMicro had first floor office space at 111 Franklin Road, Roanoke.

The new J&J building will serve as space for professional engineering and sales operations and will include office space, a reception area, cafeteria and a highly specialized training facility for customers and distributors.

"This move will provide much needed space for our growing company," says Don Howell, ADMMicro's president and CEO. Howell says ADMMicro, which began manufacturing its patented energy management and submetering systems in 2004, has grown from a few employees to nearly 50, with continuing growth likely.

Delta purchased the J&J-Innotech building with an option on the factory as a potential location to consolidate its Roanoke headquarters and operations facilities.

Big bakery to Franklin County

Franklin County has lured the Ohio-based **TSG/Empire Foods** facility to a new 45,000-square-foot, \$3.5 million facility where about 100 people will work within three years. Many of those workers will include the 50-person workforce now in place.

TSG/Empire will produce baked goods for retail grocery stores and will pay employees about \$14 an hour. Some of the baked items will be decorated. The new factory will help compensate for the loss of more than 400 jobs since the middle of 2007.



Clang! Clang! Clang! went the trolley

Roanoke's new **Star Line** 31-passenger trolley bus has made its debut with a weekday loop connecting downtown Roanoke with Carilion Memorial Hospital and stops in between. Riding is free. With its nostalgic red-and-beige paint to vintage wooden seats, the Star Line, operated by Valley Metro, will run every 10 minutes Mondays through Fridays, and seven minutes between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. to serve the lunch crowd.

The intent is to provide hospital employees,

patients and their families, downtown workers and visitors a way to get downtown without having to drive and find parking.

The Star Line is sponsored by Downtown Roanoke Inc., Carilion Clinic, the City of Roanoke and Valley Metro and received Transportation Department funding.



Changing the center

Center in the Square and the **Science Museum of Western Virginia** hope to make some major changes to the downtown building that has been the center for arts and culture since the 1970s. They hope in the next 2.5 years to grow plants in a "technology garden" and set up science demonstrations on the roof, as well as have an outdoor dining center. Total expected renovations to Center in the Square, including the roof upfit, would cost between \$20 million and \$25 million and need to be approved by the Center's board.

The city has approved \$1.5 million for the project and Center is working on raising another \$6 million. The remainder of the expected cost would be paid for with historic and other tax credits. Spectrum is doing the design.

Liening Landing

Smith's Landing, the Blacksburg development named for former Virginia Tech and NFL football player Bruce Smith, is under a mechanic's lien, filed by a contractor, drywall and painting business for nonpayment. The contractors want \$1.75 million from general contractor APTCO East. The project, which is expected to cost \$50 million ultimately, already has three buildings with 158 apartments rented. A hotel is scheduled to be built, as well.

RCC under new management

Global Spectrum of Philadelphia has been awarded the management contract for the long underperforming **Roanoke Civic Center**. The company will begin its five-year contract in January, whose operating deficit in the most recent fiscal year was \$1.6 million (in addition to a \$1.1 million subsidy). Global's management fee begins at \$26,000 a month and rises each year. It will also be given revenue increase incentives.

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Slow growing ivy

Ivy Market's deadline to open its new Walgreens store is now April 30, 2009. The store was initially intended to open June 30, but IMD Investments, the developer, says high winds that caused destruction of some of the construction has meant delays.

Home sales down

The **Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors** reports that the number of homes sold in October is down 21 percent, dropping to 238 from 415 in 2007.

Another hill

Roanoke's **Hill Studio** has expanded to Greenville, S.C., where vice president Don Harwood will be in charge of the office. Hill will feature community planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and historic preservation in Greenville.



Hollins campaign

Hollins University has kicked off the public phase of its \$125 million Campaign for Women Who Are Going Places by accepting a challenge from the John M. Belk Educational Endowment to raise \$500,000 in the next five months in order to receive a

matching grant of the same amount. Claudia Watkins Belk of Charlotte, is a member of Hollins' Class of 1960.

Oh, Shenandoah...

One of the Roanoke Valley's most stable, long-standing institutions has fallen upon hard times and plans to merge with an Indiana company. **Shenandoah Life Insurance**, which was founded 104 years ago, has absorbed substantial losses because of investments in unstable mortgages, will merge with OneAmerica Financial Partners, which will make major investments into Shenandoah. The deal is expected to be approved by regulators by the middle of next year.

Shenandoah Life's core business—life insurance—remains stable, but its losses of nearly \$70 million in its investments was more than it could overcome alone. Company officials say little will change for its 280 employees and that it will retain its name and Roanoke location.

Life in Alleghany

The **Alleghany Foundation** has awarded \$1,193,628 in 13 grants to 11 area organizations for projects designed to improve and enhance the quality of life. The largest grant, \$399,000 to the Alleghany

Highlands Economic Development Corporation, will fund four separate projects: A downtown Covington and Clifton Forge planning study; tourism needs assessment; analysis of workforce characteristics in the region; and a study of an abandoned limestone mine near Low Moor to see if it can be used as a data security center.

Southern hospitality

The publication Meetings South has named **The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center** one of three Best of the South hotels. The other winners were in Glen Allen and Williamsburg.

Layoffs

ABX Air, a division of German-based DHL, will lay off 73 people at its Roanoke facility as the mother company gets ready to exit the American delivery business and concentrate its efforts internationally.

Meanwhile, in two other unrelated layoffs announced at the same time, **Hubbell Lighting** will release 39 people

and **HCA**, owner of several health care companies in the region, will lay off 20.

A moving story

Southeastern Freight Lines, a South Carolina-based trucking company, is investing about \$4 million in a new Cloverdale facility that will accommodate its trucks and 22 drivers based there. Southeastern's building at the site has a \$2.6 million price tag and the land cost \$1.3 million. The company had been on Plantation Road, a facility that will now house New England Motor Freight.

The variety show

The multi-purpose Roanoke company **A. Byron Smith** has a new 7,600 facility to house his bail bond, oil and real estate businesses, as well as a space for his daughter's tax service on Centre Avenue in Roanoke. Smith will also rent some office space.

FRONT Notes

A capital Y

A new \$2.5 million expansion is planned for the **Salem Family YMCA**, adding an indoor track, enlarged space for family and child programs and a new wellness center that will be 9,000 square feet. Work could begin by the end of next year, if fundraising is successful.

No Jack

Roanoke-based **Western Sizzlin Corp.** will not purchase Jack in the Box, as intended because of a glitch in regulatory compliance. The company had planned to buy up to 680,000 shares of

the California-based company. Western Sizzlin now hopes to initiate a stock exchange. The company has seen a 19 percent profit increase during the third quarter of 2008 with earnings at \$2.94 million. That's \$1.04 per share.



Changes in women's wear

E.I. Randle, a high-end women's clothing store at The Forum shopping center in Roanoke County, is being sold

by owners Diana and Henry Vaughan to Winter Hodges. He owns several shops in Roanoke, Blacksburg and in Tennessee and Texas.

Shrinking homes

Saying, "We're right-sizing for the market we're in," officials at **North American Housing Corporation** in Boones Mill have been deliberately trimming the workforce. The modular homes producer—a staple industry in Franklin County—North American has had more than 100 employees in Boones Mill. Officials declined to say how many

people have been laid off or if more layoffs were expected.

Expanding Moog

Moog Components in Blacksburg is constructing a 72,550-square-foot building next door to its facility on North Main Street that is valued at \$6.38 million. Some of its operations will move into the building next year and plans to add 50 jobs, according to reports. Moog has 1,100 employees in the New River Valley locations in Blacksburg, Galax and Christiansburg. It is based in New York.

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Courtyard Marriott Blacksburg

Contact: Allison Long at
along@montgomerycc.org

Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting & Awards Banquet

Jan. 15
6:00pm

Baker's Best Fairlawn

Contact: 540-674-1991

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2nd and 4th Thursdays
7pm

540-342-3161

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1st and 3rd Thursdays
7pm

540-389-3707

Blue Hills Toastmasters
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Noon

540-983-9260

Talk of the Town
1st and 3rd Fridays
7:30am

540-562-4276

Franklin County Toastmasters
Every Thursday
Noon

540-484-5537

Christiansburg Toastmasters
1st and 3rd Mondays
7:30pm

540-231-6771

Blacksburg Toastmasters
1st and 3rd Thursdays
7:30pm

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Virginia Tech Toastmasters
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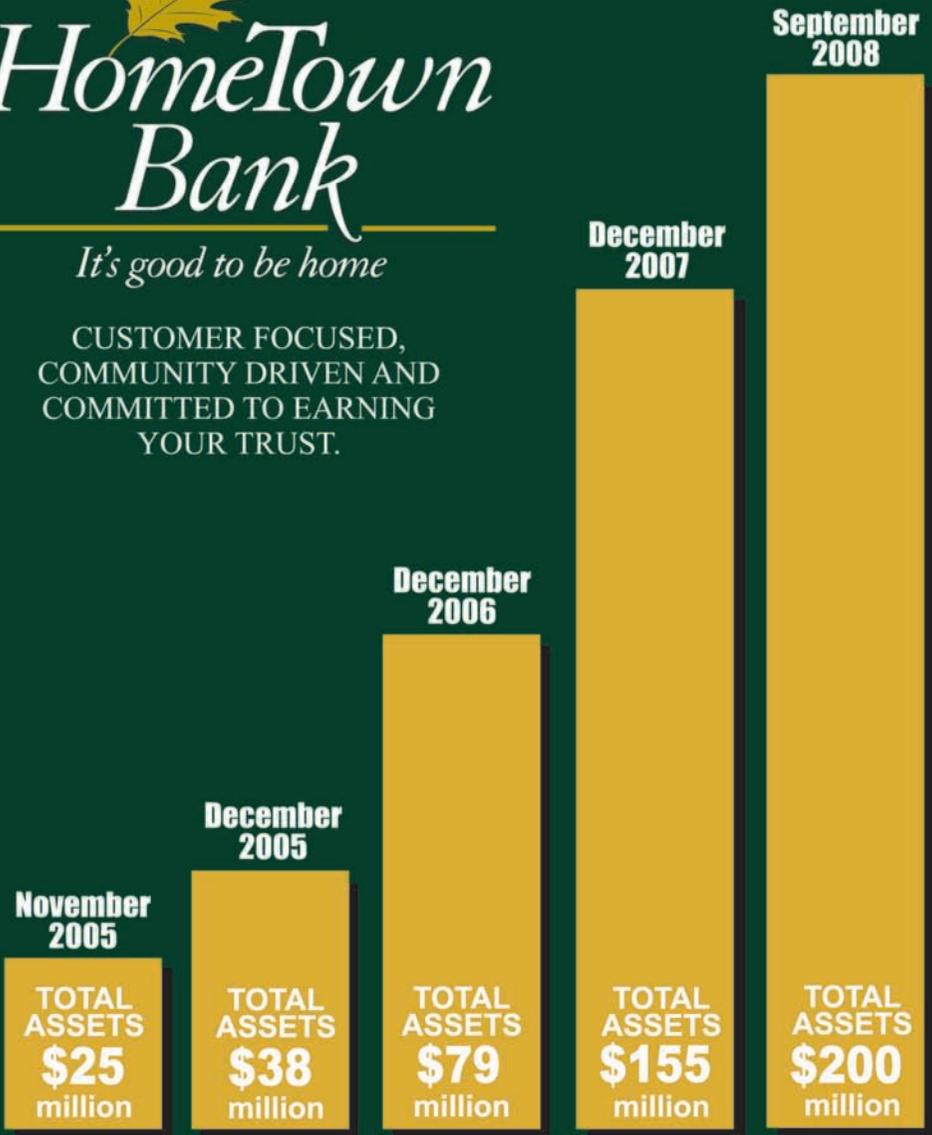
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