

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
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BODY SHOP

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WELCOME to the FRONT

It's all coming at us so fast that it's dizzying. Here's the second edition of the FRONT after what seems a 15-minute pause and the third is under construction as we speak. We built our reputation putting out our previous publication every two weeks and had hoped that we'd have a little more leisurely pace at once a month. Ain't so. So much to do in order to give you the best possible business magazine we're capable of delivering.

In this issue, we've loaded up the news budget again with timely, informative stories over a broad spectrum of business adventure—and business is, indeed, an adventure these days. We've tried to infuse a smidge of excitement and enthusiasm into these stories during a time of gloom and doom, one that we're confident will pass. We will not ignore the Sword of Damocles hanging over our nation's economy, but we refuse to toss the healthy baby out with the nasty bath water of big banks and big financial institutions.

Most business is doing what it does best: producing, imagining, creating. That's the most important card in our deck right now and we need to slam it on the table with all the enthusiasm and entrepreneurial spirit we can muster. So, we've lost a few rounds. There's a lot left to play.

Tom Field

Dan Smith

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Valley Business FRONT

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COVER STORY

Blogging for Business

is social networking *really* necessary?



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the ultimate

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EXECUTIVE PROFILE

There's Something About Mary

Cover photograph of Wendy Schuyler
by Greg Vaughn Photography

Valley Business FRONT

NOVEMBER

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Sarah Cox



Jane Dalier



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Andy Hudick



Dan Smith



Kathy Surace

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



Donna Dilley



Jill Elswick



Keith Ferrell



Tom Field



Rachel Garrity



Tim Jackson



Paulette Jayabalan



Gene Marrano



John Montgomery



Catherine Mosley



Greg Vaughn



Alison Weaver

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 46.

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

“Just like
the movie...
but with
a different
plot. — Page 73

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.



Tom Field

New way of talkin' >

By Keith Ferrell

Questions of the day: Do you have a blog? Does your business? More than that—are you and your business represented on LinkedIn and Facebook? Is your contact information shared on Plaxo? Do you tweet on Twitter?

If not, you and your business may be missing some of the most exciting and dynamic marketing, market research and communications opportunities of the 21st Century: social networking and blogging are the ways hundreds of millions of people get in touch, stay in touch and establish new contacts.

Executive Summary:

Social networking is fast reaching the point of no longer being an option for business people, evolving into the realm of the necessity for those whose networks are critical to success.

Social networks, blogs and other tools are supplementing and increasingly taking the place of not just established media but also those traditional “old boy networks” (a phrase that’s so 20th Century, not to mention sexist). Online networks are faster, hipper, more flexible, more open, more global, more responsive and more dynamic than anything any of those old boys ever dreamed of. Social networking—online tools for communicating, meeting, updating, dealing, debating, inviting and virtually any other gerund you care to name—is arguably the most

BIG BAD BOLD BLOGGERS

(4 business)

important Internet development since the deployment of the Web 14 years ago.

At the heart of social networks is one basic idea:

"A social network," says Roanoke Web entrepreneur, consultant and FRONT cover model Wendy Schuyler (www.upupperiscope.com) "is a way to connect with other people."

That's it—but of course, as with so much on the Internet, the revel is in the details.

E-mail, after all, is a way to keep in touch with people as, for that matter, was that old boy network's alumni newsletter. What makes the new media's networking different, Schuyler points out, is its immediacy and interactivity: when an idea, news item or bit of information needs to get out to your market, post it on your FaceBook or LinkedIn page, send a tweet (a short burst of text) via your Twitter account, write a blog entry, and get it out there immediately.

Out there to whom, though? Isn't social networking just for the under 25 set?

Hardly, says Stuart Mease (www.stuartmease.com) special projects coordinator for the City of Roanoke. "A quarter to a third of the population has Facebook pages, and that's as true of our region as of the nation. In July of 2008 there were 40,000 to 50,000 Facebook users in Roanoke alone. Our under 40 population is 25,000, so you can see that it's not just younger people using the service."

The math not only speaks for itself, Mease feels, it speaks clearly and loudly: "If your product or service targets people under 40, you had better be on Facebook."

Which doesn't mean the old media—magazines, for instance, to pick a medium not entirely at random—are irrelevant. Far from it, he says.

"The most effective companies," Mease says, "are those that combine their traditional media plans with a simultaneous

““”

A quarter to a third of the population has Facebook pages, and that's true of our region as of the nation

—Stuart Mease



Anne Clelland



Cheryl Smith

Dan Smith



A good business blog is like an all day and all night business networking meeting.

—Anne Clelland
Handshake 2.0

In our transient society, that sort of constant access to providing accurate information is a very effective way of solidifying business relationships.

—Cheryl Smith
CultureSmith Consulting

If your product or service targets people under 40, you had better be on Facebook

—Stuart Mease
Roanoke City

It's simple... a social network is a way to connect with other people

—Wendy Schuyler
upUPperiscope.com

new media plan. Doing both, there comes a moment where a magical marketing point evolves, the new and the traditional playing off each other. Marketing becomes much more effective with a lot of additional cost."

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Plaxo and most other social networking sites and services are free (their business plans call for them to generate revenue from advertising), as are most blog services.

Facebook is an "open" social networking service—people post anything and everything there; the service includes games and online events—and as such, your business and marketing information mingle with everything else.

"Facebook space is very personal," says Lynchburg new media consultant Cheryl Smith (www.culturesmithconsulting.com), "while LinkedIn and Plaxo are primarily business networking sites."

Smith is particularly impressed with Plaxo, essentially an online address book and contact information service. "For people who have a change in status, Plaxo automatically updates the information throughout the person's contact list. In our transient society, that sort of constant access to providing accurate information is a very effective way of solidifying business relationships."

For quick and highly focused business communications, Smith notes, Twitter can be dynamic business tool. Restricting users to text messages—no photos, audio or other multimedia that Facebook encourages, for instance—and further limiting those messages to 140 characters. Twitter messages, known as "tweets," force the sender to focus on the absolute essence of the message, an approach that companies such as Dell are finding valuable, both for communicating their own messages, and for mining consumer interests and concerns.

For more detailed communications, Blacksburg consultant Anne Giles Clelland (www.anneclelland.com) sees large business potential in blogs. Short for "web logs," blogs are essentially online diaries or journals, the chance for the



Lori White



Stuart Mease



Wendy Schuyler

Dan Smith

Greg Vaughn Photography

blogger to address, at whatever length is comfortable, whatever is on her mind.

"A blog can be a source for a lot of traffic for your company," Clelland says. "A good business blog is like an all day all night business networking meeting." The important thing, she says, is that the blog entries be clear and reflect a passion for the business, whether you write the blog yourself, have an employee do it or retain an outside consulting services to create and maintain the blog for you. In each case, honesty is not only the traditional best policy it's the new media's best policy too.

"A business blog," Clelland says, "should be truthful every day. It's demanding work, but worthwhile."

Like all other new networking media, blogging's interactive. Most blog sites offer readers the opportunity to comment on your business's blog posts; tweets often prompt plenty of tweets (pro and con) in response; Facebook commentaries can be as informative about your business as the original post.

"The important thing to remember," Wendy Schuyler says, "is that new media communications remain personal communications. In some ways they're more personal than traditional letters."

The sheer number and variety of social networking and blogging tools can be daunting. "You can't keep up with every new social networking tool," Schuyler says, recommending that businesses try different ones and "figure out which works best for you and your business purposes."

As with the most traditional media, those business purposes remain paramount. "Technology is just a tool to help your business be more engaged," says Cheryl Smith.

A tool that, through social networking, blogging and, no doubt, technologies just beginning to emerge, gives your business global (and local) reach while maintaining, enhancing and vastly extending the personal touch.

Blogs & Social Sites You Might Want To Know About...

To create your own blog

blogspot.com
typepad.com
wordpress.com
blogger.com
livejournal.com

Leading global network sites

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linkedin.com
myspace.com
plaxo.com
twitter.com

Local / Regional blogs

Around Town >
myscoper.com
stuartmease.com
swvabloggers.com
myroanokestory.com
newvaconnects.com

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storefront/
handshake20.com

Real Estate >
livinggreen.typepad.com
nrliving.typepad.com
blog.roanokehousehunter.com

Technology >
designnine.com/news
thetechnologycouncil.com



In the beginning was the blog >

By **Tim W. Jackson**

Her days typically start around 4:30 or 5 a.m. She has a brand new business that needs tending and says she has to be productive and creative first thing in the morning before answering the phone or checking e-mail.

By mid-morning she's moved on to physical exercise, either lifting weights or training for a sprint triathlon. By lunchtime, she's ready for something to eat and a quick nap to recharge her batteries. After that, she's ready for her second shift.

Life is busy for Anne Giles Clelland these days. Having started Handshake 2.0, at the end of July, she is still trying to get the company on secure footing and publicize it to the business sector that is her focus—high tech. With enthusiasm and passion, and a plethora of past work experience, Clelland wants to present area businesses an online blogging presence.

She says Handshake 2.0 is a high-tech business news site that allows clients to broadcast their high-tech news and readers to find out the latest developments in high-tech entrepreneurship, business models and innovation.

Clelland took a circuitous route to beginning this company. She began her career as a teacher and a coach throughout most of

the 1980s. She had stints as a writer for The St. Petersburg Times (the non-profit paper owned by the Poynter Institute) in the 1990s and also began to get experience as a business consultant. She was a public relations consultant just prior to starting Handshake 2.0.

"I have been told that one of my greatest gifts is engagement," Clelland says, reflecting on how her myriad jobs all had engagement as a common thread.

"I engage in person. I engage in words. I engage in ideas. Starting this company was the synthesis—or an application—of engagement," she said.

Clelland says she's backing—and banking on—high tech to be the impetus for regional economic development.

"This is my part," Clelland says. "This is the gift I have."

She says 15 percent of Fortune 500 companies are blogging and she asked herself what regional companies with regional budgets could do to compete online. "It has to be an aggregator," Clelland says. "And that's what I do. There's no one who can afford a full-time blogger, so I'm the blog within a blog.

"My clients have all the benefits of having a blog, but they don't have to write it, they don't have to hire someone. We have Web 2.0 here, too. It's not just for Silicon Valley."

One of the challenges we face as a local entity, Clelland says, was the uncertainty that exists about the power of online relationship building. "We have great things going on in our area in the business world and as a place to live," Clelland says. "Online, we can get the word out." 

“”

There's no one who can afford a full-time blogger, so I'm the blog within a blog.

—Anne Clelland

[omg she's everywhere]

Name:	Anne Giles Clelland	Interests:	Weight training, sprint triathlons, savory meals, red wine selected by Thomas "The Wine Guy" at Kroger, local community and economic development, New River Valley Triathlon 2009
Age:	50		
Company:	Handshake 2.0, a venture of Handshake Media, Incorporated		
Location:	Blacksburg		
Education:	B.A. history, M.A. education, Virginia Tech; M.S. mental health counseling, Nova Southeastern University	Philosophy:	Thoreau: "Live deep." About Handshake 2.0: This company is a high-tech business news site showcasing local, mostly high-tech economies and offering business blog services to those companies, their partners and affiliates
Work History:	Serial passion—jobs ranging from teaching to sales, from newspaper writing to business consulting		

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Dan Smith (all photos)

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Executive Summary:

The latest technology is on impressive display at Virginia Prosthetics, but this is not so much about creating bionic people as it is returning real people to real lives that have been tragically interrupted.

Virginia Prosthetics: making lives whole >

By Alison Weaver

Piles of legs lie in a corner. Stacks of arms adorn a table. A disembodied face peers up from a workbench. Walking through the Williamson Road offices of Virginia Prosthetics can be disconcerting at first—but then the technology grabs you.

“You cannot go to a more high-tech facility,” President and Owner Doug Call says. “If it’s available anywhere in the world, then we’ve got it here.”

The Roanoke-based company that produces and fits custom prosthetics and orthotics can claim a lot of firsts in the state:

- First to use a CAD/CAM system to develop replacement limbs.
- First to fit a C-Leg, a “smart” device with an on-board microprocessor.

- First to fit bilateral bionic ankles.

Virginia Prosthetics was founded in 1967 by Fred Murko, a former Marine and body builder who ran Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center from 1952 to 1966. A certified prosthetist, registered physical therapist (he received license No. 2 in Virginia) and athletic trainer, Murko was passionate about helping people be active.

Doug Call was a high school football player when he first met Murko, then the athletic trainer for Northside High in Roanoke. Call was smitten with Murko's cheerleader daughter, Marty, and they began dating. Call worked part time at the company during the 1980s and after he graduated from Radford University, Murko asked Call to join the business. By the next year, he and Marty were married. Murko sold the seven-employee company to Call in 1992.



BODY SHOP

"I had a deliberate plan when I bought the company to grow it," Call says. "We grew ourselves to fend off competition."

Sixteen years later, Virginia Prosthetics employs 33 people and has five full-time staffed offices in Roanoke, Christiansburg, Martinsville, Charlottesville and Fishersville. "Most of our success has been due to our employees," Call says. "We have very talented practitioners. Anybody can make anything; it's the follow-up that makes the difference."

That attitude helped the company earn the Small Business of the Year award from Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce in September. The chamber also cited the company's 400 percent growth in revenue over those 16 years.

The aging of America has led to a dramatic increase in the need for prostheses. Only about 15 percent of people lose an arm or leg because of trauma; the vast majority of amputations stem from vascular and circulatory complications from diseases such as diabetes. Only a small percentage of amputations are of the upper extremities. Over the years, Virginia Prosthetics has steadily increased its production of orthotics. "Orthotics" refers to any type of bracing to support the musculoskeletal system—from back braces for scoliosis patients to leg braces for stroke patients or those with multiple sclerosis.

War is hell, but historically every U.S. war has led to significant medical advances. Call volunteered at Walter





Tony Whitcomb
shaves a leg...so to speak

Reed Army Medical Center in 2004 and says, "We saw lots of severe, severe trauma. Patients who weren't missing just a leg, but both arms and a leg. It was a humbling, learning experience."

Still, soldiers from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars do not make up a significant number of clients at Virginia Prosthetics, Call says.

He expects to see growing numbers as veterans return to the area and enter the local Veterans Affairs system.

The rambling Virginia Prosthetics building has been expanded again and again over the years to accommodate more and better technology. One room boasts an OMEGA Tracer System, a machine that enables the practitioner to create a highly accurate 3-D image of a patient's residual limb. In another room, a machine can carve a urethane-based polymer block into a lower leg in six to seven minutes. Next door a technician heats plastic blocks and uses vacuum pressure to precisely mold a prosthetics.

"We can go to a hospital in the morning, measure a patient and produce a limb in half a day," Call says.

The technology doesn't come cheap: a typical below-the-knee prosthetic costs between \$5,000 and \$12,000, while an above-the-knee device can range from \$6,000 to \$38,000. In most cases, health insurance covers the costs.

Advancements in plastics have led to replacement limbs that are lighter and stronger than ever. A typical below-the-knee prosthetic weighs in at 2 to 4 pounds, an above-the-knee device ranges from 5 to 9 pounds. According to Call, "The lighter the weight, the better."

New silicone gel technology and the use of suction sockets have vastly improved patient comfort and alleviated the need for belts and straps in many instances.

"You tell us what you want to do, and we'll have you back doing it," Call says. "You can do what you did before." 

“ ”
You tell us what you want to do, and we'll have you back doing it.
—Doug Call

the ultimate
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SHOP**
Virginia Prosthetics



The real bionic man >

Sidney Nicely, who's worked at Virginia Prosthetics for more than 40 years, is also one of its satisfied customers. The Allegheny County native became an amputee at the age of 10 weeks when doctors realized that what appeared to be a bruise on his foot was actually osteogenic sarcoma. Doctors at Sloan-Kettering removed the infant's leg in 1947 to save his life. He was fitted with a prosthesis at the age of 2 and has personally experienced the advancements in technology over nearly 60 years. Nicely's first prosthesis was a wooden limb that rested on a pad fashioned from an automobile tire. Over the years, he was fitted with a progression of devices as new techniques and materials were invented. In 1999 he became the first person in Virginia to be fitted with a C-Leg, a prosthesis with a knee controlled by a microprocessor. Fifty times a second, the microprocessor analyzes his stance and the angle of his knee and makes adjustments accordingly. "It's more stable and there's less chance of falls," he says, adding that descending stairs is much easier. He can climb ladders, play church softball and tinker around on his grandfather's farm. "There's no limit." To demonstrate his bionic knee, Nicely casually bends and swivels his leg around with the foot canted sideways at a breath-takingly unnatural angle. "It makes tying my shoes a lot easier," he explains, matter-of-factly. —Alison Weaver



Sidney Nicely shows off his bionic leg



Doug Call looks at the scan created by the OMEGA Tracer System. The computer image is used to make, in this case, a new leg.





Dan Smith

'I'm happy to serve you.' NOT! >

Have you ever wondered if the customer service world has been taken over by zombies? Can you remember the last time a customer service provider walked up to you, looked you right in the eye and smiled when offering assistance? (That's assuming you didn't have to chase them down to get help.) I'm writing about a genuine look or tone of voice that says, "I'm happy to serve you."

There are many costs associated with the everyday operations of a business. These costs include advertising dollars that are poured into getting the company's name in the public eye, special discounts and promotions to entice consumers to try products or services. There's a dangerous truth to the fact that an attitude of indifference that customers experience when they visit or call a company may actually cause a company to lose business.

Genuine human interaction is critical. Studies show that in face-to-face communication, 55 percent of the overall message comes from body language (smiles, eye contact, etc.), 38 percent is contributed by voice tone, and 7 percent is from the actual words that are spoken.

On the phone, when body language is removed from the mix, voice tone becomes 87 percent of the overall message and words only contribute 13 percent to the impression that is made upon a customer.

While the impact of body language is removed from telephone communication, it is important to note that body posture can affect how someone sounds over the phone. For example, if your feet are propped up or you are slouched in your chair, your voice tone will almost certainly reflect your casual posture.

While this might not be thought of as treating customers rudely or inefficiently, speaking with a company representative on the phone that sounds disinterested and in a monotonous voice is extremely frustrating to a customer. These representatives may actually be creating irate callers for themselves.

Challenge the customer service staff within your organization to smile and stay focused on the conversation with each customer, whether face-to-face or by phone. They will sound more sincere, friendly, and caring (and will often be treated better by customers).

In turn, this will contribute toward the satisfaction and retention of a loyal customer base. 

Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

Executive Summary:

OK, it's time for the annual rant about those people who 'serve' us. Pay attention to how you treat customers, whether it's in person or on the phone.

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Dan Smith

Larry Davidson: Economic turmoil actually makes customers more sensitive to and concerned about their appearance.

Davidson: Advice from the master >



Grooming says more about you than the cost of the clothing. It reflects how you feel about yourself and the level of your attention to detail.

—Larry Davidson

Impeccably dressed in a gray wool suit, a white shirt striped in purple, a perfectly coordinated purple silk tie, elegant onyx cufflinks securing French cuffs, and accented with an elegant pocket square, Larry Davidson is a walking advertisement for what he does best: provide high quality menswear to our region.

If there is one thing Larry Davidson knows, it is better menswear.

In the early 1970s, as a graduate of the University of Cincinnati with a degree in accounting, and against his better judgment, he accepted a position as manager of a now defunct Davidson's store in Lexington. As a young boy, Davidson's father, Sig Davidson, had cautioned him never to go into retailing, but when his father offered him the job, Larry took it and never looked back.

Today, as president of the 98-year-old institution, he has seen scores of fashions come and go. With more than 30 years of experience under his perfectly-coordinated belt and stores in three locations, we turned to him for his take on coming trends and what we can expect.

Davidson says he sees three distinct trends of late.

- First, an urban trend in which more suits are being worn to work, replacing khakis with a dress shirt, tie and a sports coat. The suit is worn with a dress shirt, but not necessarily with a tie—a look often seen this year on our presidential candidates as they campaigned across the country. The cut of the suit is trimmer and thinner than in recent years.

- The second trend is toward a narrower lapel on suits and sport coats. As the lapel is narrowed, it accompanies a slimming of the silhouette in general, giving a trim look to the figure and a more youthful appearance.
- Third, flat front trousers are becoming more common and preferred. Worn with this season's shorter coat, they give a cleaner look to the silhouette than the pleated trouser.

We can expect the trends to appear immediately in the Roanoke and New River Valleys, though they will not be as extreme as what we see in the pages of fashion magazines.

Davidson says economic turmoil makes customers more sensitive to and concerned about their appearance. In many cases during economic downturns, professionals update their wardrobes to ensure they project a sharp image—minimally by adding just a few new shirts or accessories.

Davidson says that thirty percent of Davidson's sales are custom orders. A custom suit is priced starting at 10 percent more than a suit off the rack. The time required to tailor a custom suit is less than it once was and delivery is between two to three weeks. The suit will be uniquely the customer's, made specifically to his measurements and fabric preferences, while showcasing his personal style.

In Larry Davidson's opinion, ordering a custom suit is like going to a better restaurant; the expertise and special treatment are part of the experience. The clothier forms a relationship with the customer to provide guidance for his present and future wardrobe needs and lifestyle. He works with the customer to build on the wardrobe he already has, helping him to get more value out of his wardrobe.

The most important tip? "Grooming says more about you than the cost of the clothing," says Davidson. "It reflects how you feel about yourself and the level of your attention to detail. It is not what you are wearing or the label that matters, but how you wear it. Attention to detail and grooming is essential." 



Dan Smith

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

The region's undisputed master of business dress, Larry Davidson, talks about what to wear, how to wear it and what the economy is doing to dress.



Ellis Gutshall



Greg Feldmann

Dan Smith



Bank fallout: A sharing of the pain >

Very interesting times.

—Ellis Gutshall

Selectivity is certainly a watch-word.

—Greg Feldmann

Through the turmoil and panic of the last few months, the American commercial real estate market had delivered some sorely-needed stability to the U.S. economy, but is that going to last?

—Ed Hall

The credit crunch, which may be alleviated somewhat by the package Congress passed last month, has already been affecting commercial borrowers. It's also made lenders more cautious, more apt to ask additional questions about a project or development that may sound like the best thing since sliced bread—but comes with an awful lot of risk in perilous financial times.

Greg Feldmann, president and CEO of StellarOne Bank in Christiansburg, says, "From an industry standpoint, credit is certainly tighter today than it was a year ago."

StellarOne (60 branches), which merged with Christiansburg's First National Bank earlier this year, is "open for business," and has the liquidity, says Feldmann, that some other banks do not.

Feldmann says housing-related lending industry-wide is more cautious these days, with housing values dropping and homeowners bailing out on mortgages. Banks have a mission, adds Feldmann: "You want the best asset quality you can find in the market. Selectivity is certainly a watch-word."

Banks need to know what's moving in a particular market, what's moving and what's not moving, before they make commercial loans—perhaps more than ever, says Feldmann.

A good case in point is Mason's Crest in Roanoke County, a planned community of high-end Craftsman style homes that would sell in the mid-to-high six figures. After sailing through the approval process and site prep work that involved more than 100 acres, only about a dozen were built. Developer Radford & Associates threw in the towel several months ago and put the unsold lots up for auction.

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary:

The problems facing banks and their customers are severe, but commerce continues and in some segments there is optimism.



Ed Hall



Mason's Crest in Roanoke County: Developer Radford & Associates threw in the towel and put unsold lots up for auction.

Gene Marrano

It's not just developers that may have trouble securing commercial loans these days. A recent New York Times story describes small companies that have been turned down when looking for loans to help them grow, even from banks that had worked with them in the past. In other cases, firms that would qualify for loans are holding back, waiting to see what the economy does.

Members of the Virginia Banking Association—every financial institution in the Commonwealth says president Bruce Whitehurst—are taking an approach that is “clearly more cautious ... [regarding] acquisition and development lending, which really ties to the residential market.”

Lenders need to know what's going on in the marketplace these days, says Whitehurst, adding that Virginia banks are in better shape than others around the country because the economy has been stronger here. “Banking and the economy are inextricably tied,” he notes.

As for commercial projects Whitehurst has not heard of any radical changes, but says that for some time banks have had a more disciplined approach when it comes to lending money in that sector.

Commercial overbuilding in the early 1990's, excess office space and a recession helped bring about that go-slow approach, according to Whitehurst. “I think that is serving banks well now.”

Commercial properties that are built on speculation, without signed leases in hand, are a rare bird these days, says Whitehurst.

For a smaller institution like ValleyBank (eight branches) there's a tendency to be more cautious when lending money, anyway. With mega-banks like Wachovia being gobbled up—after being the gobbler for so long—President and CEO Ellis Gutshall called these “very interesting times,” for the banking industry.

The sale of Wachovia Bank, which had a large presence in this region, has also had an impact, though, in some cases, a positive one, says Gutshall. “Their customers have been lined up outside our door,” he says.

ValleyBank just had one of its best loan production months ever; a sign said Gutshall “that we're not pulling in our horns. But some of the deals that may have been approved two years ago, would they have made the grade today? There's going to be a bunch of them that don't.”

Looking at a Mason's Crest today for example, Gutshall says bankers might ask, “How many lots does this put on the market? How many lots are selling every month?” Gutshall sees a return to more traditional lending, where developers for instance “would have more of their cash in the deal.”

Hall Associates offers a variety of services for commercial clients, from selling their properties to managing and maintaining them. Chairman and President Ed Hall says banks are “being more frugal.” With major commercial transactions taking anywhere from 6 to 36 months to compete, Hall says the true effects of the Congressional bailout and the economic slowdown may not be evident for some time. “We're not going to

find out a great deal until 6 to 12 months out, in terms of how it affects our business," he predicts.

Hall says commercial loan default rates are low at this point, but the dropping value of retail spaces around the country (30 percent in some cases) could spell trouble. Because the Roanoke Valley normally doesn't swing too high or too low he doesn't expect as much of a problem here, "but its too early for most of us to see how this is going to shake out."

Adds Hall: "Through the turmoil and panic of the last few months, the American commercial real estate market had delivered some sorely-needed stability to the U.S. economy, but is that going to last?"

Hall sees some commercial market weakness in the future—the question is how deep that weakness will be? No doubt a lot of people, lenders, borrowers and developers, will be asking that same question. 

FINANCIAL POLL

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

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What do you think you know? >

Executive Summary:

A little advice for the skittish investor. Understand the markets. Be patient. Diversify.

By Andy Hudick

For the past few months the financial markets have experienced huge price swings with some assets declining in price by large amounts in one day only to increase in value by a similar amount the next day. It is hard not to get caught up in current events. This difficulty is compounded by media outlets constantly offering speculation, rumor and their version of the “facts.”

As you watch a financial reporter offer some financial facts and opinions, have you ever wondered whether the reporter actually had any skin in the game? Do these folks have equity investments? Do they own bonds? Are they investors offering investment advice or just financial reporters creating a buzz? I have often suspected many of them have few investments and one prominent talking head says that she has all of her money in one asset class: bonds.

Several months ago oil prices were very high and many news reporters were offering negative comments about the profits being made by oil companies. It was suggested that this was a bad result and somehow these companies were wrong to be making a profit. Congress was talking about “capping profits.”

Note what happened to many financial institutions in the past few months as they stopped making profits. Our economy needs our public companies to make a profit. Absent a profit, these companies will not be in business. As we have discovered recently, if these companies are not in business, the effect on you and me can be profound. The profits, or lack of profits, impact each of us in our pension plans, other investments and even our daily lives.

If you are a speculator, then you should have enjoyed the past few months of activity. If you are a long-term investor then you need to focus on the real world that lies beneath the flow of data and the noise being created.

A long-term investor should remember a few of the more challenging moments in the past 25 years:

- The high tax rates of the early 1980s;
- Creation of tax shelters that inflated real estate prices and the subsequent collapse (and government bailout) of the savings and loans;
- The high-flying stock market fueled by the Internet and dot.com companies that imploded in early 2000;
- And most recently, the “easy credit” available to those with no ability to pay that has helped create our current financial challenge.

The emotions of the moment can distract us if we do not have a plan. It is impossible to predict how markets will move at any time due (in part) to the frenzy created by those feeding us information that prey on our emotions of fear and greed.

If you have a diversified portfolio and some patience, then stay focused on your goals, invest for the long-term and diversify away some of the risk. Do not concentrate your investments in any one stock, industry, piece of real property, or sector.

My own money is invested in our local real estate, our local industries and the broad stock and bond markets. I am experiencing some of the same discomfort you are, but I have a financial plan.

I expect the current challenge to end and the financial system to survive and the talking heads to keep talking. Consider the source before you take action. Markets ebb and flow. We need to have patience and the flow will return. 

Optical Cable >

Fiscal years to Oct. 31, 2008
2007 2006 2005

Compiled by Paulette Jayabalan

Overview:

Optical Cable Corporation (Nasdaq: OCCF; www.occfiber.com) is a leading manufacturer of fiber optic cables primarily sold into the enterprise market, and the manufacturer of military ground tactical fiber optic cables for the U.S. military. Founded in 1983 in Roanoke, it pioneered the design and production of fiber optic cables for the most demanding military field applications, as well as fiber optic cables suitable for both indoor and outdoor use.

Optical Cable sells its products worldwide for uses ranging from commercial and campus installations to customized products for specialty applications and harsh environments, including military applications.

The company, led by 44-year-old Neil Wilkin, is headquartered in Roanoke, with offices near Asheville, N.C. It has 210 employees.

Value

(Source, Oct. 10: www.reuters.com)

Exchange:	NASDAQ		
Price per share of common stock:	\$3.76		
Change	down \$0.05 (-1.31%)		
Volume	41,110 shares		
52 Week High	\$7.45		
52 Week Low	\$3.24		
Market Capitalization	\$22.76 million		
EPS (year to Oct. 31, 2007)	0.21		
PE Ratio	8.15		
Shares of common stock outstanding:	6.05 million		

Performance Record

(Dollars in millions except for per share data)

	2007	2006	2005
Operating Income	1.9	0.5	1.8
Net Income	1.3	0.4	1.2

(basic and diluted net earnings per share)

Total Revenue	45.5	45.3	45.9
Total Assets	37.3	34.8	34.9
Long Term Debt Obligation	---	---	---

Book Value per share %	3.6	0.2	2.5
Price / Book	0.8	0.9	1.1

(Source: Morningstar Online)

Net Book Value: \$5.43 at end of Quarter 1, Jan. 31, 2008)

Weighted-average shares:

Basic	6,089	5,954	5,776
Diluted	6,096	5,966	5,800
Common Stock	\$3,683,754	\$2,670,343	\$1,930,944
Shareholder Equity	\$31,978	\$30,435	\$29,345

Unaudited Third Quarter Performance

(Source: Optical Cable, www.reuters.com)

	Nine months		Three months	
	Ended July 31		Ended July 31	
	2008	2007	2008	2007
Net Sales	42.6	32.1	16.4	11.7
Operating Income	unavailable		0.6	0.8
Net Income (loss)	2.2	0.44	0.48	0.54
Net Earnings/Share (Basic and Diluted)	0.37	0.07	0.08	0.09
Total Revenue	unavailable		16.4	11.7
Total Assets	unavailable		52.1	32.8
Long-Term Debt Obligation	unavailable		8.6	0.0

Directors (as of July 31, 2008)

Name	Age	Title
Neil D. Wilkin, Jr.	44	Chairman, President, CEO
Tracy G. Smith	40	CFO, Vice President
Randall H. Frazier	56	Director
John M. Holland	62	Director
Craig H. Weber	48	Director
John B. Williamson, III	53	Director

Executive Compensation

(Source: www.reuters.com)

Name	Total Annual Compensation
Randall H. Frazier	---
John M. Holland	---
Tracy Smith	\$203,895
Craig H. Weber	---
Neil D. Wilkin, Jr.	\$368,350
John B. Williamson III	---

Price Range of Common Stock

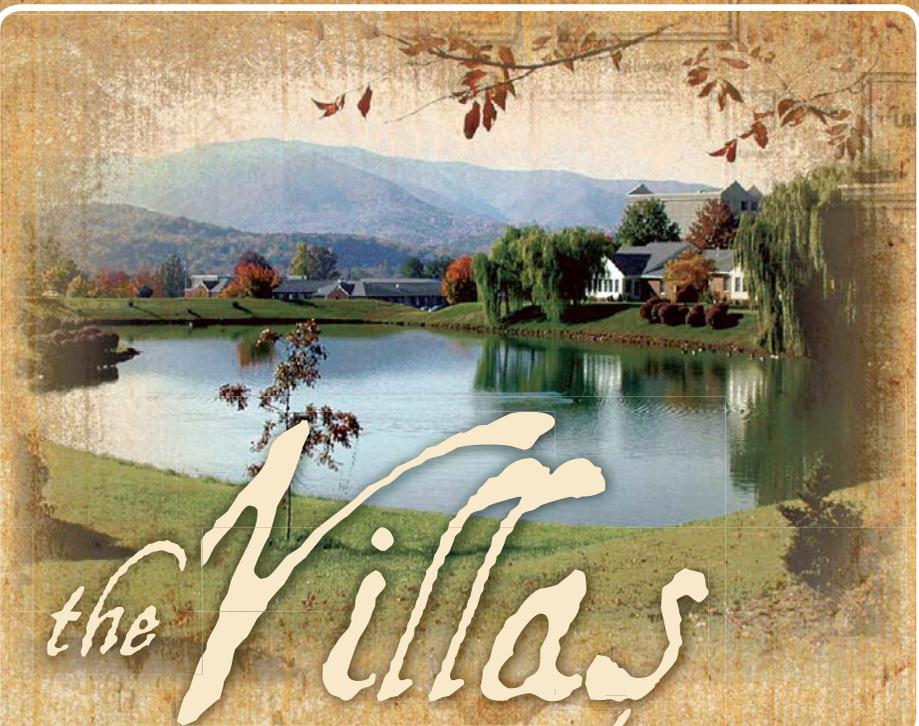
As of Oct. 31, 2007, and Dec. 31, 2007, there were approximately 3,700 and 3,600 shareholders of record.

	Fiscal Year ended Oct. 31			
	2007		2006	
	High	Low	High	Low
First Quarter	\$6.00	\$4.25	\$6.39	\$5.10
Second Quarter	\$5.97	\$4.52	\$6.48	\$4.46
Third Quarter	\$5.45	\$4.57	\$5.16	\$3.69
Fourth Quarter	\$5.20	\$4.40	\$5.83	\$3.41



Neil Wilkin





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Authorized by Nicholas C. Conte, Chairman, on behalf of the firm.



It sounded too perfect.

—Howard Highland

Howard Highland

Dan Smith

Legal aid center targets the elderly >

Executive Summary:

The new Community Law Center at Oliver Hill's home on Gilmer Avenue in Roanoke will help carry on the work of the Civil Rights pioneer and hero.

By Alison Weaver

Famed civil rights lawyer Oliver Hill's boyhood home has a new life and you'd have to believe he'd approve.

The large frame house on Roanoke's Gilmer Avenue now has a dual role as a museum and free legal aid center. It is run by a Washington & Lee University law school graduate who works with the elderly poor in this Northwest Roanoke neighborhood.

Hill, who died last year at age 100, rose to fame when one of his cases led to the

landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that ended the "separate but equal" system of racially segregated schools.

Open since October, the Washington and Lee Oliver White Hill Community Law Center provides legal services to Roanoke Valley residents 60 and older whose incomes are 200 percent or less of the federal poverty guideline (currently \$10,400 for an individual, \$14,000 for a family of two).

The program is designed to complement existing services provided by Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley and Blue Ridge Legal Services.

The center is a collaborative effort of the Oliver White Hill Foundation, Washington and Lee University and the Commonwealth of Virginia. One of Hill's missions was to encourage the legal profession to get more involved in civil rights and providing services for minorities. That mission meshes well with W&L law school's new third-year curriculum that replaces classroom instruction with real-client interaction.

Recent W&L law school graduate Howard Highland, 27, directs the center. Plans call

for six law students to work with him, but their schedules haven't yet been determined. "Right now, I'm the paralegal/secretary/lawyer," he says.

The center initially will focus on elder law: preparing advance medical directives, simple wills and durable powers of attorney.

Growing up in Northern Virginia, Highland participated in typical activities such as marching band and jazz band. But less typical was his involvement in the Classical Association of Virginia—a group that promotes the study of Latin and Greek. One highlight was being selected to attend the Latin Governor's Academy, a three-week program at then Hollins College.

So what does one do at a summer camp designed around a dead language? "We worked on translation skills, comprehending what you're reading," Highland says.

The National Merit Scholar had his pick of schools and headed to the University of Texas with plans to be an anthropologist. He pursued a double major in classics and anthropology and says that nothing in law school was as grueling as a course in ancient

Greek that crammed four semesters into 12 weeks. "Five hours a day, then we had to read for five to seven hours," he recalls.

After college, he discovered that there's a limited market for anthropologists and took a job handling claims with Progressive insurance. Much of his time was spent dealing with attorneys, a group he'd never really been around. "It wasn't necessarily the best exposure to lawyers," he says wryly. "I found myself explaining to them how to do their jobs." It prompted him to go to law school.

Before starting at Washington and Lee, Highland did a stint on a relative's cattle ranch in Montana. "I tried to be a ranch hand." But he laughs at the idea of calling him a cowboy. "They knew better than to put me on a horse. They put me on a four-wheeler instead."

While at W&L, Highland worked with associate dean Mary Natkin on cases targeting "underserved" people in Virginia. When she approached him about heading up the law center, he hesitated at first because, "It sounded too perfect." 📖

LEGAL POLL

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WELLNESS POLL

Universal health care:

Yes, no, or perhaps?

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put "WELLNESS POLL" in subject line

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Guest Commentary



Dick Robers Dan Smith



This is only a proposal to get the discussion started.

—Dick Robers

A modest health insurance proposal >

Executive Summary:

Dick Robers, an executive at TAP, has always been a man bursting with ideas. Whether he's proposing the Smart Road in Montgomery County, putting together the Blue Ridge Health Care Coalition, or recommending to Virginia Tech that the quickest way to alert students of danger is with a siren, Robers is generally out front. Herewith, we present the former Roanoke County Board of Supervisors member's health care plan for a nation. Like all his ideas, it requires more than one read. And like all of them, it is worth reading and thinking about.

By Dick Robers

The proposed solutions to the national health care dilemma range widely from universal health care to the free market approach. The problem, though, is that too many people are priced out of the market and too many have been destroyed because of the cost of health care. Americans have worked entirely too hard to have their life savings taken because of medical bills.

I would like to propose—for discussion purposes—a way of controlling the costs to individuals and families, while allowing them to receive necessary medical treatments. The proposal would limit

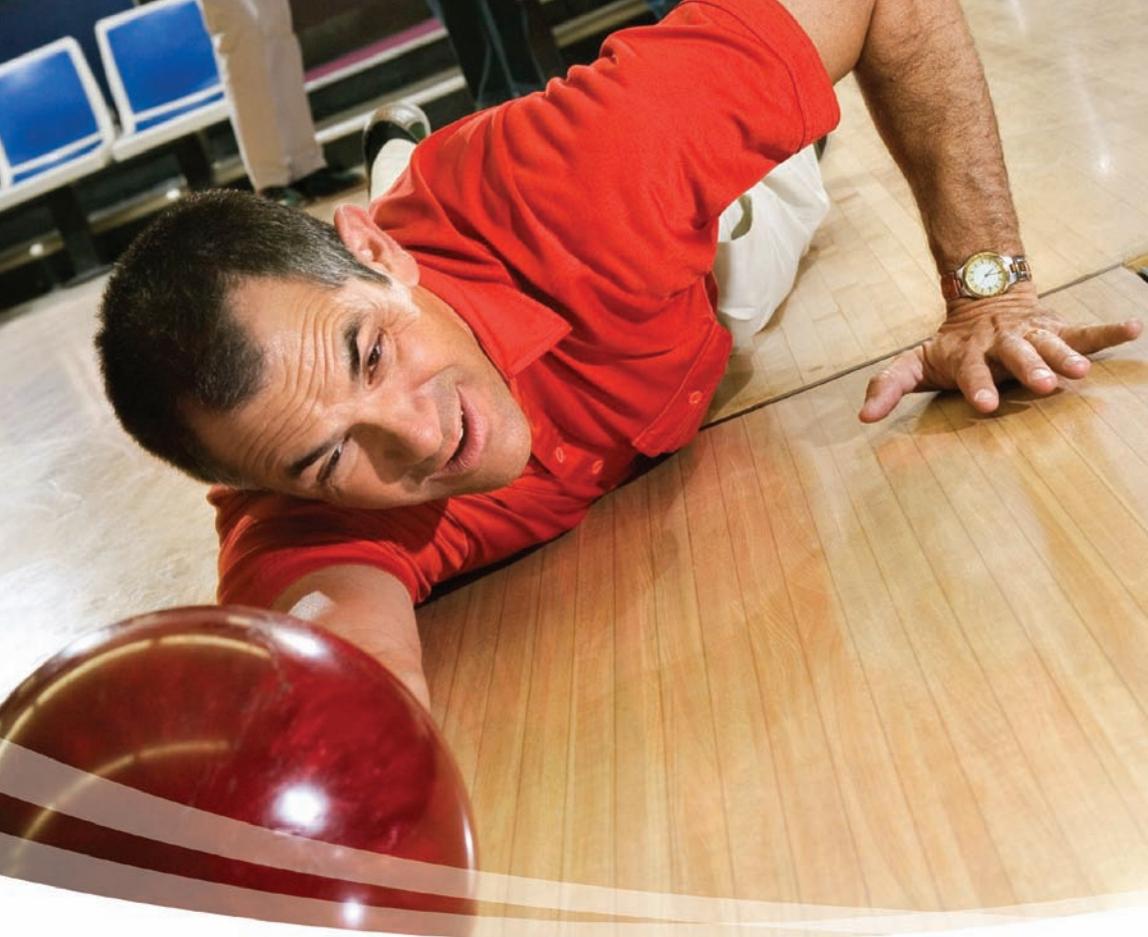
their liability to 15 percent of net worth (excluding their homes), but also assure that their bills are paid in full.

The proposal would work as follows:

1. Everyone would pay annual premiums: single plan would be \$1,500; married couple, \$2,500; single and one child, \$2,500; family, \$3,500 (retired single, \$1,000; retired couple, \$1,500 at Social Security retirement age. Those who are unemployed could have their premiums waived for up to four months if they are registered with the state employment commission and actively seeking unemployment. This premium would be used to provide re-insurance over a maximum out of pocket expenditure. This premium would be mandatory for all who are employed and would be paid by either the individual or employer or a combination of both.
2. Medical services costs of up to 15 percent of the net worth (not including the home), or \$7,500, whichever is more, would be paid by the individual through private insurance.
3. Those with a net worth of \$10,000 or less would be covered by Medicaid.
4. Those with a net worth of \$10,000 or more who fail to pay premiums would have no coverage under this plan.
5. Any scheme to falsify net worth would automatically void coverage.

As stated, this is only a proposal to get the discussion started and to see what other ideas might be offered to help solve the health insurance cost problem.

The dollar amounts in this suggestion are for example purposes only and could be higher or lower when an underwriting analysis is prepared. 



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Urgent Care

Doing 'something to help somebody' >

Executive Summary:

Virginia's top nursing assistant shows that dedication to a specialty has its own rewards.

By Bobbi Hoffman

Walking through Richfield Recovery and Care Center with Tina Harrison, it's easy to understand why she won the Certified Nursing Assistant of the Year award. Residents' eyes light up when she enters their rooms, and co-workers greet her enthusiastically when she returns to work after a day off—more like someone back from a long absence.

The award comes from the Virginia Health Care Association, a membership organization of almost 300 licensed nursing and assisted-living facilities. Harrison beat out CNAs from across the Commonwealth for the honor.

Administrator Richie Alba and Nursing Director Toni Pierce, who nominated Harrison for the honor say Harrison is the ideal CNA: caring, warm, professional.

Harrison has worked at Richfield for almost 25 years. It was still McVitty House when she began. "I fell in love with helping people who need a lot of help," she says, so she took the six-week class to receive her CNA certification from Virginia's Board of Nursing. Harrison started as a basic CNA—checking vital signs and assisting with activities of daily living: feeding, toileting, giving bed baths, shaving, etc.

She's been hard at it since Day 1: "I care about my residents ... I have been known to go to Goodwill to get tennis shoes for some people who didn't have shoes. I feel like I go extra; maybe that's why they picked me [for the award], but there's so many that do."

As a restorative CNA, Harrison works with residents to continue their therapy after

physical therapists have worked with them and prescribed ongoing exercises. She stretches and strengthens their muscles with range-of-motion exercises, and helps them walk. Harrison's charges may be long-term, permanent residents, people recovering after joint replacement surgery, or those regaining abilities lost to a stroke.

With Baby Boomers entering old age, the eldercare industry faces a shortage of nurses and nursing assistants.

"That's the single biggest concern of a director of nursing, to have enough staff to meet the needs," says Toby Myers, an assistant director of nursing. Richfield, she says, is constantly recruiting. "I think that everybody is always in need of CNAs."

"When you go home, you feel like you accomplished something," says Harrison. "You might be bone-dead tired, but you feel like you've done something to help somebody. You're always needed here—not just physically; mentally, too." 



Tina Harrison Bobbi Hoffman

“ ”

I fell in love with helping people who need a lot of help.

—Tina Harrison



Kevin Browne with a working robot in ESS' 17,000 square foot factory

Dan Smith

At ESS, it's all about the process >



We are able to design complex, multi-step procedures without the hours of time and escalating costs that would be incurred were we to engineer the automation from scratch.

—Walt Langosch

Executive Summary:

This small technology company in Blacksburg remains small on purpose, but its product is as sophisticated and advanced as technology allows.

By Rachael Garrity

After weeks of watching Wall Street implode and Washington explode, are you about ready to throw in the towel on American business? Wait. A more careful look reveals that despite our economic climate, there are small private businesses across the country that are managed well, and focused on providing services to other businesses that will spell solvency and even success over the short and the long term. In a phrase, these organizations play it straight.

ESS Technologies in Blacksburg is a prime example. Begun 15 years ago by Kevin and Linda Browne, it is an equipment manufacture and systems integration firm. It serves the pharmaceutical, medical device, cosmetic, diagnostics and consumer products segments of the economy.

ESS designs and installs a production and packaging process that will create the product, wrap it, and prepare it for distribution.

Service has been so consistent, say the Brownes, that 75 percent of the orders come from the existing customer base of more than 200 installations in Virginia and North Carolina alone.

ESS most often uses domestic components and systems, but there is an important exception. To accommodate a necessarily sterile environment with precision necessary in pharmaceutical and medical worlds, ESS often incorporates robots into the systems it designs. Manufactured in Japan by other robots, these bear zero resemblance to any Star Wars denizen.

Walt Langosch, director of sales and marketing for the company, demonstrates

TECH / INDUSTRY FRONT

a robot while he explains: "There are six axes of motion on these robots. We are able to design complex, multi-step procedures without the hours of time and escalating costs that would be incurred were we to engineer the automation from scratch.

"Once the systems are in operation, the efficiency and cost savings continue to accrue. FANUC (the manufacturer) has measured the mean time between failures for these robots at 65,000 hours." If they were running all day, every day, that would mean roughly 7.5 years.

In the medical and pharmaceutical fields, the robots become even more valuable, because they protect the product from the risk of contamination, and protect employees from having to work in a laboratory environment that could spell health risks for them.

The necessary sterile environments (one germ-free, one secure) help limit the

risk of counterfeiting. Products can be traced to their source, time and date of manufacture.

ESS engineers use 3-D design software to create the systems, and the tools and other customized parts that are added to the robots are manufactured by local machine shops. Other than that, all operations are in-house: design, assembly, testing, integration and start-up service.

While ESS remains—intentionally—a small company, with 23 on the staff, both its customer base and its competitors range from small, local operations through large multi-nationals.

"Every solution is custom," Langosch says. "There is nothing off the shelf about anything we provide. For every installation, we take great care to see that the design is efficient, reliable and durable. We may—and do—have hundreds of customers, but we serve them one at a time." 

TECH / INDUSTRY POLL

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

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After all that, Entre's still here >

Executive Summary:

Bart Wilner's little computer company is like the Energizer bunny with a brain. It just keeps adjusting and keeps on going.

By Alison Weaver

Bart Wilner is wide open. The concept of doing something halfway has apparently never entered his mind.

The president/owner of Entre Computer Center in Roanoke's Old Southwest neighborhood readily admits that he has difficulty "thinking within the box," and the company's success for 25 years illustrates his penchant for innovative thinking and adapting to change.

Personal computers were just beginning to replace room-sized mainframes when Wilner launched Entre in 1983 in an office on Electric Road. "When we opened Entre, we didn't have a P.C. We had a typewriter," he recalls.

Over the next decade, Entre grew but so did its competitors. On Wilner's daily commute to work, he passed seven computer stores on a less than two-mile stretch of Franklin Road to Electric Road. Even so, Entre established a dominant presence selling hardware and software. As the 1990s passed, a tectonic shift occurred as big-box retailers moved in and mail-order companies such as Dell and Gateway sprang up. Wilner altered Entre's focus to consulting, training and installation, targeting small and medium-sized businesses without their own IT staffs. "If we didn't make that change, we wouldn't still be in business," Wilner notes.

Willingness to change and a drive to improve the community have been hallmarks of Wilner's career. He has delved into civic service, giving considerable amounts of time and money, and has encouraged his staff to do the same. "We've tried to be good corporate citizens." Wilner has difficulty talking about himself—he keeps straying off topic to talk passionately about pet projects. A mention of United Way has him springing around his office, showing videos and passing out buttons

Name: Barton J. Wilner
Age: 55
Company: Entre Computer Center
Location: Roanoke
Founded: March 1983
Employees: Nine

Employment History: Began working for Burroughs Corp., then the second largest computer manufacturer in the world, after graduating from Virginia Tech in 1975 with a business degree. Sold banking equipment in Roanoke (mainframes, teller equipment and proof machines) for eight years. Rather than advancing to company headquarters in Detroit, he launched Entre Computer Center in Roanoke County so he could stay in the area.

Community Service: Board member of United Way of Roanoke Valley and co-chair along with his wife, of this year's fundraising campaign; founding and current board member of HomeTown Bank; board member of Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau; board member of Business Leadership Fund; member of Kiwanis Club of Roanoke Valley; member of Greater Roanoke Valley Development Foundation; past chairman of Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce; past chairman of Better Business Bureau of Western Virginia; co-chair of American Cancer Society's Relay for Life for two years; chairman of Roanoke Symphony Ball in 2007; served on Roanoke City Public Schools' Safety Task Force.

Personal: Married to the former Jacqueline Lynn Blair since 1980; three sons, Blair, 22, and twins Brandon and Bryce 20.

Philosophy: "Do things right and do the right things." And, "Never give up."



FRONT executive profile / technology sector: Bart Wilner

photos: Dan Smith / art: Tom Field

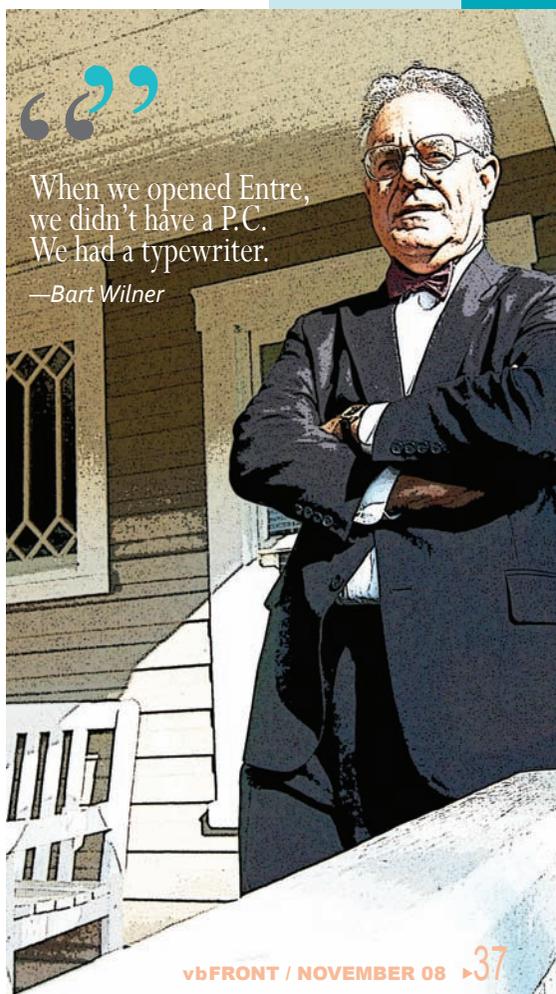
emblazoned with this year's "I Feel Good!" slogan. He says he wouldn't have agreed to head the fund drive without the assistance of his "remarkable" wife, Lynn. He talks glowingly of local artist Eric Fitzpatrick who donated 200 prints as prizes for people seen wearing the campaign buttons.

His passion for music—Roanoke Symphony Orchestra in particular—led to his taking piano lessons again as an adult, becoming fast friends with conductor David Wiley, whom he calls "a genius," and prompted him and Lynn to head last year's symphony ball. "People think I'm on the board, but I'm not. I just like being very involved," he says with understatement.

Growing up in Miami, Wilner developed a love for the outdoors and water sports. He plays tennis and racquetball, makes scuba-diving trips to Florida and the Caribbean and enjoys entertaining guests with boating trips on Smith Mountain Lake. "Work hard, play hard," he advises. Another passion is his 1947 Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith. His parents purchased it in the 1960s from the original owner, who had brought it over from Britain. They gave it to Bart and Lynn as a wedding gift. Wilner had the car fully restored—a five-year undertaking—and he clearly treasures it. "I love to share it with friends," he says, adding that the car has been used in dozens of weddings and special events. "Otherwise, it just sits in the garage 99.9 percent of the time."

After the Rolls was restored, Wilner sent his sons on an Internet quest to locate the original owner, who was still alive and living

in Maryland. Instead of merely sending photos to the former owner, Wilner drove the car to Maryland for a nephew's wedding and invited the now very elderly gentleman to come to dinner and see his former pride and joy. "He cried when he sold the car in 1969, and he cried when he saw it again," Wilner says. 🖨️



When we opened Entre,
we didn't have a P.C.
We had a typewriter.

—Bart Wilner



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Bob Strenz at newly completed NRV Airport hangar

Tim Jackson

Strenz strives for Pulaski progress >

Executive Summary:

A Pulaski flier and builder finds—and eagerly pursues—opportunities in the New River Valley.

By Tim W. Jackson

Bob Strenz has a couple of primary interests, first among them aviation. As a result, he is responsible for 12 new aircraft hangars at the New River Valley Airport in Dublin.

Second: he hates to see anything, property in particular, not being used to its potential. "I like fixing things up," Strenz says. So he has bought several properties in Pulaski with a plan to re-energize or develop them.

Strenz loves to fly. He has long been a pilot of airplanes and helicopters. He loves aviation so much, he bought an airport the Pocono-Stroudsburg Airport in East Stroudsburg, Pa., purchased two decades ago. He still owns it.

He is the owner of RAS Properties and President of Monroe Construction. He dabbles in other endeavors, acting as the executive producer in a television project in one instance.

Strenz says he was excited to add "first-class hangars" to the NRV Airport. He owns one of the three completed hangars, while nine more should be finished by the end of the

year. The airport will get a new taxiway, as well. Draper Construction is the contractor. Strenz says the hangars will be heated, have an option for bathroom facilities, offer remote-controlled doors and will have windows to allow natural light.

Strenz is selling his home in Pennsylvania. He spends about half the year in Naples, Fla., and the other half at his home on Claytor Lake in Pulaski County. His wife, Cheri grew up in Pulaski County.

He purchased the Pulaski Mall and plans to give the property a face lift. He has a pad site, he says, that would be perfect for a restaurant. "Especially with gas prices the way they are, people don't want to have to drive to Blacksburg or Christiansburg to go get a nice meal," Strenz says. He's bought the old Pulaski Furniture Plant 10 site and is still pondering options on how best to develop it.

Strenz, a proponent of affordable housing, bought four mobile home parks in the area and has been named to the Pulaski Redevelopment & Housing Authority.



One of his more recent purchases is what had been the RU West campus. Strenz plans to divide the acreage into two-acre building lots. Strenz says, "It's really secluded down there. Just unbelievable property for housing." Strenz says that he hopes construction can begin on homes by spring of 2009.

The area is ripe for his basic Build It philosophy: "It's a fabulous opportunity to invest in this area," Strenz says. "It's much easier to find something on the opportunity side. There are loads of opportunities for people to come in and do stuff here." 

Work Spaces

At Spectrum, 'responsibility of design' >

Executive Summary:

Spectrum's design for its own offices gives it a showcase for its business and makes a statement: the cobbler's children have shoes.

By Sarah Cox

It looks like an architect's office, explains David Bandy. As well it should, since that's what it is.

Located in a historical, renovated building at 10 Church Avenue, Plaza Suite 1 in downtown Roanoke, Spectrum Design is a result of the 2000 merger between Spectrum Engineers and Echols-Sparger Architects. Along with the merger came a "busting at the beams" situation that necessitated



But it is the space itself—pulling into its quarters the ginkgo tree and its upsweeping branches, the passersby strolling along the plaza, the changing sky-scape and the colors of the seasons—that reflects the firm's philosophy of "responsibility of design."

Bandy, the vice president and director of design, who took the lead in designing this renovation—which received historical tax credits—reviewed its original design, added



expanded offices. The firm took advantage of this opportunity to bid on the circa 1900 building, which has four floors, is 23 feet wide and 200 feet long, and offers 5,000 square feet of space on each floor for a total of 20,000 square feet. Not needing to use the entire space, Spectrum leases the extra offices to six tenants.



windows that were eight feet tall—"the tallest we could find," he says—moved the placement of the front door to the park and not the street, and combined the old brick and hardwood flooring with new lighting to give the space a successful study in contrasts of old and modern.

Dan Smith

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



all photos: Dan Smith; art: Tom Field

Everything seems, and probably is, deliberate: The tall, narrow windows that reflect the shape of the ginkgo's branches; the residential spaces created with furniture that softens workspaces into places where good conversation and perusal can happen; the narrow corridor, along which is posted a gallery of recent jobs; the Sherwin Williams historical colors (24 of them) that seem to copy the exterior—goldenrod, moss, and plum; the seagull-shaped light fixtures that



deflect and extend the light; and the carefully construed lines.

It was once a carriage manufacturing facility, and the heart-of-pine floors still slope slightly downward toward the street, where craftsmen would pull their wagons for delivery to the warehouse doors.

These doors have become a huge window in the first-floor conference room that uses the busy street scene as a piece of art.

The scene, however, can be hidden with a screen that pulls down from the ceiling. The layout of the offices invites open exchanges between employees because, says Bandy, "In a firm like ours, communication is very, very important. The architect has to talk to the structural, mechanical, civil engineers." Ah, the thought that went into this renovation...

Bookshelves act as partitions, desks are generous enough to accommodate endless rolls of blueprints, kitchenettes on each floor are hidden into a curve of a wall... it is a total concept, Bandy points out.

It is one of the reasons that his firm is able to attract and retain talented and experienced people. "With young people, their working environment is right up there with salary," Bandy says.



But is also the case that the building attracts and retains clientele. "We can't afford to be like the cobbler whose children have no shoes," he says. "Your building says volumes about your talent and how important their building will be to you." 



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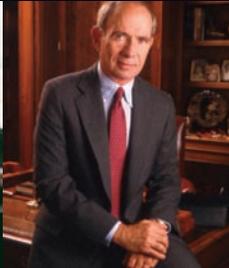
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We've had people buy rainwater systems from us who actually received 100 percent of the cost of the system as an evaluation on their appraisal when they sold their house.

—David Crawford

all photos: Dan Smith

'Raindrops keep falling on my...' >

Executive Summary:

When David Crawford's around, those raindrops aren't falling on your head, they're being 'harvested' in one of his containers for future use.

By Beverly Amsler

Rain falling on the roof is music to David Crawford's ears because it means his customers in a dozen countries are saving money.

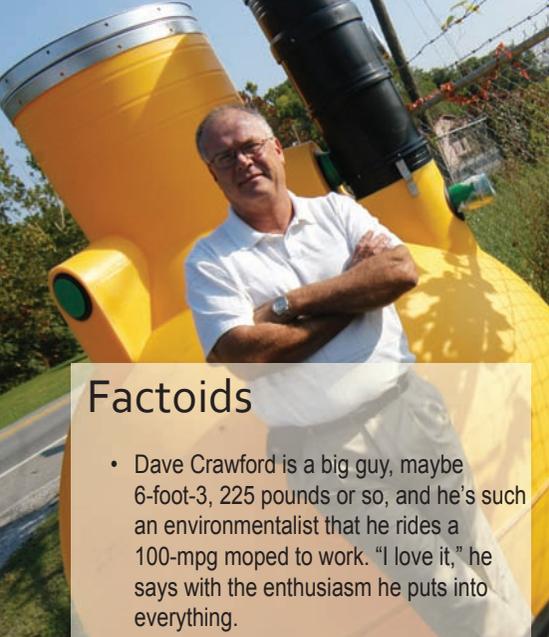
His company, Rainwater Management Solutions in Salem, harvests rainwater and looks for opportunities to save storm water runoff. It is a resource for water reuse in commercial and residential facilities and has

a range of customers from the homeowner to such giants as IKEA and General Motors.

The company was one of the first, in 1999, on the Internet to market rain barrels and has become the largest rain water harvesting company in North America, Crawford says. He adds that there are more than 200 rainwater harvesting dealers in North America and the number continues to rise.

Rainwater Management Solutions has nine employees at its Salem office, plus 40 stocking dealers and more than 300 sales representatives worldwide. "A lot of the products we use right now we import from Germany with our German filters," says Crawford. Other products are manufactured in the U. S.

RMS has grown from a basement operation six years ago to a company of significant size (Crawford won't say exactly for publication, but the company is big and getting bigger daily). Last year Rainwater Management Solutions tripled its business. Crawford expects the company to grow by even more this year. It is growing so quickly and its clients demanding so much that



Factoids

- Dave Crawford is a big guy, maybe 6-foot-3, 225 pounds or so, and he's such an environmentalist that he rides a 100-mpg moped to work. "I love it," he says with the enthusiasm he puts into everything.
- Crawford says you have to water artificial turf. "You water it before playing on it to soften it," he says. That works out to 6,000 gallons for football, 8,000 for soccer.
- Crawford says 75 percent of what we pay for water is in transportation costs—getting it from the source to us and out again.
- Rainwater Management Solutions is in an expansion mode, having bought the large lot next door to its Salem facility (missing an opportunity by just a bit to buy an 80,000 square foot building nearby) and it is looking around for more space.
- Among Rainwater Management's clients are Bill McDunough, author of Cradle to Cradle, one of the Bibles of environmentalism, and Kmart, which is using his system on a number of its stores.
- Crawford is helping organize a national association of rainwater businesses.
- From its Web site: "Architectural firms from across the country retain RMS to provide assistance, during the project initial planning phase, in designing rain water systems. Atlanta-based Greenberg Farrow Architecture utilizes RMS for Ikea Home Furnishings stores; Rosser Associates of Atlanta for the design of a new stadium in Roanoke; VMDO Architects for the construction of a school in Charlottesville; and Randall Stout Architects of California for the Art Museum of Western Virginia." —Dan Smith

Crawford is having to carefully consider where he's going and what the company will look like when it gets there. Already, there is talk of spinoffs and even selling parts of the company to create more capabilities.

Crawford expects the rainwater management business as a whole to be in the \$400 million to \$500 million range in the next five to 10 years and he fully expects to be among the national and international leaders (he already has some overseas contracts).

Before starting the company, Crawford was employed as a consultant for the health care industry. He saw large industrial laundries use as much as 50,000 gallons a day to clean hospital linens, and the increasing cost of water, "[I] realized was a great opportunity to have an environmentally friendly company that could do well by doing good and feed off the supply and demand."

Crawford built rainwater harvesting barrels which he started selling at home shows and environmental seminars and pretty soon the idea took off. Now, he's in demand nationally as a speaker to groups such as the American Society of Plumbing Engineers and the U. S. Green Building Council.

Crawford says there have been some growing pains along the way. "We're a customer advocate company, and [the challenge is] making sure that we keep up with our customers' demand and deliver what the customers need on a timely basis."



In just the past two to three years, officials from several localities and other states have contacted Crawford's company asking for help after they've passed mandatory storm water runoff and rainwater harvesting regulations. "Unfortunately, the drought drove a lot of that, but I think all that did was offer the opportunity for education."

The company works with and for commercial and residential developers, architects and engineers, industrial and commercial end users, agriculture professionals and government agencies.

Crawford's company has published the Rainwater Harvesting manual which is being used throughout the nation as a guideline for rainwater harvesting, and holds monthly training sessions for plumbers and sewer septic system installers to add this skill to market to builders. "It is a green market and so if you're going to build a LEED certified house, certainly that would be something you'd want to consider.

"It's one of those opportunities where you could spend \$10,000 on a garage and you

might get 20 or 30 percent of your investment back. We've had people buy rainwater systems from us who actually received 100 percent of the cost of the system as an evaluation on their appraisal when they sold their house. So we think it's a good, long-term investment."

The future is unlimited, he believes: "I think what we'll see over the next five years is mandates requiring greater amounts of storm water to be kept on site. That water will be used and recycled. We'll see a trend toward great water recycling across the U. S. Right now [we're experiencing] increased water costs for irrigation and pool needs.

"Because of the short supply, things that are extra, that we really don't need, (municipalities) are going to charge you more for," he predicts. He also believes that within the next decade, residents won't be able to use municipal drinking water for irrigation. 

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



Lori White

OCTOBER 2008 > Contributor of the Month

Valley Business FRONT congratulates **Lori White**. She received both 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. Lori was recognized for her engaging story and excellent photography on "Organic: It's more than just a slogan" feature. If you missed it, you can read it online (October 08 issue) at vbFRONT.com



Erryn Barkett

Dan Smith

Flying over a business opportunity >

Executive Summary:

Erryn Barkett has done a lot of things, but taking pictures of football games from above is beginning to like the one that gets his passionate attention.

By Dan Smith

What started for Erryn Barkett a few years ago as something of a diversion, an avocation, is looking better all the time as the center of his professional future. Barkett is a successful investment professional, owner of his own firm, one of many in that often-lucrative profession. However, as a guy who shoots football games with a 12-megapixel digital camera from a few thousand feet above the quarterback, he's nearly unique and certainly unusual.

In Brief

- Name:** Erryn M. Barkett
- Age:** 39
- Company:** Barkett Allen Capital
- Location:** Fincastle
- Hometown:** Vero Beach, Fla.
- Education:** Bachelor's degree from University of Richmond
- Profession:** Has worked in trash recycling, commodities trading, commercial pilot and moved to Roanoke to work for Cycle Systems before going to investments
- Personal:** Met his wife Ginny (a health educator) in college. "I thought I was going to be a naval aviator," he says, "until I met her. Funny how things change."

Same can be said about the fact that Barkett is even allowed to do that—especially since 9/11 when airspace over large gatherings of people has been



I'm dreaming World Cup, NASCAR, that level.

—Erryn Barkett



hyper-protected by the FAA, the military, the constable, and just about anybody else with the authority to tell you not to do it.

That Barkett has earned permission from the right people, has enabled him to photograph college stadiums full of people in places as diverse as Lord Botetourt High School, Washington & Lee University, the University of Tennessee, Penn State University, Ohio State, VMI, the University of Virginia and, of course, Virginia Tech.

The Tech game was one that opened the doors, though it was hardly his first effort. He had started this at the University of Mississippi in 1993.

Barkett's photo excursion to Blacksburg came upon the occasion of the Tech-Miami game following the murders at Tech, 18 months ago. Air authorities were still skittish about allowing flyovers, but on this day there was to be a military flyover with fighter jets, so they figured, "Hey, what damage could a small, single-engine, high-wing plane do?" and told Barkett he could do it.

The photos taken at that game have generally been big sellers, sentimental keep-sakes for the Hokie and non-Hokie alike, and they set the stage for what could become Barkett's Next Big Thing. Erryn Barkett has been a man of Next Big Things since he met Ginny, got married and

changed his plans from Navy pilot to wage-earning civilian.

He was in commodity trading for a while. Then he found a niche in picking and up and recycling trash. That one was so successful that his company was bought in he late 1990s and enabled Barkett to move back home to Vero and get the rest of his flying licenses—he can fly just about anything these days.

Ultimately, though, after moving to Roanoke to work for Bruce Brenner at Cycle Systems, he determined his niche was as a professional money guy—at least it was until the current gig cropped up. This one has enormous promise—and it's just a heck of a lot of fun to do. On football weekends, Barkett sends out several leased planes in different directions to shoot football games. They're printed in Marion at Racing Reflections (a good friend owns the printer) and the most of the marketing is done on the Internet (www.skypixonline.com).

Licensing the pictures for sale is one of the challenges, as it is with anything with a school logo on it, but the pictures have proven a money-maker: a 24X36-inch picture, for example, goes for \$279.

Never one to think small, Barkett says this little sideline "will grow into a large company. I'm dreaming World Cup, NASCAR, that level." 

RECREATION POLL

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

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The Kirk Family YMCA has tripled its membership.

John Montgomery

Running the Valley's real community center >

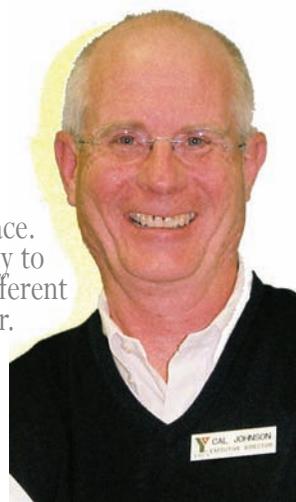
Executive Summary:

This is not your grandpa's YMCA. It is a true center for the community and answers to the needs of far, far more than "young men" and Christians.



I like to schedule workouts at each place. It gives me the ability to see things from a different perspective, as a user.

—Cal Johnson



John Montgomery

Cal Johnson

By John A. Montgomery

Say "Cal" to a sports aficionado, what do you see? A baseball player; a consistent, workmanlike demeanor; a trim, athletic build; a short haircut with a trace of silver; a strong forehead and piercing blue eyes?

There once was a big-time baseball player who fit that description.

In Roanoke fitness circles, though, there's only one "Cal": that would be Cal Johnson, executive director of the YMCA of Roanoke Valley since 1987.

Like the former great Baltimore Oriole shortstop, Cal Ripken Jr., Johnson is an ironman. At the institution he heads, long tenure is part of the expectation. Quarter-century stints are commonplace.

During Johnson's regime, the Y growth has been anything but routine.

The YMCA of Roanoke Valley is a sprawling operation that includes four major facilities (the Kirk Family Y in downtown Roanoke; Salem; Gainsboro; and the Waldron YMCA in Shawsville), 18,000 members, 500 employees and an \$8 million budget.

The wildly successful partnership with local governments to construct new facilities has been a model for similar ventures throughout the Southeast.

The YMCA of Roanoke Valley Magic Place serves 23 area schools with after-school programs at their sites.

It's all quite a leap from the original Y headquarters, a two-story house on Jefferson Street that opened in 1883, one year after the city was chartered. It served as quasi-hotel where railroad employees could spend their furloughs, rather than hang out at bars. Since the YMCA opened its Kirk Family and Salem operations

in 2004, overall membership has tripled. Further expansion plans are well underway and another \$4 million fundraising campaign, partially supported by YMCA reserves, is on target.

It would seem just about time for Johnson, 55, to plan his exit strategy. But for a man who works out daily, a former college basketball player, Johnson remains in game-day shape, both in terms of his commitment to his job and to exercise.

"I try to spend quite a bit of time at [all of] the facilities," Johnson says. "I like to schedule workouts at each place. It gives me the ability to see things from a different perspective, as a user."

Johnson calls daily workouts his "drug of choice."

Johnson's legacy? "I think Y's are successful when you have the right kind of volunteer leadership, people who believe in the mission. We've been fortunate to have leaders."

The Young Men's Christian Association was founded in London in 1844, and today, while

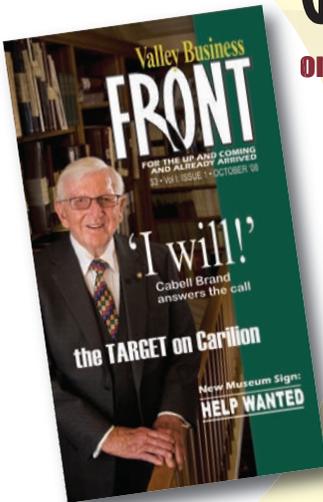
it still operates under that name, it's largely a misnomer. The institution displays no bias toward age, gender, religious affiliation or other differences. It prides itself on inclusion.

Johnson says the mission statement is "to put Christian principles into practice for programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all."

Says Johnson, "Other than at the emergency room, you won't find a more diverse group. Someone making six or seven figures [annually] is dressing out next to the guy making minimum wage. And they're friends."

Johnson is the son of a YMCA career director, and he has 32 years experience in the field, with stops in Thomasville, N.C., Orlando, Fla. and Bedford.

Sales is an emphasis, even though the Y is a non-profit organization. "The board gives me the responsibility to make sure that our organization is achieving our mission, as well as making sure we have the resources to do so," Johnson says. 



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Entrepreneurship: Business on fast track >

Executive Summary:

At VWCC, they're teaching students how to go to work for themselves, instead of for somebody else.

By **Jill Elswick**

Many see the Roanoke and New River Valleys as wellsprings of entrepreneurship. With a relatively low cost of living, natural beauty, and a growing talent pool, the area

is often a magnet for new business. To encourage entrepreneurship within the community, Virginia Western Community College this fall is launching a new career study certificate called Entrepreneurship Plus.

The 10-credit program includes a marketing class, a class on developing a business plan, and a basic course in Quickbooks for

““”

I feel like we're outgrowing our baby clothes.

—Cory Donovan



Chuck Terrell and Cory Donovan

Jill Elswick

““”

Let's say you... wanted to form a business someday. You would take all your academic prep work... but then you could take a few additional courses to graduate with a career study certificate in entrepreneurship.

—Chuck Terrell

students to learn how to manage their finances. The certificate is intended as a complement to other courses of study.

"Let's say you were in the culinary arts program and wanted to form a business someday," says Chuck Terrell, vice president of Workforce Development Services for Virginia Western. "You would take all your academic prep work for your culinary arts program, but then you could take a few additional courses to graduate with a career study certificate in entrepreneurship."

The college's HVAC instructor, who teaches heating and air conditioning classes, told Terrell he had been waiting for a program like this. "I've got guys who are very talented, who know how to fix air conditioning units and heating systems," he told Terrell. "They could form their own business here, but they don't have any knowledge of a business plan or how to manage a business."

Virginia Western also wanted to find a way to serve the adult community, those who may not be interested in going back to school full-time but want to start a business. The college is launching a night class called "Business 101," that will focus on various business topics each week. Some of those topics, such as managing finances, will be offered to the community at large as a one-night, stand-alone seminar.

The college is in talks with a local school division to offer some of the entrepreneurship classes as dual-enrollment courses within the high school curriculum. Students taking the classes would graduate from high school with some college credits already under their belts.

The point of Virginia Western's emphasis on entrepreneurship is to promote small businesses in the region. "The days in which we might be able to attract a big employer that would come in and hire 200 or 300 people—that's tough," says Terrell. "But establishing a small business? That's easy." Virginia Western is working with a number of business partners on the program, including the non-profit NewVa Corridor Technology Council (NCTC), the Department of Business Assistance, the Small Business Development Center, and the City of Roanoke's Entrepreneurship District.

Cory Donovan, executive director of the NCTC, says the time is right for a new emphasis on entrepreneurship in the region.

"I feel like we're outgrowing our baby clothes," says Donovan. "We've had world-class successes. We have serial entrepreneurs. We have the Corporate Research Center [in Blacksburg]. We have companies that have been acquired and gone public. But we're still in the dark in terms of people in D.C. and Richmond knowing what's going on." 

EDUCATION POLL

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*2008 survey of affluent investors by Prince & Associates
Securities & Financial Planning offered through LPL Financial Member FINRA/SIPC

From Virginia Tech, the wireless revolution >

Executive Summary:

The communication device you have in your hand at any given moment is likely a product that started its life at Virginia Tech's wireless technology research department.

Special to the FRONT

Think Direct TV, Iridium Satellite, Bluetooth, Globalstar.

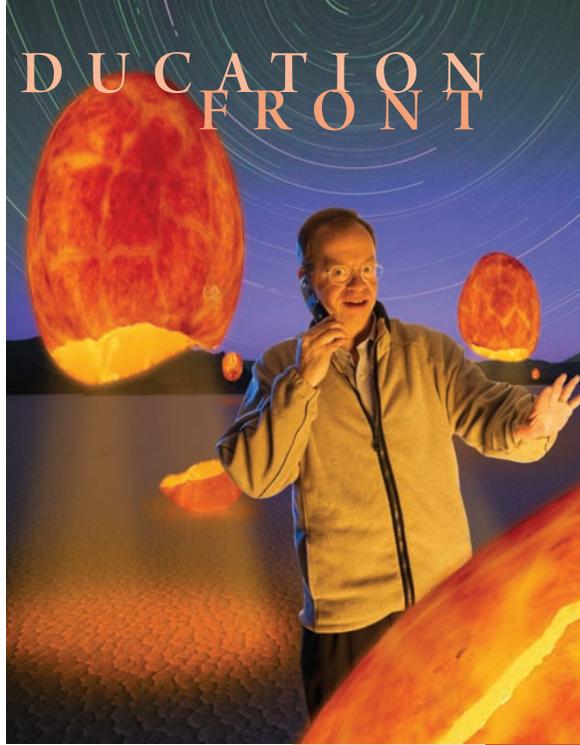
You know them and it's likely you use them. But did you know they are based on satellite communications research and development that was begun at Virginia Tech four decades ago in its Bradley Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

Beginning with their first NASA-funded project in 1971 and continuing through the 1990s, electrical and computer engineering professors Charles Bostian and Warren Stutzman (now with Maxtena in the Corporate Research Center) led Virginia Tech's satellite communications efforts, building ground stations for global satellite communications and characterizing the propagation environment.

"The work they started as members of Virginia Tech's Satellite Communications Group has impacted standards and real systems used by industry and government," says Jeff Reed, director of Wireless@VT.

A defining moment for Virginia Tech's wireless researchers came when they started receiving major funding in 1993 from the Defense Advanced Projects Research Project Agency. The first \$1.7 million DARPA contract asked Virginia Tech to develop a revolutionary approach to wireless communications.

The Virginia Tech communications engineers—led by Mobile Portable Radio Group founder Ted Rappaport, who would



Jeff Reed

become world renowned—combined new technologies in computer chips, antennas, and digital signal processing in a novel way. Eventually that allowed wireless devices to be miniature, but able to adapt to interference in the radio channel. They increased the number of radio devices that could share a single radio frequency, increasing the capacity of wireless users in a specific region of space.

"Companies spun out of this research," Reed says, including the first wireless communications company in Blacksburg, TSR Technologies (Rappaport's company), which later was sold to Grayson Electronics. In 1998, a second spin-off, Wireless Valley Communications Inc. (another Rappaport effort), was founded and later sold to Motorola for some \$30 million. "People made their careers from the enabling technologies that we developed," Reed says.

In the 1990s, the wireless researchers at Virginia Tech began filing for patent after patent. Within a few years, some of the technologies they developed included SIRCOM, an indoor channel modeling program; CELLSCOPE, a technology that identifies a person using a cellular phone; SMT, a site modeling tool for indoor communications that led to Wireless Valley Communications; Stallion, a high-performance computing device for handsets; and Interactive Video, a wireless mechanism for users to order products they

see advertised on TV. All were available for licensing through Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties Inc.

In one of the first highly publicized uses of CELLSCOPE, the FBI employed it in 1995 to track down Kevin Mitnick, the nation's most-wanted computer hacker, in Raleigh, N.C. The SMT software was licensed in its introductory year to leading communications companies, including Motorola, Ericsson, Hewlett Packard, Tellans, and Mobile System International.

Some of the other wireless projects the different groups were working on then are commonplace today, such as the creation of Bluetooth technologies that enable the wireless office emerging in the 21st century; software radio for wireless communication interoperability and smart antenna technologies to eliminate co-channel interference; and advanced wireless modems to support remote computing and high-data-rate wireless access to the Internet.

They also were instrumental in improving cellular communications to prevent co-channel interference, and in allowing radio waves to penetrate into buildings. In the area of intelligent transportation systems, they were working on Global Positioning Systems more than a decade before they became popular Christmas presents for directionally challenged drivers.

Rapaport, who worked with Gov. Tim Kaine in 2007 on a broadband roundtable, authored the first textbook on modern



Ted Rappaport

wireless communications, called *Wireless Communications: Principles and Practice* in 1996. An instant classic in academia, some 30 universities from around the world adopted its use within the first 12 months, and thousands of engineers were trained using the knowledge coming from the Virginia Tech research laboratories. Rappaport eventually moved to the University of Texas, where he founded the Wireless Networking and Communications Group.

Most recently, Tech has become a leading research institution in the field of cognitive radios, called a new frontier for the world of wireless communications. Cognitive radios are intelligent radios that can determine the best way to operate in any given situation. 

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Michael Kennedy, Evie Slone and George Kegley of the Preservation Foundation

Dan Smith

Going to war to preserve our heritage >

Executive Summary:

When Evie Slone and two of her colleagues formed the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation 20 years ago, they had a specific mission in mind. That mission has significantly expanded over the years.

By John A. Montgomery

As catchy acronyms go, RVPF will not win any awards. It doesn't roll off the tongue; it may not be worth preserving. But the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation isn't hung up on its acronym. Instead, it's focused on its mission: to promote the preservation of the historic, natural and cultural resources of the Roanoke Valley. "Saving our heritage" is its mantra.

It is a group that gets things done. And in that regard, it is an award-winner. Its track record over the past 20 years is impressive. Many local landmarks—including the N&W Office Buildings, the H&C Coffee Sign, the Martin Luther King Bridge, the interior murals at Hotel Roanoke and the Oliver Hill House—have gained new life, at least in part due to the foundation's efforts.

The foundation annually publishes a list of its most endangered sites, an aggregate that includes historic buildings, of course, but also contains more general environmental concerns such as unimpeded mountain views, rural landscapes, river headwaters and Roanoke Valley air.

RVPF recognizes individuals and organizations for renovation and re-development accomplishments at an awards ceremony in May; each year it also presents a barb in the form of its Bulldozer Award, perhaps the most notorious of which resulted from the desecration in recent years of Slate Hill in Roanoke County, across from Tanglewood Mall.

Campbell Avenue buildings in 1988 (below); and today (right)

Norfolk & Western (NS) office buildings (below)

photos: Dan Smith; art: Tom Field



“They were historically significant and architecturally sound,” Slone remembers, “but he was interested in demolishing all four” for downtown parking purposes.

It was 20 years ago that three Roanoke women—Martha Boxley, Mitchell Bowden and Evie Gunter (now Slone)—started the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation. Boxley, the city’s historical review officer, was named president. Bowden, director of the Roanoke Valley History Museum, and Slone, who worked for the Roanoke City Planning Commission, provided ample support.

Slone remains active with the foundation today. She is the director of planning for Hill Studio, an architectural firm at 120 W. Campbell Ave., coincidentally one of the first projects the foundation sought to protect.

In the late 1980s, local real estate magnate Jimmy Trinkle owned four consecutive buildings on W. Campbell (118, 120, 122 and 124) that he considered to be expendable.

According to Carolyn Hale Bruce’s *Roanoke Past and Present*, which was updated and reprinted in 1988—just as the foundation as taking shape—the future of the four buildings was bleak.

“In spite of the fact that these are among the oldest retail buildings in the city, prospects are not good that preservationists can prevent their being converted into a parking lot,” Bruce wrote. “Last minute attempts have been made to seek state help in underwriting part of the expenses of purchasing the buildings and private buyers have made offers, but none has satisfied present owners.”

In the ensuing months, however, the preservation foundation found a solution. “We were successful in convincing the city to take [the project’s preservation] under its



CULTURE FRONT



Warehouse Row (left)

H&C Coffee sign (right)

Henry Street revitalization (below)

Martin Luther King Jr. bridge (bottom)



wing," Slone says. Subsequent negotiations allowed the structures to survive and today they house several thriving businesses, including Hill Studio where Slone works.

The foundation's goals and objectives extend beyond watchdog activities. It promotes education through schools and public awareness, including a speaker's bureau; it provides technical information, helping those seeking National Register status and investment tax credit qualification; it works as a liaison with local, state and national groups; and it provides financial support through a revolving fund for rehabilitation.

In addition to Slone, two prominent current foundation board members are former Roanoke Times business writer George Kegley and copy editor Mike Kennedy, now an architectural intern with Clark Nexsen.

Kegley, 80, worked for the Times from 1949-1993 and has immersed himself in a number of volunteer activities in the decade and a half since he retired. "Volunteering is like quicksand," he says with a smile. "I spend half my time on preservation—history and the environment."

Kegley and Kennedy practice what they preach. Kegley's home in Northeast Roanoke

dates to 1845 and is included on the Virginia Landmarks Register. Kennedy, 48 and the foundation's president, has restored an 80-year-old Roanoke home.

One of Kegley's particular interests in the foundation is its revolving fund, "where we [acquire] an old house, restore it, sell it and then repeat the process."

"Awareness is [the foundation's] main purpose," Kegley says. "There are many older structures in the area that shouldn't be discarded." 



CULTURE POLL

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

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Studies and reports have led American cities... to realize they must promote not just infrastructure but also cultural diversity.

—Susan Jennings



Susan Jennings in front of Roanoke courthouse art

Christina Koomen

City program is based on economics >

Executive Summary:

OK, you say, art's pretty. So what? Well, "what" is that art is also good for business. Very good for business. And communities are coming to understand that.

By Susan Jennings

Someone recently sent me an ad that speaks to the power of public art. The ad was for the Metropolitan Tower, a condominium development in Chicago. It boasted "90 percent sold ... final closeouts."

The photo in the ad reflected the skyline in the shiny finish of one of Chicago's most famous pieces of public art "Cloud Gate," created by Anish Kapoor in 2004. Rather than show the proximity of the lake or the park, the advertiser chose to demonstrate the proximity of this famous sculpture. The research shows this choice may have been very effective.

In fact, according to the 2007 Americans for the Arts report "Arts and Economic Prosperity III," communities investing in the arts see additional benefits of jobs, economic growth, and quality of life that positions those areas to compete in the 21st Century creative economy.

The statistics cited in this report are powerful.

The nonprofit arts and cultural industry generates \$166.2 billion in annual economic

activity and supports 5.7 million full time jobs in the United States.

Additionally, the power of the arts to transform a neighborhood was demonstrated by a recent article in *Business Week*, which began, "Want to know where the next hot real estate markets will be? Watch where the artists are living now." The author then describes a multitude of once run down neighborhoods transformed by the arts.

A University of Pennsylvania found that "there is substantial evidence that culture contributes to neighborhood revitalization." And, "Urban neighborhoods with a history of cultural engagement were significantly more likely to experience declines in poverty than other neighborhoods."

Studies and reports have led American cities, trying to distinguish themselves as exceptional places to live and work, to realize they must promote not just infrastructure but also cultural diversity. The economic vitality of a region cannot depend solely on large scale development or sprawling retail, but needs to factor in a beautiful environment and a lively arts and cultural scene.

To this end Roanoke City Council passed a Percent for Art ordinance dedicating one percent of certain items in the capital improvement budget to public art. The first projects rolled out this fall with a major permanent work installed at the Roanoke Civic Center, a temporary exhibition entitled

"AIR: Art in Roanoke" of eight artworks spread across the city and two soon to be built artist designed bus shelters at both city high schools.

Some cities require private developers to incorporate public art in new building projects. Roanoke helps private developers to voluntarily become involved in its public art policy, encouraging art to be part of the overall building plan. The Roanoke Arts Commission may serve as a consultant for projects.

Businesses can be involved in other ways besides a project on their property. They can suggest a site for public art to the Roanoke Arts Commission, have a representative serve on a citizen selection panel, contribute to the public art fund, sponsor the purchase of one of the temporary AIR pieces as a gift to the citizens of the City of Roanoke or offer a site for public art.

One of the founding principles of Roanoke's public art program is citizen participation, including individuals and businesses.

For more information on the City of Roanoke's public art program, go to www.roanokeva.gov/publicart. 

(Susan Woods Jennings has served as Public Art Coordinator for the City of Roanoke since October, 2006. She previously executive director of the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge for 13 years.)



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A time for listening, learning >

My View >

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

blog: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

Americans, by nature, are an optimistic lot. We're optimistic in the best of times and in the worst of times. That optimism sent George Bush to the White House twice, hoping against hope.

But there are limits and recently 8 out of 10 of us (according to a New York Times/CBS News poll) screamed "Uncle!" That translates to a tectonic political shift, as seen by our most recent national elections. This one rivals the upheavals of 1912, 1932, 1980 and 1994 and will likely result in a shift of power for some time.

The reasons are pretty much the same as they have been: one party had too much power, abused it, became fat and lazy and corrupt, and the other party—which hadn't necessarily done anything to deserve praise—inherited the reins by default.

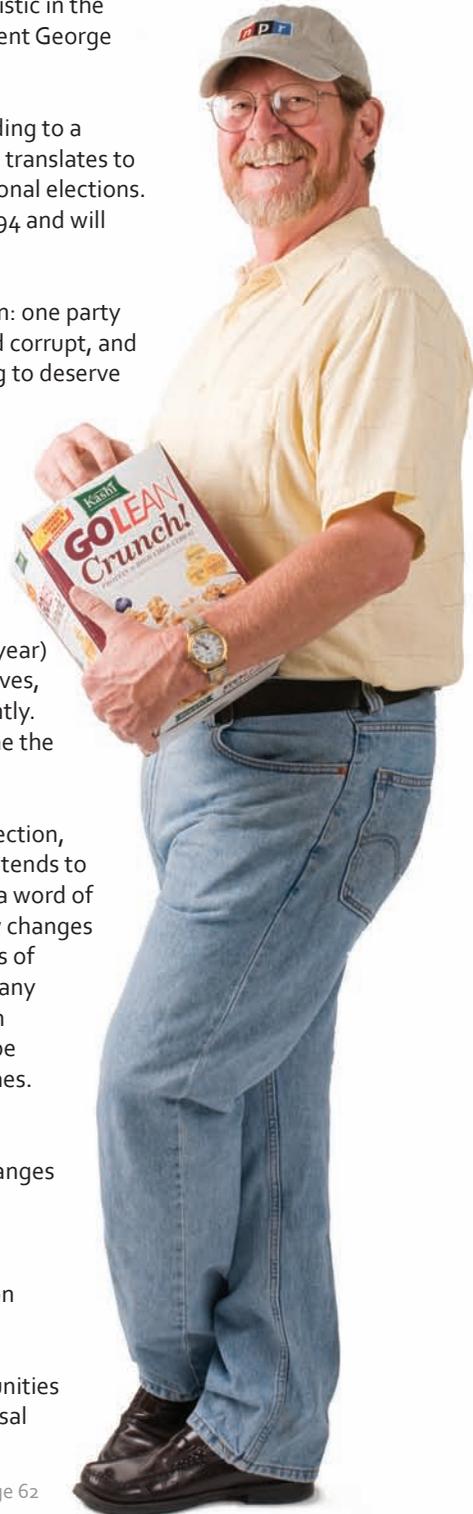
The national and international dissatisfaction with our dysfunctional government—and its direct negative impact on every one of us—is almost unanimous. Approval ratings for our congress, for example, have been in the teens (some people will approve anything; witness the return of Virgil Goode to Congress and Morgan Griffith to the General Assembly year after year) and even dissatisfaction with our individual representatives, almost always inexplicably high, was at 43 percent recently. Compare that to a 56 percent rating in 1994, the last time the public was moved to throw the bums out en masse.

My suspicion is that our national mood, following the election, will be swallowed up by hopefulness pretty quickly, as it tends to do when everything is sparkingly new. But let me issue a word of caution: we still have basically the same Congress (a few changes do not a new body make) with the same antiquated rules of engagement, the same often-irrational court system, many of the same people in the executive branch as have been there in the past. Change, even in normal times, would be slow in coming if it came at all. These are not normal times. Ours are not everyday problems.

Our government is simply not geared to make major changes in a short while. So hold on to your hat and your wallet.

My political leaning is left and the natural inclination for those of that persuasion at this time would be vindication and optimism.

But I'm an old leftie and have seen far too many opportunities missed because of dogmatism, lack of consensus, a refusal to compromise. "We're right, you're wrong so stick it



The art of
tongue holding >On Tap
from the PubBy Tom Field
Publisherblog: [ontapfrompub.blogspot.com]

When I was a kid growing up off of Melrose Avenue, Peters Creek, the old Roanoke-Salem Plaza and Lakeside Amusement Park areas, we *always* had something to do. Top of the list was riding my bike. We rode everywhere. Back then, there were no helmets and no restrictions on distance—as long as you got back home by 5 'o'clock to beat dad coming home from his job at the railroad. If you heard mom's voice hollering your name throughout what seemed like all God's country, you knew the time had slipped up on you—and you were in trouble.

Beside my chores, riding bikes and building forts were about the only other somewhat productive things we did. The rest of the time—we made up things to do.

"Hold your tongue and say, 'My daddy works in a shipyard.'"

We'd tell some younger or gullible kids that, and then snicker when what came out of their mouths was not at all what they intended to say.

Today, the opposite is true.

If you *don't* hold your tongue, you may regret what you say.

My daughter told me about her editorial for the high school newspaper. Oooh, it was good. Full of zingers. Snappy. Witty. The kind of reading that makes you say, 'Oh no she didn't just say that?'. Without naming names, she had called out various teachers about this shortcoming or that deficiency in such creative and illustrious ways—I half expected a student rally and 500-teenager march on Washington.

"But Kelsey," I said, "you have to face these teachers after it prints." She didn't care. But I'm thinking about all the 16-year old girls whose ranking order of friends on their MySpace changes every other day. And her teachers—like my despicable drill sergeant at Fort Leonard Wood—sometimes just happen to turn out to be the best influences. Somehow, that article never published—and I wasn't called to the principal's office (and forced to recall childhood tramas).

Blazing e-mails, texting (yes, that's a verb) on the fly, cyber-bullying, instant blogging, mass access to profiles, revenge publishing... These are the things we have to guard against in today's world. Hostile and damaging communications can hurt you professionally and individually. Not to mention, it can be, well... just embarrassing.

Not as embarrassing as hearing your mom's voice hollering your name throughout all God's country in front of your friends. But still... 📺



Smith / My View

from Page 62

in your ear" simply won't work. It never has. Look at George Bush as your most recent clinic in non-cooperation (with everybody).

We need what's often called a "national dialogue" (or a "national enema," as I prefer it) beginning with a conversation with the person in front of us, especially if that person has different views. And the conversation can't start with, "You're stupid." It must start with, "How do you think that will work and why? I really want to know how you came to that conclusion." It's not just politics that works well with that conversation. Personal relationships, business relationships, teaching/learning relationships, international relationships work best when there is give and take, talking and listening—and hearing.

Two years ago, I attended something called Pigfest at the home of computer programmer Jeff Clinton, a member of the Christian right. The room was filled with people whose political outlook was diametrically opposed to mine, but the point of the evening was "to discuss issues of moral, political, theological, philosophical and historical import" and to do it in a civilized manner. We did. I was impressed. I listened and was heard. Nobody came away from that warm and welcoming meeting with a changed political philosophy, but I think we came away with some understanding and some respect. My view went from 75mm to 12mm, to frame it as my photographer instincts would.

This is a good time to consider a basic American value—an open mind—which seems to have rolled under the couch in times of Lee Atwater and Carl Rove. Let's put the heat on those we recently elected to talk to each other and work with people whose philosophies and values might differ. During Mark Warner's recent campaign for the Senate, I heard him say several times that one of the vital ingredients that has been missing of late is our representatives asking Americans to take part in their government, trusting them to be willing to sacrifice.

We can ask the same of our representatives: give up a little of that ego, of that hard-edged doctrine, of that stubborn insistence that you're right all the time. And, for heaven's sake, listen to other people. 

Letters > > >

I'm out here in L.A. hosting a show for the BBC UK but saw the exciting news and wanted to send my congrats.

Cameron Johnson,
Roanoke entrepreneur

Your magazine is first rate.

Cabell and Shirley Brand, Salem

What a fabulous mix of articles, people, observations, editorial comment, book reviews, and on and on. Excellent edition out of the gate.

Marilyn Burrows,
Cox Communications,
Roanoke

You must feel the way a woman does who wants kids, knows she can get pregnant just once, and has triplets.

Rachael Garrity,
Blacksburg writer

Just plain awesome!

Alecia Nash,
Renaissance Computers,
Roanoke

I love the size, the heft, the feel of the paper, the flip-through aroma.

Anne Clelland,
Handshake 2.0,
Blacksburg

I ended up spending much more time with the magazine than I had planned... reading almost all the entertaining and informative articles, admiring the format of the publication, and being delighted with the broad range of business, industry, health care, cultural and educational issues covered in the first issue.

Robert Sandel,
Virginia Western
Community College,
Roanoke

Very impressive.

Annie Johnson,
Congressional
Quarterly,
Washington D.C.

The new publication is some piece of work—and I mean that in a good way.

Lisa Garst,
Salem City Council

How appropriate to have the Valley's most distinguished senior, Cabell Brand, on the cover.

Nita Echols,
Vinton

It looks great. Congratulations on giving birth to this new pub!

Leslie Coty,
WFIR Radio, Roanoke

REVIEWS & OPINION



Very impressed.

Deke Summers,
Automated Mailing
Systems, Roanoke

Visually clean,
interesting to read.
You've put together
a winner. Love
the executive
summaries.

Terri Jones,
Access, Roanoke

You all have done an
amazing job, and I
wish you great
success and much joy.

Jim Lindsey,
former publisher Blue
Ridge Business Journal,
Charlottesville

If you can duplicate
that same level of
quality every month,
then I want to buy
into Valley Business
FRONT. It was really
good and would rival
any other regional
business publication.

Stuart Mease,
City of Roanoke

I like the size and the
way it feels in your
hands.

Theresa Knox,
IDD, Blacksburg

Whomever did the
Photoshopping on
page 68 is a genius.

Richard Rife,
Rife + Wood, Roanoke

It looks fabulous.
A great start to a
greater adventure.

Nanci Hardwick,
Schultz-Creehan,
Blacksburg

VBF is a masterpiece!

Linda Nardin,
Blue Sky PR, Moneta

Enjoyed the look and
content.

Dave Henry,
Jackson Hewitt,
Christiansburg

Looks great.

Gregg Lewis,
SmithLewis Architecture,
Salem

CONGRATULATIONS!

Yes, I am yelling.
I just opened ...
Valley Business
FRONT and WOW!
I knew it would be
great.

Vickie Damico,
Breakell Inc., Roanoke

It is all about the
content. A force to
be reckoned with.

Deborah Nason,
Connecticut writer/editor

Hip! Really hip!

Steve Hartman,
On the Rise Bakery,
Roanoke

It looks beautiful.

Cara Modisett,
Blue Ridge Country

Professional looking
and snappy. I saw lots
of familiar faces and
some I'd like to get to
know. The color and
the layout are great.
It looks like you're
covering every
aspect of life in the
Star City.

Lucy Lee,
Roanoke bon vivant

I've just spent the
last hour perusing it,
even when I have
work to be doing.
Pretty damn
impressive!

John Montgomery,
Play-By-Play, Roanoke

Interesting format.
Easy to read.

Tom Cain,
Impact + Amplify,
Roanoke

Handsome book.

Tommy Denton,
retired Roanoke Times
editorial page editor

It is filled with great
articles and news
updates that are
relevant to the busi-
ness professionals of
Southwest Virginia.

Dan Cagle,
Teksystems, Blacksburg

I want to tell you
what a great
publication you have
just launched.

Michael Newman,
Optical Cable, Roanoke

I was amazed at
how much excellent
content you were
able to pack into the
premier issue. The
layout looks terrific
as well.

Daryl Scott,
Attaain Inc., Blacksburg

I predict that your
magazine is going to
be a huge success.

David Mikula,
Inprint, Roanoke

I was impressed
with the overall
quality of the
editorial and design.

Neil Sagebiel,
Floyd

I really like the size
and style. This
publication will be
a nice 'change' to
what the valley
receives in this area.

Debbie Collins,
Owner / Publisher,
Salem Phone Directory

I love your new
magazine!

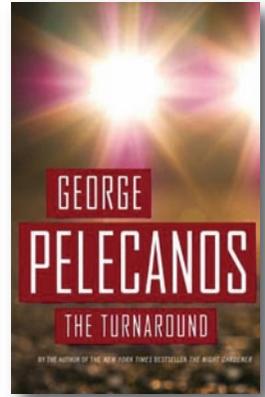
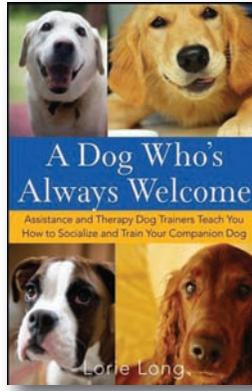
Lisa Ison,
New Century Venture
Center, Roanoke

I have enjoyed every
article. Thank you for
all that you are doing
to promote
economic growth
in our community.

Sharon G. Scott,
Virginia Tech - Pamplin
College of Business

Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our staff and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Each month, we will ask readers to submit two 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.



The well-trained dog

Some years back, I took two dogs of different owners on an off-leash walk in the country. Tess, the German Shepherd, never left my side. Emma, the Border Collie, went off in a thousand directions. Granted, Border Collies are high-energy dogs, but there was no livestock in the area to fire up her herding instincts, and her unruly behavior would reveal itself on a number of other occasions during our acquaintance. As is so often the case, the main difference between Emma and Tess was most likely their owners' approaches to training.

Anyone who visited Barnes & Noble in September for the book signing for *A Dog Who's Always Welcome* (Howell Book House, \$19.99) might have had the chance to hear author Lorie Long's straightforward explanation for where so many dog owners go wrong. To hear Long (a contributor to FRONT) describe it, most owners start out giving their dogs almost complete freedom, but as the dog begins to make mistakes—having accidents, chewing furniture, raiding garbage, jumping on visitors, barking—his owners start to curtail more and more freedom in an attempt to impose discipline. Before long, the dog is practically confined to one room of the house, yet still doesn't really understand what's expected of him. Creating those expectations first, Long explains, allows the dog's world to expand as he learns, so that eventually he can go anywhere and be a welcome guest.

The twist in Long's volume is revealed in the subtitle: Assistance and Therapy Dog Trainers Teach You How to Socialize and Train Your Companion Dog. The book explains the difference between behavior

modification, which aims primarily at teaching commands such as "sit," and socialization, described as teaching the dog "to act appropriately in a variety of settings and with a variety of inanimate objects, animals, and people." Socialization, Long asserts, should come first.

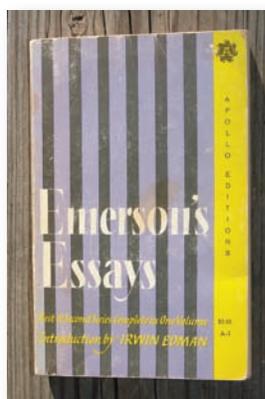
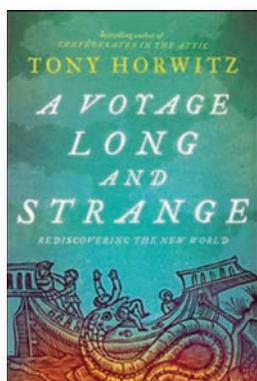
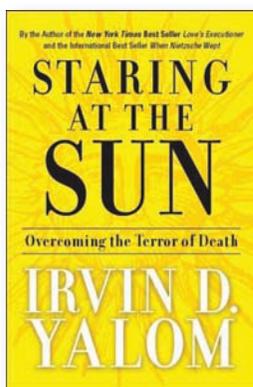
Long, a retired communications executive, has decades of experience raising and training dogs. Not only does she provide training and consulting services to groups and private clients—the dogs in her own life have participated in tracking, nursing home visits, and agility competition. The book is written from this in-depth perspective, and deserves to be studied almost like a text book. But make no mistake: this is a lively, readable treatise that covers not just the Zen of dog training, but the fascinating nature of our relationships with these beloved companions.

—Christina Koomen, *City of Roanoke*

Pelecanos magic

The Turnaround by George Pelecanos (Little, Brown, \$24.95) is a gripping story about how a tragic incident that occurred while the main characters were teenagers affected their later lives. It is, in the words of another outstanding mystery writer, John Connelly, "a mystery with a message."

Mysteries are not on the top of my list for books to read, but I do not miss a George Pelecanos novel. For the last 10-plus years he has been turning one out annually and I look forward to reading each one and have yet to be disappointed. His stories are all



based in Washington, D.C., and he takes the reader to its gritty back streets and slum neighborhoods. His books are violent, but he gives the reader insight as to the reasons behind these seemingly wanton acts of violence. Read them all, you're in for a treat.

—Jay Turner, *J.M. Turner Construction*

Death and dying

Ah, death. Not a common topic of conversation at cocktail parties. Yet Irvin Yalom, 75, internationally regarded psychotherapist, asserts in his book *Staring at the Sun: Overcoming the Terror of Death* (Jossey-Bass, \$24.95) that not confronting death—not staring at death as if it were the sun—limits our lives.

Yalom urges us to focus on the here-and-now to experience our full humanity. He writes, “Staring into the face of death... renders life more poignant, more precious, more vital.” Applying Yalom’s wisdom, at 50 I expect my life to end in my beloved Southwest Virginia, but right here, right now, my days feel vitally full of ideas, passion, and precious people.

—Anne Giles Clelland, *Handshake 2.0*

Between times

In *A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World* (\$27.50, Henry Holt), author Tony Horwitz, a former Virginian, continues with the historic twist that made him something of a cult figure. His *Confederates in the Attic* gave us a sideways, often comic look at the Civil War.

With *Voyage*, he goes back further into our history, to the time between Columbus’ discovery of the New World and the landing of the Pilgrims more than a century and a half later. It is a time, says Horwitz, that few know much about, including historians like him.

His way of correcting that oversight is to research and visit, getting to know descendents in order to understand the originals. It’s an oddly effective gimmick that works because Horwitz is funny, insightful, accurate and truly curious. The book is a delightful, revealing and unusual peek at our history. The story’s been told, but never quite like this.

—Dan Smith, *Editor*

Transcend this

You don’t have to be a 19th Century New England transcendentalist to appreciate Ralph Waldo Emerson. He didn’t prefer that designation either, though credited as the movement’s founder. This book (in fact, the very worn out paperback I’m holding on page 61) was instrumental in steering one 15-year-old to a lifelong appreciation and constant pursuit of classic literature and whatever we can call a distinctively American philosophy. Ummm... that was me, 1978.

Open up *Emerson’s Essays* (Thomas Y. Crowell, \$16) to any page, and put your finger on any single sentence. You’ll have an entire sermon at your fingertip which you can apply—or merely ponder.

—Tom Field, *Publisher*



Warner Dalhouse

Dan Smith

The Wachovia failure and promise >

Executive Summary:

The Wachovia failure is tragic for our region as a whole and for stockholders specifically, but the strength of small banks in the Valleys offers hope.

By Warner Dalhouse

Three vital financial elements are now in place:

- Congress has passed the Rescue Plan that will inject liquidity back into the banking system;
- The Federal Reserve has said it will begin lending directly to distressed corporations for the first time since the Depression;
- Central Banks around the world have launched significant rate cuts.

It is now possible that we may, in this region, avoid the harshest effects of those historic events. Except for chaotic stock markets.

This is serious business requiring serious intervention by government. Fortunately, our government is now equipped and taking action. So far, the most significant fallout from this in our area is the shocking and unexpected failure and forced takeover of Wachovia Corp., whose bank in Roanoke holds about 23 percent of the local market.

Dominion had 51 percent of the market when it was sold to what's now Wachovia. Wachovia has lost over half of the deposits it bought from Dominion.

In discussing the Wachovia debacle with Doug Densmore, a respected financial services attorney with Gentry Locke Rakes and Moore, he succinctly described it as, "almost unbelievable."

Here was the fourth largest bank in America—into whose balance sheet were embedded Dominion, Bank of Virginia, CoreStates (in Pennsylvania), First Fidelity (in New Jersey), First Union and the previous Wachovia, with \$812 billion in total assets—being led to a shotgun wedding with Citigroup by no less than the chairwoman of the FDIC. Unbelievable.

A couple of years ago, Wachovia had paid \$25 billion for Golden West Mortgage Corp. in California. Citigroup was proposing to buy the entire Wachovia banking operation, including Golden West, for \$2.1 billion. Wachovia was carrying \$122 billion in "pay option adjustable rate mortgages" most of which it acquired with Golden West. Such mortgages allow the borrower to decide whether or not to make this month's payment. If he decides to skip a month, that payment amount is added to the loan principal, but of course, the interest continues on the larger amount.

It is not hard to see that a mortgage disaster would occur if the market value of the property fell below the amount of the debt. And many mortgages were going up not down.

The value of many homes was going down instead of up. A scenario designed for trouble. In fact, when real estate values began to fall precipitously, something happened that had never occurred before in America. Borrowers began to simply walk away from their homes and mortgages.

They had put little or nothing down originally, had not reduced the debt much, if at all, and decided to give the keys back and walk away. Wachovia either had to agree to the FDIC pressure to be acquired or be taken over by the government itself, which



Although I believe credit standards have already tightened, good companies with good balance sheets and cash flows are not going to have trouble finding credit available in Roanoke and New River Valleys.

—Warner Dalhouse

is what happened with Washington Mutual, the nation's largest thrift. In that case, the stockholders were wiped out. In the Citigroup deal it wasn't much better, but it wasn't a total wipeout. In April of 2007, Wachovia stock was valued at \$55. Citigroup was offering \$1. Shortly after, Wells Fargo offered \$7, which has been cleared by federal antitrust regulators.

For local stockholders like me, who still hold Wachovia stock, it is devastating. There is no way to know how many local stockholders there are, but there were several thousand local Dominion stockholders, who did very well with the First Union acquisition of Dominion. And after the merger of First Union and Wachovia, who would have ever imagined these present circumstances.

When I was still with Dominion, dealing with security analysts and institutional purchasers of regional bank stocks, the then-Wachovia, based in Winston Salem, was the gold standard of regional banks in America. That's why when that merger took place the new board had the good sense to retain the Wachovia brand rather than First Union.

I preferred the Wells Fargo acquisition offer, which was higher and Wells Fargo agreed to buy the whole company, not just the banks. Its corporate culture will be much more compatible with Wachovia's. But a lot of wealth has gone out of the hands of any local stockholders who were foolish enough, as I was, to hold on to their old Dominion stock.

This area is fortunate in having a lot of other banking options with healthy national and regional companies. And, of course, there are several totally local well capitalized banks in the region with respected boards that have been successful for years.

I think what Valley Bank and HomeTown Bank (which has a New River Valley branch) are doing in the Valleys is slowly recapturing local banking strength and competition we had when Colonial-American and Dominion were the dominant local banks with combined market share of 75 percent. A lot of that market share that has left Wachovia, SunTrust and Bank of America is showing up in Valley and HomeTown.

Although I believe credit standards have already tightened, good companies with good balance sheets and cash flows are not going to have trouble finding credit available in Roanoke and New River Valleys. Mortgage loans are available with reasonable rates and terms. The sub-prime lending that catalyzed a lot of the nation's problems was largely not part of local banks' operations.

Wachovia had backed off charitable contributions before this. Its pledge to the new art museum building might be in jeopardy, and the United Way campaign is now underway and will be affected.

It is reasonable to expect a lot of people will find it harder to make contributions with the Dow having dipped and everyone uneasy. The law that allowed anyone at least 70.5 years old to make contributions directly from an IRA, tax free, that expired Dec. 31, 2007, has been extended for 2008 and 2009. That might help our non-profits a bit.

With the credit crisis affecting Europe and Asia, no one knows what else is going to happen, but there is not much we can do except watch and wait and hope. The plan included an increase in FDIC insurance for bank deposits up to \$250,000.

The Treasury Department has said it will make capital available to much smaller banks that are considered strong and that could be very good for our region and the whole psychology of financial confidence. 📰

Warner Dalhouse is the retired head of Dominion—now Wachovia—Bank and active member of a number of business and non-profit boards of directors in the region. He is he is one of the more respected observers of financial matters in the Valleys.



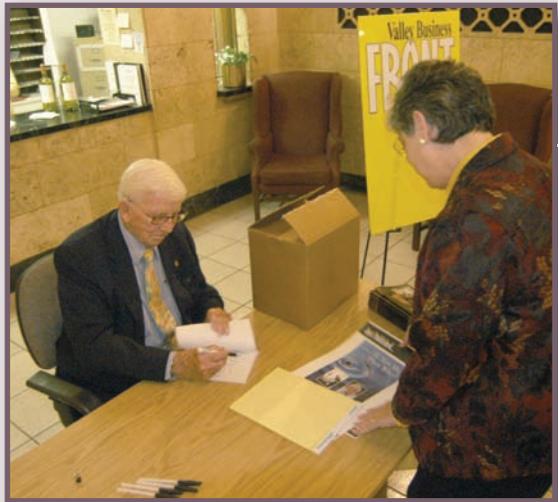
The Kiwanis Club of Roanoke / Fall Waterways Cleanup, sponsored by the Clean Valley Council and Roanoke City

Left to Right: **Dave Pillis** of Dunman Moving, **John Montgomery** of Play by Play, **Wendy Brown** of Tuck Chiropractic (with her son **Nicholas Clements, 8**) clean up along Roanoke River at Wiley Drive

photos: Dan Smith

Cabell Brand signs his new book, *If Not Me, Then Who?* for Roanoke Chamber of Commerce President Joyce Waugh at the **Cabell Brand Book Signing / TAP** Crystal Ballroom, sponsored by **TAP** and **Valley Business FRONT**

photo: Dan Smith



Left to Right: **Cory Donovan** of NCTC, **Eric Schmidt**, CEO of Google and Senator **Mark Warner** speak at NCTC / Virginia Tech Alumni Association sponsored event at Lyric Theatre, Blacksburg

photos: Tom Field

FRONT 'N ABOUT



Developer **David Radford** (left), and landscape architect **David Hill** of Hill Studio in Roanoke were among the presenters during a Blue Ridge Parkway tour for the **Society of Environmental Journalists** based at Virginia Tech. Journalists from all over the world attended the conference. **FRONT** Editor **Dan Smith** was the tour leader.

photo: Dan Smith

Mayor **David Bowers** of Roanoke talks at the dedication of the new work "In My Hands" at the Roanoke Civic Center before a crowd of art supporters. The sculpture is the first piece of public art purchased with funds from Roanoke's **Percent for Art** program.

photo: Christina Koomen



Jim Flowers, director of VT Knowledgeworks (standing) talks about Automation Creation's **Henry Bass** (center, with drink) at a luncheon to honor Bass, who was to leave in a few days for a 13-month tour in Iraq with the Army Individual Ready Reserves. **Nanci Hardwick** of Schultz-Kreehan, **Jim Barney** of Click & Pledge and **John Peters** of Premier Transfer and Storage are to Bass' right; his wife is to his left.

photo: Dan Smith



NCTC's Fall Membership Gala was held at The Inn at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg. Upper left: **Anne Clelland** of Handshake 2.0, Cory Donovan of NCTC; left: **Tom Field, Emily Field** of Valley Business FRONT; above: "The Rapping Professor" **Chris Neck** of Virginia Tech was the guest speaker. Neck teaches a class on leadership with Tech football coach Frank Beamer.

photos: courtesy of NCTC and Rebecca Stotler

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FRONT 'N ABOUT

Developer **Ed Walker**, has rehabilitated a group of offices on Downtown Roanoke's Kirk Ave. (one of which houses FRONT) and turned one into a sort of floating community center. The first event held in the office, sponsored by the **City of Roanoke**, was a presentation by **Roanoke media professionals** to a group of communications students from **Radford University**. Here **Courtney Fitzpatrick** and **Greg Brock** of WDBJ-7 (from left), **Thomas Becher** of tba and **Eric Earnhart** of Carilion public relations talk before engaging the students.

photo: Dan Smith



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There's something about Mary >

By Catherine Chapman Mosley

Executive Summary:

Mary Miller fully understands that the only failure is in not trying.

Interactive Design & Development President Mary Miller and her husband live between Blacksburg and Smith Mountain Lake. When asked what she likes to do in her "spare time"—and this busy woman was asked the question with tongue in cheek—the answer was "rowing."

"There is something magical with the water and puddles [the latter made by the oar blade hitting the water]," says Miller. "As you look backward, you see where you came from."

Miller was on the cutting edge of multi-media development in Virginia Tech's research park in the 1990s. Then came budget cuts, and she was approached about going into business. She had never considered this option before and naturally began to question what would happen if she failed.

"Then I realized failure would be not trying," says Miller. "After a while, I would be 58 and looking back and saying 'Why didn't I try that?'"

Founded in 1991, Interactive Design & Development Inc. is an IT firm that blends technology with business and educational initiatives. Its national portfolio is prolific and diverse.

"My greatest joys come from knowing we delivered good value to our customers," says Miller, "and working with very bright, creative and energetic people." Miller enjoys watching her team members



Mary Miller

Dan Smith



I have had a lot of strong women in my life that have opened doors for me.

—Mary Miller

develop. Looking back, she reflects on the great teachers that encouraged her.

"I have had a lot of strong women in my life that have opened doors for me," Miller says. "I have a strong sense of what people have given to me, and I want to help as many people as I can whether it be pointing them in the right direction or giving them an introduction or a little confidence."

Mary Miller's inspirational influence makes its mark outside the doors of IDD as well.

"I've had the privilege of working with Mary on several technology projects for our firm's clients," says Cynthia Lawrence, president of Design Marketing in Roanoke. "She is a brilliant and engaging business partner."

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

More important is that she is a compassionate and visionary person dedicated to opening doors for others.

"She motivates, challenges, supports, comforts and celebrates individuals and their victories, personal or public. She is an inspiring woman and I am honored to know her as a colleague, mentor, and friend."

Miller recalls a piece she read that gave three things to think about every day. These three principals have guided both her business and personal lives.

- Life is short.
- The only guarantee we have is this moment.
- If you fail to make a decision, time will make it for us.

According to NCTC Executive Director Cory Donovan, "If you know Mary and you know her energy level and the many and various things she is involved with, these three things do come through. Just like the movie by the same name, but with a different plot, 'There's something about Mary' that is friendly, energetic, driven and telling of her guiding thoughts." 

In Brief

Name:	Mary Guy Miller
Age:	58
Company:	Interactive Design & Development, Inc. (IDD)
Location:	Blacksburg
Hometown:	Marion
Education:	Virginia Tech. B.S. in mathematics and education; masters in computer science; Ph.D. in instructional design
Community Involvement:	The NewVa Corridor Technology Council, incoming president; Rotary, former assistant governor for District 757; National BankShares, Inc. Board of Directors
Favorite Quote:	"The harder I work, the luckier I get." Samuel Goldwyn, film producer



She motivates, challenges, supports, comforts and celebrates individuals and their victories...

—Cynthia Lawrence,
Design Marketing

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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Accounting

Laureen Gisiner is new at Cole & Associates CPAs in Roanoke.

Janet Shrader has been named firm director of Brown, Edwards & Company in Roanoke.

Banking

David Rakes has been named director of marketing and communications at HomeTown Bank.

Terri Curro is the new branch operations administrator and security officer.

Kimberley Braswell has been named senior vice president of human resources and training at Member One Federal Credit Union in Roanoke.

Mark Hudzik has been named vice president of community and housing development.

Investing

Peter Krull, president of Krull & Company, a socially and environmentally responsible financial services firm with a significant client base in Roanoke, was a guest speaker at the GreenBusiness Works EXPO in Atlanta in October. He presented the talk "Socially Responsible Investing: Aligning Your Investments With Your Values."

LEGAL FRONT

W. Calvin Smith has been named a senior attorney at Spilman Thomas & Battle in Roanoke. **Nicole Wagner** has been added as a lawyer.

WELLNESS FRONT

Eldercare

Scott Parvin has been named landscaping supervisor at Warm Hearth Village in Blacksburg.

Sherrill Hollandsworth has been named director of nursing and **Sharon Barnes** is the new administrator at Pheasant Ridge Assisted Living Community.

Health care

Dr. Aubrey Knight is the new medical director for the Berkshire Health and Rehabilitation Center in Vinton.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Manufacturing

Kent Murphy, chairman/CEO of Luna Innovations in Roanoke, has joined the VirginiaFIRST executive advisory board. VirginiaFIRST is a multinational non-profit organization concentrating on youth and technology.

Ben Lawhorn has been named sales manager at East West DyeCom in Roanoke.



Hubbard

Wayne Hubbard has joined a multi-disciplinary team responsible for the design and fabrication of medical devices, instrumentation and other components at Schultz-Creehan in Blacksburg.

Albert Prillaman has joined Stanley Furniture Company in Stanleytown as CEO.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Construction

Ben Price of Branch & Associates in Roanoke has been accredited by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

Robert Bengston of the Roanoke Public Works Department has been named the Roanoke Regional Homebuilders Association's Employee of the year.

Real Estate

Matt Simmons has been named managing partner of the Christiansburg model home sales office of Southland Log Homes.

Karen Mabry has joined Coldwell Banker Townside Realtors in Roanoke.

Linda Brady has joined Weichert, Realtors-Bridges & Company of Smith Mountain Lake and Salem as a Realtor.

RETAIL FRONT

Automotive

Brian Bazer has been named VP of asset protection at Advance Auto in Roanoke. **Markus Hockenson** has been named regional VP and **Joe Caruthers**, **Matt Lodbell** and **Bill Grommes** have been named VP in commercial sales. **Galen Grubb Jr.** has been named VP for human resources in the commercial department.

Wine

Michael Harper has been named manager of Wine Gourmet in Roanoke.

RECREATION FRONT

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

EDUCATION FRONT

College

Charlotte Parks has been named VP of resource development at Roanoke College.

Radford University has named **Jill Johnson** associate athletic director.

CULTURE FRONT

Non-Profit



Whitaker

United Way of the Roanoke Valley has named **Lea Whitaker** development associate and **Kitty Branch** finance associate.

OTHER FRONTS

Consulting

Seth Oginz of Security Consultants Unlimited in Roanoke has been appointed to the private security services advisory board of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Recruiting

S.R. Clarke, a Blacksburg recruiting firm, has hired **Eric Melniczek**.

Media



Jones



Carlin

PR changes at Access >

Two of the bigger names on the region's communications roster—**John Carlin** of WSLs-TV and **Terri Jones** of AccessPR—are experiencing major career changes.

WSLS news anchor John Carlin, a 21-year veteran, is leaving TV journalism to become a senior vice president of AccessPR, a division of Access Advertising+Design in Roanoke. Anchor/reporter Jay Warren replaces Carlin as news anchor.

Carlin will join AccessPR on Dec. 1 and will take over the leadership role held

and developed by Jones, principal of the firm. She moves to a part-time position in early 2009 allowing her to honor family commitments. Jones won the 2007 PRNews Agency Executive of the Year award and is a member of Valley Business FRONT's editorial advisory board.

Access Advertising+Design President Todd Marcum says, "John's knowledge of media relations, ability to work on tight deadlines and exceptional communication skills will translate very well into our public relations efforts."



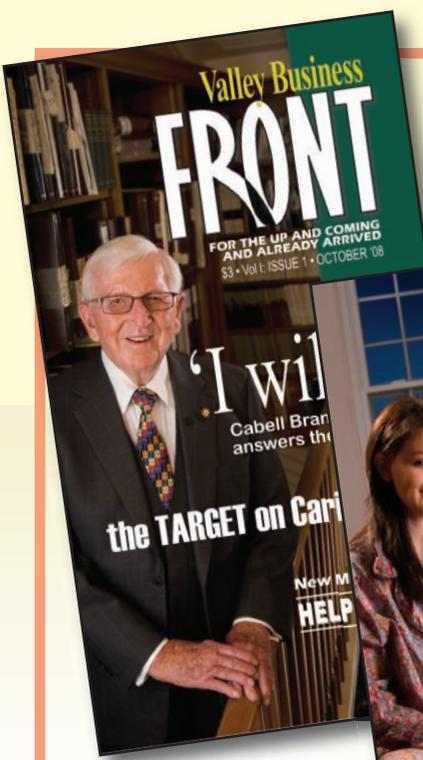
Knocke

William R. Knocke, head of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Virginia Tech, has won the 2008 Virginia Outstanding Civil Engineer Award from the Virginia Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Coming Up...

December 2008 Edition

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Career FRONT

VWCC picks new nursing head >



Morfesi

Virginia Western Community College has named **Sharon Morfesi** head of the nursing program at the college, replacing Marty Barnas, who retired earlier this year.

Morfesi was at Jefferson College of Health Sciences, where she served as

assistant professor in the 17 years. She was with Carilion for 27 years, either as a nurse or teacher. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing from Radford University.

The program head position at Virginia

Western is responsible for overseeing teaching and instruction components of the curriculum as well as the various clinical rotation sites required to provide student experiences in all aspects of nursing care.

Lowing with high technology >



Sutphin

Tim Sutphin of Dublin has been named the Virginia Cooperative Extension's Farmer of the Year because, "Tim and his family are true representatives of excellence in Virginia agriculture," according to Jim Riddell of the Extension.

Sutphin owns a 2,270-acre cattle, sheep, and horse farm, Hillwinds Farm in Dublin. It encompasses 1,123 acres of rented land and 1,047 acres of owned land. He runs a commercial cow-calf operation with 850 bred

cows and heifers and raises about 480 head of stocker cattle for backgrounding, the practice of raising young animals on pasture before placing them on a feedlot. He operates a bull test station where he feeds about 230 purebred bulls each year.

Sutphin and his family raise about 120 head of commercial ewes and have a small herd of horses. His cattle operations rely on a diverse mix of forages and two key technologies designed

to improve cowherd genetics and add value to calves: artificial insemination and estrous synchronization.

"To be successful in the cattle industry, your cost of production must be lower than most producers and you must add value to your cattle," Sutphin says. "I decided I could make a living in the mainstream of the cattle industry using practical and innovative practices."

Chamber picks Joyce Waugh >



Waugh

The Roanoke Regional Chamber has stayed home with its choice for the new president/CEO: **Joyce Waugh** is the pick and she's a popular one. Waugh, has been VP of public policy for the chamber since 2000, replaces Beth Doughty, the director of the Roanoke Regional Economic Development Partnership.

Chamber officials interviewed candidates

from all over the country and former Chamber Chairman Ed Murphy of Carilion said Waugh "has a well-earned reputation of trust, competence and innovation in business, social and political spheres. She's clearly who we want leading the largest, most influential business organization west of Richmond."

She represents the VA West Business and

Legislative Coalition and she started the Chamber's Business Dinners for Educators program. She co-hosts a political talk show on Cox Channel 9. She has been assistant director of economic development for Roanoke County and was the land negotiator for The River Foundation, assembling over 1,200 acres for Virginia's Explore Park.



Cycle Systems deal

Cycle Systems has acquired Coiners' Scrap Iron & Metal, a scrap metal processor in Charlottesville. The facility will operate as Cycle Systems effective. The purchase will enable Cycle Systems to collect additional scrap metal to feed its metal shredding and shearing operations in Roanoke and Lynchburg, while boosting production of processed scrap metal, which the company sells to steel mills and other customers in the region.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed. Coiners' will transfer to the Cycle Systems brand, including 10 Coiners' employees in Charlottesville. Coiners' was founded in 1907 and incorporated in 1967.



Luna on the brain

Roanoke-based **Luna Innovations** has won an award from the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health to improve the detection and diagnosis of brain tumors. Under this program, Luna will adapt its contrast agent technology, using carbon nanospheres to produce an improved magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) agent. This

contrast agent will be designed to enhance tumor imaging and advance the diagnosis and treatment of this disease by directing nano-molecules to seek out specific biological targets, such as a glioblastoma tumor, one specific form of brain cancer. "Our hope is that this novel approach will provide better resolution to radiologists, who in turn, will improve patient outcomes," says CEO/Chairman Kent Murphy of Luna.

More storage

Cox Communications Roanoke is offering its high-speed Internet customers up to 5GB of free storage in an online vault through its new Media Store and Share service. The newly-launched feature is free with Preferred and Premier Tier subscriptions. Media Store and Share allows customers to save their favorite photos, videos and documents online and share them with others via an e-mail link.



News news

The Roanoke Times, in the midst of its on/off pending sale as part of the Landmark sale-off, has determined it needs to charge 50 percent more for its daily papers at the newsstands, rising from

50 to 75 cents. The Sunday paper will also go up a quarter, from \$1.50 to \$1.75. Officials blame the increase on the cost of newsprint and fuel.

Meanwhile, citing a "sales process [that] has been cramped by the credit crunch," Landmark Media Enterprises says the sale of its Nashville TV station will not take place now. Landmark's media properties—including The Roanoke Times—have been for sale for some months and rumors of the "imminent" sale of some of them have been rife. At this point, though, only the flagship Weather Channel has been sold (to NBC Universal). Landmark officials say they remain optimistic that all their properties will sell eventually.

Landmark sale suspended (at press time)

Landmark Media Enterprises, owner of The Roanoke Times, has suspended the search for buyers for most of its properties—the notable exception being The Virginian-Pilot in Norfolk. Tight credit was given as the reason.

Vice Chairman Richard Barry said the company is "having discussions regarding The Virginian-Pilot with an interested buyer. The buyer is encouraged about obtaining financing."

Landmark Chairman/CEO Frank Batten said, "The credit crisis has

made it virtually impossible for companies to obtain bank commitments to help finance acquisitions. And the recession has reduced revenue and earnings and made it very difficult to value a business." Landmark earlier sold its most valuable asset, the Weather Channel, for an estimated \$3.5 billion.

Meanwhile, Landmark has announced the retirement of three upper-level executives, including Bruce Bradley, president of Landmark Publishing Group.

New editor at Star-Sentinel

Gene Marrano, a freelance writer who contributes to the FRONT, among other publications, and who has radio and television shows, is the new editor of the **Roanoke Star-Sentinel**. He had been editor of two Salem Newspaper Group properties, Cave Spring Connection and the Vinton Messenger before that company began cutting back employees (including its advertising manager) recently.

Jobs for Giles

Even as the financial markets fell into the abyss in October, there was some good news if you knew where to look for it. **Giles County** was a good starting place: 50 new jobs, \$2.65 million plant investment by

Jennman Corp. The company, which makes roof supports for the mining industry, will triple its workforce to 73 with the additional jobs.

M/A-Com purchased

M/A-Com, one of the largest original equipment manufacturers of microwave substems in the world, has been sold to Cobham plc of Dorset, England, for \$425 million. M/A-Com has a facility in the Roanoke Valley. It will be integrated into the Cobham Defence Systems Division and will operate under Cobham's existing U.S. special security agreements. M/A-Com earns about 40 percent of its U.S. revenue (\$477.7 million in 2007) from aerospace and defense. That portion of the business is complementary to the CDS Division. M/A-COM Inc. is involved in the development and manufacture of wireless radio frequency, microwave and millimeter wave semi-conductors, and components and technologies. Its products include antennas, cables, ICs, sub-systems, radar sensors, wafers, RFID products, readers, amplifiers, phase shifters, switches, and components, as well as telemetry products, such as transmitters, encoders and modules.

Commerce park money

A new federal infusion of \$3 million could make the **New River Valley Commerce Park** in Pulaski County more attractive to large companies looking for a home. The park will need to come up with a matching amount to complete the project, which could accommodate a company that would employ as many as 1,000 people, officials say. The park rests on nearly 1,000 acres and has already cost \$6.4 million for development. It has been ready for a tenant for six years, but none has come.

Tech elevated

Virginia Tech's rank for agricultural and natural resource research spending jumped four places to sixth in 2007, up from tenth in 2006, in the National Science Foundation's nationwide ranking of programs. In addition, ChoicePoint Inc. has made a \$50,000 gift to the **Pamplin College of Business** to support social entrepreneurship and technology education at Virginia Tech.

New owners

Riverwalk at Salem LLC of Lynchburg has purchased Salem Ridge Apartments for \$4.3 million and officials say they plan to invest another \$4 million to improve them. The complex, formerly known as Willow River, has been flooded

nearly a dozen times in 30 years.

More TAP real estate

Total Action Against Poverty, which is becoming something of a Roanoke Valley real estate magnate, is at it again, this time seeking support for a development of 44 single family homes for low income people. TAP asked Roanoke City Council for that support in October for a development at the intersection of Shenandoah Ave. and Stevens Rd. City Council tentatively granted the requested tax credits for the \$9 million project. The units would be rented for 15 years, then sold.

The mice man cometh

The City of Roanoke closed the **City Market Building** for nearly a week in early October after mice were found in the building. The entire incident turned out to be something of a PR nightmare for the city, which first denied an infestation (saying

the building was being closed "for fall cleaning"), then fessed up after newsmen hounded them. For all the hand-wringing, finger-pointing, conspiracy theorizing the result was a spanking clean Market building with new tables and chairs.



Trading stock

Western Sizzlin Corp., based in Roanoke, plans to make an exchange offer for nearly 700,000 shares of California-based Jack in the Box restaurants. The Roanoke company hopes to exchange 1.607 shares of its stock for a single share of Jack in the Box stock based on recent prices.

Have an announcement about your business?

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

FRONT Notes

Breakell continues to set pace >



(PHEV) Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle

You can, without fear of hyperbole, call them “pace cars.” Those are the cars **Breakell Inc.** and its owner, Stan Breakell, are pushing as the Next Big Thing. Breakell bought a small fleet of hybrid vehicles about a year ago as a way of demonstrating that even a general contractor can shrink its environmental footprint.

Now, he’s going one better: diminishing the small footprint of the

hybrid even further with the introduction of the Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle, which was developed partly by **VPT Energy Systems** in Blacksburg, Nilar Continental of Centennial, Colo., and Plug In Conversions Corporation of San Diego.

Breakell has been driving the plug-in converted Prius to work, getting the equivalent of 130 mpg,

when all is considered. The car is charged at night when electric rates are low and Breakell says the first 18 miles driven the next day cost about 12 cents. The car travels 12-15 miles powered with the battery and then converts to Prius technology.

VPT works with the Smart Grid market, helping make plug-in hybrid vehicles practical.

Market clock getting a facelift >



Colonial American clock on the HomeTown Bank building, with Wachovia tower in background

The 1920s-era clock on the corner of what is now HomeTown Bank on Roanoke City Market is being rehabilitated.

Second generation clocksmith Robert Rodgers of Harrisburg, Pa., is refurbishing the face of the Colonial American Bank clock, which dates to the construction of the building in 1927.

Rodgers, who has been in business 32 years at Rodgers Clock Service (taking over his father’s

business which began in the 1940s) repairs clocks primarily on the east coast, but occasionally has ventured as far as Hawaii and Central America.

He primarily rehabs tower clocks (like the one at Greene Memorial United Methodist Church in Roanoke, which both he and his father have kept up to date). One of his more high-profile jobs is on Cinderella’s Castle in Disney World.

Electric Time Company, which provided the mechanism for the Cinderella clock, has provided the mechanism for the Colonial American clock, as well. This is an O.B. McClintock clock, which Rodgers says is fairly common. “I have repaired several of them over the years,” he says.

Developer Ed Walker owns the building and has contracted Rodgers to do the work. He would not say what the project costs.



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Lionbergers, Branch in Hall of Fame >



Rindy Lionberger and Sam Lionberger, Jr.



Billy Branch

Rindy and Sam Lionberger Jr. are part of two different firsts with the Junior Achievement of the Roanoke Valley Business Hall of fame. Sam Jr. is a second generation Laureate and the pair is the first couple elected. They and **Billy Branch**, who has been in charge of four different Branch companies over the years, are the most recent class of laureates for the Hall.

Branch, a Tennessee native and father of eight children, was selected to the 18-year-old Hall of Fame for his contributions to business in the region, as well as his deep involvement in civic organizations. He bought out his father's highway construction firm and developed some of the region's most lucrative commercial sites and constructed a number of highways. The company established an employee ownership program for all the 800 employees of four independent companies (highway construction,

real estate management, HVAC/mechanical, general contracting).

He built a youth camp and managed construction of a Christian school. He helped create the Regional Partnership and is active in the Rescue Mission. He is active in the Economic Development Authority of Roanoke County, Roanoke Downtown Rotary Club, Central Fidelity Bank, Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce, James River Limestone Company, Habitat for Humanity and David Lipscomb College.

Sam and Rindy Lionberger are officers of their family-run business. Rindy moved to Roanoke when her father was transferred with GE. Sam is a native and Virginia Tech graduate and class president. Sam worked with the Army Corps of Engineers for a couple of years and that led to working with his uncle and his father S. Lewis Lionberger (a Hall laureate in 1993).

As a general contractor in his early years Sam developed and used the first design and team build services offered by a construction firm, where the contractor hires the architect, then designs and builds the project. Rindy has served in a number of capacities, including marketing and management of several Lionberger interests. She has also served on the Commonwealth Transportation Board. Sam served his industry as president of the Association of Contractors from 1975-76, board member of the 4-H Center, Salvation Army, Minnick Center and Lutheran Children's Home.

Together the couple has each been recognized as Mother of the Year and Father of the Year by the Roanoke Merchants Association. They have both served on the Ferrum College Board of Visitors.

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Calendar

Special Event

Roanoke Urban Effect Design Competition

Saturday, Nov. 15
7-10pm
Center in the Square

Displaying the results of the Roanoke Urban Effect design competition. Sponsored in partnership with the American Institute of Architects Blue Ridge Chapter, the event is an international design competition that “sprang from the hope and vision of a group of young design professionals who know their community can be greater than the sum of its parts,” according to competition literature.

The competition has issued the challenge to designers to “look beyond the traditional urban planning model to present innovative and inspired ideas that encourage a more vibrant, dynamic and sustainable urban environment in the City of Roanoke.”

The most recent design competition held in Roanoke—C2C—drew entries from all over the world.

Conferences

The Sixth International Conference on Farm Animal Endocrinology

Nov. 14 - 16

Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center

For more information, reach Mike Akers of Tech at 540-231-6331, rma@vt.edu. Professionals \$275; students \$175.

Fundraisers

Junior League of the Roanoke Valley's 20th Stocked Market Sale

Nov. 14

Roanoke Civic Center Special Events Center

For information, call 540-343-3663.

Training

Virginia Tech Center for Organizational and Technological Advancement Certified Training Program

Nov. 17 - 19

Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center

The speaker is Suzanne Morse, president of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change. The conference will offer certification as a community trainer. Contact: Continuing and Professional Education at Virginia Tech, tballen@vt.edu. Cost is \$1,495.

Arts & Culture

“White Liquor, Blue Ridge Style: Story of Moonshining in Southwest Virginia”

Nov. 1 - 27

History Museum of Western Virginia

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VAAL #2

Grand Opening

The new Valley Business FRONT magazine will host an open house and other related activities to announce and introduce the new magazine and downtown Roanoke office. The schedule will be posted at www.vbFRONT.com

Associations

Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours

Nov. 18
5 - 7:30pm

The Mix One 6
16 West Campbell Ave.
Roanoke

This is the last Business After Hours event in 2008. Admission \$5 for Chamber members and \$15. For more information, call Courtney Hungate at 540-983-0700, ext. 231 or e-mail chungate@roanokechamber.org.

NCTC Technology & Toast

Nov. 20
7:15 - 9am

Holiday Inn / University Blacksburg

Information at 540-443-9232 or info@technologycouncil.com.

Toastmasters

Roanoke Toastmasters
2nd and 4th Thursdays
7pm
540-342-3161

Valley Easy Speakers
1st and 3rd Thursdays
7pm
540-389-3707

Blue Hills Toastmasters
1st and 3rd Fridays
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
540-231-6771

Virginia Tech Toastmasters
Every other Tuesday
7:30pm
540-231-6771

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Send Calendar items to news@vbFRONT.com
Events and activities should be relevant to general business audiences.
Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

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