

Et tu,  
Brute?

Valley Business

# FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING  
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

\$3 • Vol II: ISSUE 3 • DECEMBER 09



COVER STORY  
**Marketing**  
how it's  
changing

**HOW TO  
FIRE  
PEOPLE**

**RC's  
*Mike Maxey***

**Are You Too Trusting  
With Your Business?**

**BETRAYED**

**DIRTY  
JOBS**

Ed Couvrette,  
Couvrette Building Systems

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# WELCOME to the FRONT

A common trend for the welcome letter in a publication is to introduce the stories within. You may have noticed we've never done that. From the beginning, we figured if you want to read the stories in a magazine—you'll read them. Why waste the space and repeat a litany of what's coming up? We use this space to say something else. Often, it's totally unrelated to the following content.

That practice is getting increasingly difficult. "*What are you guys doing this time?*" is a common refrain we hear. And indeed, we are always excited about the stories we're bringing you. It's tempting to tell you all about them right here, up FRONT.

But we'll refrain. Even in this issue. Another exciting issue. An issue chock full of two cover stories about what's happening in an important industry—and even a classic tale of betrayal as old as Adam and Eve—followed by a myriad of stories on businesses and individuals who are cleaning up, helping out, and moving on...

Oh, but here we go... giving it all away...

We'll just stop here. And say... the FRONT wishes you Seasons Greetings and a Blessed New Year.



**Tom Field**

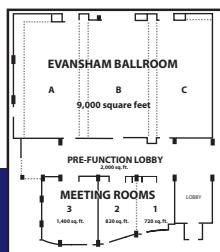


**Dan Smith**

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[morefront.blogspot.com](http://morefront.blogspot.com)

Cover photograph of Ed Couvrette by  
Greg Vaughn Photography

# DECEMBER

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## Editorial Advisory Board

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

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."

# CONTRIBUTORS



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Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 50.

## 2008 / 09 Members

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**Laura Bradford** Claire V

**Warner Dalhouse** retired banker, community activist

**Cory Donovan** NewVa Corridor Technology Council

**Nanci Hardwick** Schultz-Creehan

**Ed Hall** Hall Associates

**George Kegley** retired journalist, community activist

**Terri Jones** Access PR

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**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

You will note that the Board is comprised of experts in many different business / industry "fronts." This is intentional, as we are reporting on all the areas that affect our regional economy and are important to you. In keeping with our policy of being "the voice of business in the valleys" we ask each reader to join us as an editorial partner by calling or e-mailing us your ideas. You know more than we know about your business—or you certainly should—and that inside knowledge shared with our readers will make us all better at what we do.

“ The average young person today is going to have seven career changes.

— Page 61

**NEW  
and  
IMPROVED!**

# How Marketing is Changing to Keep Up

## Upheaval in marketing >

**Executive Summary:**  
*As with almost all forms of media these days, deep and profound changes are occurring in marketing. Some are adjusting. Some are not. We'll see who survives.*

**By Jill Elswick  
and Dan Smith**

The days of pure "push" marketing appear to be coming to an end. Consumers are saturated with advertising messages from all directions. It's becoming harder to get their attention in a world where they can find nearly anything they want for themselves through a Google search.

"The consumer is becoming a bigger player than ever before," says Stephanie Koehler, president of SAKinterMedia, a public relations firm in Roanoke. "Not only can consumers interact directly, they expect to be able to."

Businesses that still adhere to the idea of 'pushing' a brand or product, Koehler predicts, will "crash and burn."

"Marketing has become more specialized, with action-oriented goals and less branding," says John Griessmayer, chief creative officer of the Richmond-based advertising firm Neathawk Dubuque & Packett. Griessmayer, who works in the firm's Roanoke office, says firms are implementing interactive and online programs to get faster marketing results.

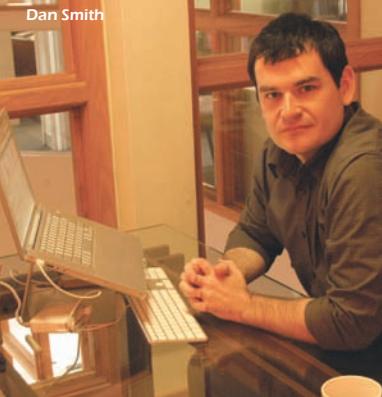
Yet new interactive tools such as Facebook and Twitter will not replace traditional channels any time soon, says Thomas Becher, president of tba, a Roanoke-based PR and advertising firm. "When TV came out, people were writing off radio," says Becher. "These are all just different marketing tools. As the media landscape becomes more fragmented, it's about understanding which channels to use to engage your audience."



**Stephanie Koehler**

Dan Smith

Dan Smith



John Griessmayer



Thomas Becher

Dan Smith

## What they're saying >

"Each year, the number of social media responsibilities in new job postings continues to grow."

**Jane Wortalik  
Speak Advertising Group**

"I still firmly believe that traditional mechanisms are a component—but the advent of social media has allowed for instant and expanded reach. I advise clients to use every tool available, but search for the most efficient."

**Stephanie Koehler  
SAKinterMedia**

"Marketing has become more specialized, with action-oriented goals and less branding. Clients want to see results now ... We do not create a brand, campaign or any other element of advertising without first considering the role the Internet will play."

**John Griessmayer  
Neathawk Dubuque & Packett**

"No one will know what the Internet will look like in a few years, but the trend is toward more robust search functionality and mobile applications. As marketers, we must understand these changes, embrace new trends and add new tools to our expertise as they come along."

**Thomas Becher  
tba**

continued to Page 11



Jane Machin



Donna Wortalik

## Word of mouse >

Social media is one of the most misunderstood business terms at the moment, says David Meerman Scott, marketing speaker and bestselling author of **The New Rules of Marketing and PR**. A lot of people think it simply means Facebook and Twitter, but those are only a small subset of social media.

"Social media differs from so-called mainstream media in that it can be updated and created by anybody on the Web," says Scott. "It includes things such as posting a YouTube video or a photograph on a site like Flickr or leaving a comment in a forum or chat room."

Google is the first place consumers go these days to figure out where they're going to take a vacation, what kind of baby stroller to buy, or where the nearest Chinese restaurant is. They either go to Google or they ask their friends, colleagues, or family members, says Scott. And the way they ask for information is not by picking up the phone but by e-mailing or sending out a message on Facebook or Twitter.

This "word of mouse" phenomenon, as Scott calls it, is a call to action for businesses to make sure they can be easily found on the Web and offer content consumers want.

"It's so easy to create the sorts of content that people are eager to share or that search engines reward with a high ranking," says Scott. "All it requires is for an organization to start thinking like a publisher of information, rather than a company that buys advertising and interrupts people to try to get their messages out."

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Tony Pearman

Dan Smith

advertising, are not only growing, but are taking market share from traditional media, like print, radio, outdoor, and television," says Tony Pearman, founder of Access, a Roanoke ad agency. However, he predicts, only a few traditional media outlets are in real danger of becoming extinct, including the Yellow Pages and similar publications.

Much of the shift to electronic forms of marketing is motivated by a desire to innovate while saving money. "Clients are definitely looking more critically at their marketing dollars," says Heather Toro Derrick, president of Communicate Consulting in Daleville. "They're challenging us to be more creative. They want a higher return on investment."

"One of the coolest things about the Internet is that we're able to engage with audiences in a way that traditional marketing doesn't allow," says Derrick. "The Internet and social media take that person-to-person marketing to the next level."

"Small and mid-sized businesses are beginning to accept the reality of the social media revolution," adds Patsy Stewart, director of social media for Optimized Strategies, a consulting firm in Roanoke. "Success will be determined by those who develop a sustainable strategy that augments their current traditional marketing efforts and integrates with their business networking."

The region's market tends to resist change, says Stewart, but more businesses are beginning to tap new competitive advantages in the market place: "Anyone can become a publisher of news and build a social network in real time. Businesses are becoming aware of this newfound power."

## Traditional media not going away

Outlets such as billboards, print ads, and television remain an important part of the marketing strategy for most firms.

"Television advertising works," says Koehler. "It works as well as, if not better than, anything else." Koehler encourages her clients to post television spots and visual clips online as well. Vistar Eye Center, one of her clients, has several educational

# COVER STORY

Dan Smith



**Heather Toro Derrick**



**Patsy Stewart**

clips on YouTube about cataract surgery and other procedures.

Billboards, likewise, still have a place in today's marketing strategies, says Koehler, but in a different way: "They used to be a source of information, but now they end up driving you to a Web site." Likewise, she says, print ads aren't going anywhere: "It's a socioeconomic thing. Until everybody can afford the Internet, and until you can comfortably take it into the restroom," print remains viable.

The most important part of using traditional media in a marketing strategy, says Koehler, is to make sure it interconnects with online marketing efforts, creating a feedback loop with the company and its customers.

"Print and traditional media aren't going anywhere," says Griessmeyer. "We still need them." One of Neathawk's most innovative new media campaigns in the past year was for the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. The ad firm produced video interviews with priests to answer frequently asked questions from young men considering entering the priesthood. The interviews, which dealt with frank subjects including celibacy, were posted on BehindtheCollar.com.

Neathawk used traditional marketing techniques to promote BehindtheCollar.com, including a poster with a tear-off priest collar that included the name of the site.

"Mediums are all getting flipped on their heads," says Dean Browell, executive vice president of Richmond-based Feedback, a social media advertising firm he launched in September with Jeff Thompson. Browell had been employed with Neathawk as director of new media.

"Billboard and outdoor is still very big," says Browell. "They're trying to put ads on everything they possibly can. But the mediums themselves are changing so fast. It's hard to determine the return on investment."

Meanwhile, says Browell, consumers are both more and less trusting of marketers. Media saturation has caused them to become more cynical about advertising claims. Yet consumers are more trusting of products they're loyal to. Word-of-mouth means more than it used to, he says.

## What they're saying >

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"I do not believe the Internet has changed the fundamentals of marketing ... The fundamentals of a great brand ... mean understanding the consumer's needs and developing a product that meets those needs better than the competition ... Now, though, marketers have more ways to communicate just how their brands meet the consumer's needs best."

—**Jane Machin**  
**Pamplin College of Business**

"For the foreseeable future, firms like Access must add and continue to develop new skill-sets and expose and educate our professionals in new disciplines to be better partners for our clients. To the best of my knowledge, there is no four-year program or degree in social media. So those practicing it are largely self-taught and of wildly varying degrees of self-proclaimed proficiency."

—**Tony Pearman**  
**Access**

"Once clients see that it takes time to develop relationships through social media, some see it as a way to streamline their existing relationships, while others see it as a burden ... The trick here is to see social media as part of your overall marketing strategy, and as another means of communicating and taking care of your clients."

—**Heather Toro Derrick**  
**Communicate Consulting**

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## Word of mouse >

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Furthermore, says Scott, businesses don't need to take advantage of every social media tool that's out there. "If someone asks me, 'Do I need to be on Twitter?' my answer is no," says Scott. "But you damn well got to be on the Web in a way where you're creating really interesting information."

Kinds of information that can be created include YouTube videos or images of products and services. A landscape architect, for example, wouldn't want to jump onto Twitter right away, says Scott. Her business would be better served by posting photographs of her work.

To skeptics who say the value of social media is unproven, Scott replies, "What's the return on investment of using the telephone? What's the return on investment of putting your pants on in the morning? What's the return on investment of putting a coat of paint on your house? What's the return on investment of carrying your business card in your pocket? This stuff works."

—Jill Elswick



Shirley Holland

John Bryant

## A blended approach

Local businesses and institutions are blending traditional and online marketing to engage audiences in ways that weren't possible before.

Neathawk helped Virginia Tech develop [ThisIsTheFuture.com](http://ThisIsTheFuture.com) as part of a new plan to showcase the university's contributions to the economic well-being of the Commonwealth. In the past, this message was conveyed through advertisements in key Virginia business publications. Launching the Web site broadened the reach of the message. Traditional, if creative, methods were used to promote the Web site, including tree wraps, flyovers, and gas pump ads. The ads were simple, pointing people to [ThisIsTheFuture.com](http://ThisIsTheFuture.com).

The Virginia Tech site includes stories in a keyword "cloud" about the university's innovations in areas as diverse as biofuels, obesity research and tomato processing. In addition, students, professors, and graduates of Virginia Tech can add their names to the site to tell how they have contributed to the university's achievements.

"There's a willingness of people, and almost a need, to tell their story," says Griessmayer. "This is a generation brought up on reality TV."

The site has generated 200 story submissions, says Cecelia Crow, brand marketing manager for Virginia Tech: "We wanted feedback and opportunities to engage our audience with our messages. We wanted to change the conversation from tragedy to triumph about Virginia Tech." The campaign was successful, says Crow, generating thousands of hits for the site.

"Marketing is moving very quickly to more of a micro level versus a macro level," says Shirley Holland, vice president, strategic development for Carilion Clinic. "There is more emphasis on grassroots events and relationship building with the technology we have now."

In addition to social media outlets such as Facebook for relationship building, Carilion is extending its marketing outreach through the planned offering of personal medical



Dan Smith

Lisa Lusk

records through CarilionClinic.org. Carilion now has more than 900 fans on its Facebook site and sees such tools as becoming more important in the future.

"We put together a Web team this past year," says Holland. "A lot of it is trial and error. Some of this stuff may not last long term. We're experimenting."

Some local businesses are seeing great results from using social media tools such as Facebook to promote themselves. Roanoke Natural Foods Co-op launched a Facebook fan page earlier this year and attracted hundreds of fans within the first week, says John Bryant, director of marketing and communications. The site now has nearly 800 fans. The co-op posts content related to its daily specials and events.

"I've heard people come into the store and say they want the Facebook 'special,'" says Bryant. "That's not what we were intending to do, but it was interesting to hear."

Nevertheless, the co-op continues to advertise in print, which Bryant says is the best return on investment: "Not everybody at the co-op is on the computer."

## Social media pays off

Meanwhile, Bubblecake, the cupcake store that launched in South Roanoke in July, owes nearly all of its success to social media marketing.

"You can honestly say this business was built on social media," says Lisa Lusk, who owns the bakery with her husband, Rob. Bubblecake took out a small ad in a local magazine for the first six months in order to build the brand. Beyond that, the company promoted itself on Facebook and Twitter. The Facebook fan page features colorful photos of the store's cupcake specialties.

"We are getting 1,000 hits to our Web site a day through Facebook," says Lusk. "It's unbelievable. We are completely slammed." Bubblecake sells between 500 and 1,500 cupcakes a day. Business is so good it has opened a second location in downtown Roanoke. 

## What they're saying >

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"Social media is powerful but success will be determined by those who develop a sustainable strategy that augments their current traditional marketing efforts and integrates with their business networking."

**—Patsy Stewart  
Optimized Strategies**

"We put together a Web team this past year. A lot of it is trial and error. Some of this stuff may not last long term. We're experimenting."

**—Shirley Holland  
Carilion Clinic**

"I've heard people come into the store and say they want the Facebook special."

**—John Bryant  
Roanoke Natural Foods Cooperative**

"You can honestly say this business was built on social media."

**—Lisa Lusk  
Bubblecake**



**Direct mail—to 17-year-old high school senior, Kelsey—overflows its bin.**

• Tom Field

**By Tom Field**

**Executive Summary:**  
*It takes more savvy than ever to rise above the clutter. Some recipients of your message never even notice it in the first place.*

## Think there's not a battle for your business? Think again >

The picture at left is real. What you don't see is all that mail failing to fit in the bin. A standard large U.S. Postal Service container, a foot deep by 17-inches wide. You also don't feel its 23.7 pounds of weight. Oh, and two other pertinent facts: All of it is college recruiting solicitations...to one girl. And all of it arrived in the mail...in one summer, between her junior and senior years.

"I really didn't pay that much attention to it," our target audience confesses (my daughter, by the way).

"None of it?," I asked, incredulously. "What about the pink and green ones?"

"Sweet Briar?" she responded.

So... she noticed *something*.

But it's true. Most of it went unnoticed. Believe it or not, nearly 100 percent of the pieces you see in the picture—were never opened.

Plain white official looking envelopes. Big honking folders, packed with material. Cute oversized postcards with shiny, happy college kids. Custom photos of college campuses with the name "Kelsey" spelled out in colorful fall leaves. Crazy shapes and folds. Stickers and magnets. Invitations to dedicated Web sites and personalized YouTube videos. Virtual tours on multimedia.

Unnoticed.

These kids today are tough, I tell ya.

So what *does* it take to capture one's attention?

Certainly, it takes the right message. No one will respond to the wrong message. But beyond that, beyond all the techniques and latest tactics—even beyond the talent of our best ad agencies and marketing firms—the answer could be simple. Simple. Simple.

Repetition. Repetition. Repetition.

No one knows that better than Source4. The Roanoke firm admits



Tom Field

it's not an ad agency. Coming up with the messages that motivate, persuade, convince. It leaves that part up to its clients. Source4 is the active agent of marketing. Down in the trenches.

The reason Source4 knows what works, is because the results are reported back to the clients it serves. Large institutions. Complex organizations. Franchises. Insurance companies and banks. And yes, colleges.

Tracking, measuring, and performance are as important as—if not more important than—the products they produce. Printed material, content-on-demand, e-mail capturing, personalized URLs and online interactive.

"It's all about the data," Kevin Gannon states, matter-of-factly. "Who owns it, and what you do with it."

And what you do with it...is use it.

Over and over and over.

Gannon is president, southeast region for Source4, a company described as providing "integrated business and marketing solutions, with extensive fulfillment and distribution capabilities and custom technology."

The reason our "target audience" remembers any school is because she noticed it more than once.

Even schools whose message wasn't particularly creative, motivating, persuasive, convincing. If she heard from them more than others, somehow those schools rose above the clutter.

Incredibly simple, isn't it?

Simple enough to make your head spin. And your mailbox (on your street, computer, or mobile phone) spill over. □

**"It's all about the data"**

—Kevin Gannon,  
Source 4, Roanoke

# BETRAYED

## The education of Ed Couvrette >

### Executive Summary:

*Through the legal hardship, employees have remained loyal and Ed Couvrette has kept his faith that his factory will return to profitability. That's been enough so far.*

By Rob Johnson

Ross Campbell, a painter at the Couvrette Building Systems factory in Salem, toiled away on a recent morning, even though the company hasn't paid him in several weeks.

"I have a lot of faith in Ed Couvrette. He's a good guy," says Campbell, a 12-year employee at the massive plant. Ross is one of 30 people still working at constructing shed-like steel kiosks that house drive-through automated teller machines for banks. Not long ago, he was one of about 100.

Campbell has plenty of company as a Couvrette believer, even though at first glance the firm's track record doesn't seem to justify it. Couvrette and his company were the victims of former Chief Operating Officer Roy Dickinson in 2005. Dickinson pled guilty in Roanoke's U.S. District Court to federal fraud and tax charges.

By that time of the plea, the resulting federal tax liens had battered the company's credit standing and tarnished its reputation with customers and vendors. "The mere fact that the company is still standing after all this is remarkable," says Walter Jones, former Internal Revenue Service agent and fraud examiner hired as a Couvrette consultant. "People who extend credit pay a lot of attention if you have tax problems and lending sources dry up."

Although Dickinson bears the guilt for this mess in a legal sense, it was Ed Couvrette's flawed professional judgment that let it happen. Bill Poff, one of Roanoke's most successful litigators and Couvrette's lead lawyer, says, "The best word that describes Ed in all this is 'naivete.'"

Ironically, Couvrette, now 58, is an avowed disciple of the careful management practices espoused by Edwards Deming, the famed industrial statistician whose strategies are widely credited with the rise of Toyota and Honda.

In the aftermath of his company's executive train wreck, Couvrette still proudly presents a visitor with a printed copy of "The Philosophy of Couvrette," which sets out goals of excellence in hiring employees and encouraging superior performance.

Couvrette failed to measure up when he trusted Dickinson, now serving time in a California federal prison, to take charge of his factory and business finances. Says Poff, "Ed wanted to



**all photos: Dan Smith**

**Ed Couvrette: "These people don't want to quit, so I keep going."**

do a lot of other things in life, like play handball. Dickinson was the answer to his prayers—the complete chief operating officer.”

But Dickinson, according to federal prosecutors, misused company money for personal expenses and didn’t pay employment taxes for Couvrette Building System workers—which eventually attracted the ire of the IRS.

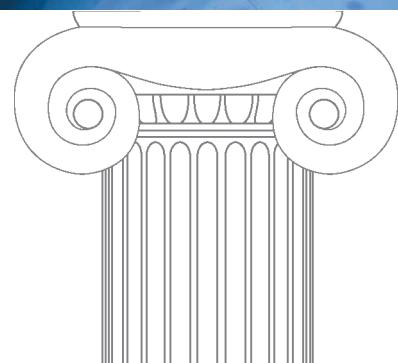
Ed Couvrette doesn’t dodge blame: “I trusted him. I put him in charge.” As his printed philosophy states, despite attempts to hire high quality employees, “sometimes we bring problems into our future.”

Today, the Couvrette factory’s hum has gone faint and opportunity has diminished. It hasn’t helped that in the wake of the tax debacle, banking industry expansion has stalled amid the overall economic downturn. The 120,000-square-foot plant on Electric Road, long boasting more than 100 workers, has been reduced by two thirds “working about 50 percent of the time,” Couvrette says.

Couvrette, a cheerful, stout man with a shock of thick graying hair who favors casual dress shirts that bear his company’s logo, soldiers on with determination and praises his followers. “These people don’t want to quit, so I keep going.”

The layoffs, he says, have been painful for him. “We’re making some money right now, but only because we have sent people home and the others are working reduced part time.”

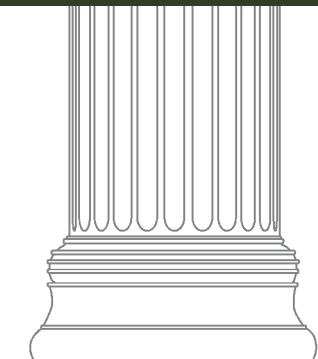
Couvrette says his revenue in 2009 will total about \$4 million,



“ ”

The mere fact that the company is still standing after all this is remarkable.

—Walter Jones

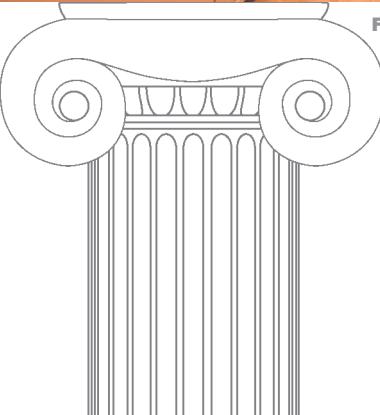




Finished kiosks



Paint Supervisor Clay Giles (left) and sheet metal worker Jay Ayersman on break in the paint room



“  
It’s not like we feel  
we’re being screwed  
over. We know  
how things are.  
And it’s not like  
in this economy  
you can go out and  
just get another  
manufacturing job.

—Mike Fitzgerald

25 percent of the company's high point in the late 1990s when profits reached \$3 million a year and he gave out hundreds of thousands of dollars in bonuses.

His workers express a cautious optimism—and a certain fatalism. “I have been through it all, the bonuses and now the hard times,” says Mike Fitzgerald, a production supervisor who has been at Couvrette since 1994. Asked about his reaction to Couvrette’s occasionally delaying pay days, he says, “It’s not like we feel we’re being screwed over. We know how things are. And it’s not like in this economy you can go out and just get another manufacturing job.”

Couvrette plant jobs typically pay about \$14 an hour and some veterans get up to \$18. Such relatively high wages have been disappearing for years as U.S. metal-bending jobs are either shipped overseas or are eliminated by foreign competition. Reviving factory opportunities has long been a campaign cry of politicians.

But Ed Couvrette is facing some harsh realities. “I have zero elasticity of funds. If you don’t have cash, you don’t make payroll.”

On the plus side, his lawyers say he has settled a \$1.5-million federal tax liability. But lenders are keeping the company at arm’s length. “We have still have no banking relationships,” Couvrette laments.

Without more working capital, he says, “I can’t do much marketing, let alone expansion. I need to rebuild my delivery trucks, pay vendors and make payroll.”

Grim as that may sound, Matt Musselman, a Couvrette design engineer, has his eyes on the future as he works at his computer screen. Musselman, who labors in Couvrette’s research and development office, is diagraming a solar-powered ATM for one of the company’s longtime customers, Wells Fargo.

Musselman is designing the sun-using kiosk to operate in Wells Fargo’s Arizona locations. “It’s one of our first ventures into green technology,” he says with a touch of pride.



**Paul Blankenship works on sign can forms**

**Welder Paul Williams hard at it**

Surely though, Musselman and others at Couvrette would also welcome the kind of green in which a few trees are sacrificed in the name of paying a profit. 

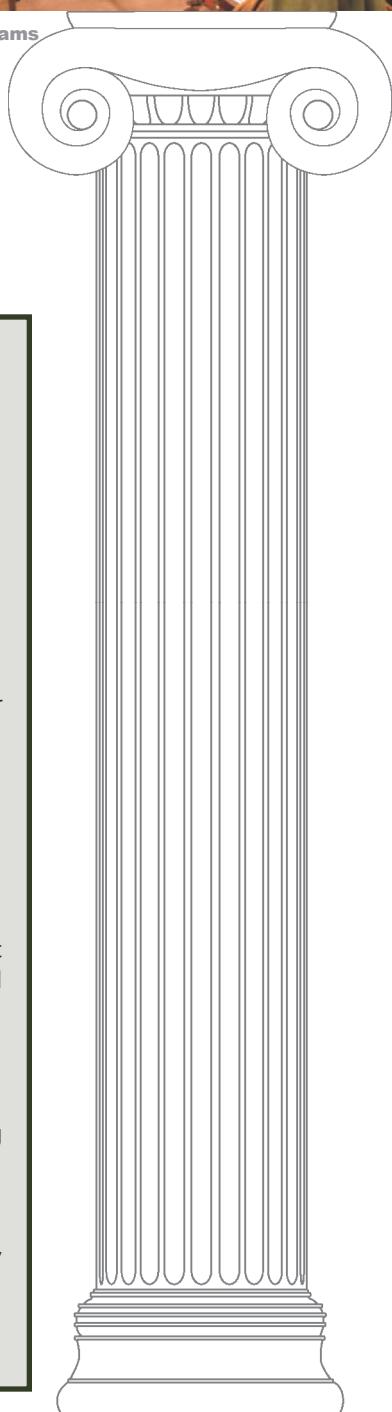
## Avoiding the 'train wreck' >

**By Rob Johnson**

How can entrepreneurs avoid the legal and financial train wreck suffered by Couvrette Building Systems?

Here are a few pointers from Walter Jones, a former Internal Revenue Service agent and fraud examiner in Roanoke hired as a Couvrette consultant.

- Small business owners who put someone in charge of their books should, as Ronald Reagan once said of the Soviets, "Trust but verify."
- Jones says, "The No. 1 thing a business owner can do to deter a fraudster is to receive his bank statements unopened and to personally review them."
- When perusing your business bank statements, don't just look at the numbers, examine the actual images of canceled checks. "That's where the action is," says Jones.
- Look at receipts for deposits of state and federal taxes.
- Liabilities can double the amount of taxes due—including penalties and interest—within a year, so don't let your informal auditing slide.
- Consider hiring an accounting fraud specialist to periodically review your business financial records. Typical fees are \$100 to \$150 an hour, depending on how organized your records are.





## A less painful way to fire people >

As our economy continues to shake and stall, termination of employees is inevitable. An estimated 2.6 million employees lost their jobs last year, and the figure is expected to be similar, if not higher, in 2009. Unemployment topped the 8 percent mark in March, the highest such rate since 1983, according to figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Terminating good employees for economic reasons is troubling. Even more troubling, though, are recent stories of loyal workers in our region who have been treated with wretched displays of callousness by their company's officials. With this type of insensitive treatment, should anyone care whether the offending company weathers the economic storm? Treating people with respect and dignity in terminations takes a little common sense and compassion.

A few suggestions are provided for those with the ugly task of unsheathing the corporate ax:

- Give as much advance notice as possible about plans. Not only is advance notice often required by law, it is also helpful for employees. Advance notice allows employees to begin looking for alternate employment and enables employees to prepare financially for the layoff. Unfortunately, many companies give workers little notice about terminations. This lack of notice dramatically increases mistrust of management among surviving workers. Trust is based on mutual respect. When employees discover what has been brewing without their input (and they will when the first person is let go), they see a blatant disrespect for their integrity.
- Meet with the individuals face-to-face in a location that allows for privacy. It is better to sit down with the person being terminated and be honest about the decision. Avoid giving the bad news on a Friday afternoon. Some employees have received their termination notices via e-mail messages. E-mail is not an appropriate manner to address such a issue.
- Offer outplacement services for the terminated employees. Often, these services are only offered to executives, but providing even a few sessions of outplacement counseling can be very beneficial and motivating to an employee in search of a new position.
- Consider offering a severance package or an early retirement option.
- Allow the employee the opportunity to say farewell to co-workers and pack their belongings without an escort. If you've had a loyal worker, a security detail is not necessary to watch over the individual as he packs up and exits the building.

(Readers, I'd like to hear from you. Share your termination stories—the good, the bad and the ugly—with me. Send to [donna.dilley@gmail.com](mailto:donna.dilley@gmail.com)) 

## Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

### Executive Summary:

*There is strength in compassion and executives can show both when the difficult decisions have to be made.*

## When 'funny' isn't so ha-ha >

**Dear Getting a Grip:** A co-worker constantly makes attempts at humorous comments, always at the expense of others. When challenged, she replies, "I was just kidding. Can't you take a joke?" Yes, I can take a joke, but her comments are critical and demeaning, not funny. Yet, if I question her, I look like the one without a sense of humor, as if I'm the one with the problem. I dread being in meetings with her and avoid her whenever possible. I'm enjoying my workplace less and less. What do I do about this office jokester?

**Dear Not Funny:** A comedian in the office is like a bully in the middle school. We fear that a stand for justice will make us the new victim and result in abandonment or shunning by peers. Like a bully, an office comedian seeks power over others and this disregard for mutuality is experienced with a very human level of dismay, even betrayal.

A show needs an audience. Public efforts to confront an office comedian usually result in empowerment of the performer, not the people. If you have co-workers who feel the way you do, and a supervisor who will mediate, a small group "intervention" may let the comedian know the stage is smaller than she thought. Although the comedian is unlikely to change behavior, the meeting establishes that you no longer intend to be a captive audience.

**Getting a Grip:** Instead of leaving her show because she has the power, leave because you do. Your presence is a gift and you have the right and power to choose to whom to give it. 



## Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

**Executive Summary:**  
Need to start "Getting a Grip" on a personal problem at work?  
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# Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

**Executive Summary:**  
A small gift of elegance or something to make life a little easier can help ease the clutter of 'stuff.'

## Giving less, getting more >

Lately our culture seems to be thinking less is more. We realize we are accumulating too many possessions and often can't keep track of what we own. Our landfills overflow with discarded "stuff" and we strive to buy and use less of everything.

With the holidays and the season of giving approaching, how do we celebrate the spirit of the season without adding to the mountain of useless possessions we already own?

We need to return to giving useful, meaningful gifts that don't clutter our lives, but actually help our self-esteem and productivity. A gift should reflect the recipient's interests, solve a problem, or fill a need that is obvious, but not necessarily to her.

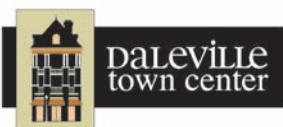
Consider giving—or requesting—these wardrobe-related gifts:

- Custom-made shirts. What a luxury to have a shirt that really fits, feels oh-so-soft, and is impeccably constructed.



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- A fine wool suit—custom fitted. A perfectly fitted suit will last years and give an invaluable boost to your confidence.
- A good piece of jewelry, in addition to adding a touch of elegance to the appearance, will become a treasured heirloom in time.
- A gift certificate to a women's boutique or menswear shop that provides custom-fitted clothing.
- A gift certificate for time with an organizational expert or a wardrobe specialist. She will unclutter office space and closets, improving self-esteem and productivity.



Very few of us experience true luxury in our lifetimes. Most people appreciate classic wardrobe pieces but resist splurging on themselves. Giving one useful and high quality gift conveys that we thought about our purchase and the recipient with care. What a compliment.

So buy less, but stick to good quality classics. You will get more satisfaction out of your purchase, the recipient of your gift will feel truly valued and your gift will never go out of style. Less can indeed mean more. 

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## Retirement: The great conundrum >

### Executive Summary:

*It's never too early—or too late—to plan your retirement. The inside tip though, is to start now. Right now.*

By Andrew Hudick

How often have you said "when I retire, I will..."?

Many people postpone or procrastinate in dealing with their retirement planning decisions. The idea of setting aside a certain sum of money periodically is often a foreign concept.

You should begin this process as soon (or as late) as the minute you realize the importance and necessity of the task. The earlier you

There is no substitute for diligence and diversification coupled with growth based on the time value of money concept. However, if you are a late starter, this is your day.

Many financial advisors and most financial magazine writers who write on the topic of total income needed during retirement suggest that you need to replace 70-90 percent of your working income in order to enjoy a comfortable retirement. While many of us may want to replace 70-90 percent of our earned income during our retired years, we do not necessarily need to do so. For most of us, only around 50 percent of our current income is used to support our lifestyle. The other 50 percent is being used for taxes, debt service (i.e. interest) and funding our savings for our future retirement.

Take some time and work through where you actually spend your money. Start with your 2008 income tax return and note how many tax dollars you paid. You paid more than 5



For most of us, only around 50 percent of our current income is used to support our lifestyle.

start the planning process, the greater the depth and range of options (and therefore benefits) available to you. Do not despair if the years have passed more quickly than you realized. If you have accomplished little toward securing your retirement, get started today.

Are you worried about being successful in your retirement planning attempt because you are getting a late start saving and investing? For many, raising their children, changing their career, changes in their marital status, or just plain living has delayed their attempt to save and invest as they wish they would have in prior years.

The same investment rules apply to late starters as those with retirement ambitions who started saving earlier in life. Buy a diverse mix of stocks and bonds and try to do so when possible in a deferred investment plan such as an IRA, 401(k), 403(b) or similar plan.

percent toward Virginia State income tax, more than 7 percent toward FICA, and more than 20 percent toward Federal income tax. Add in your mortgage interest listed on schedule A and it is likely you spent approximately 40 percent of the total income you claimed for 2008 for something other than normal living expenses. If you save even a modest 10 percent of your earnings, you have accounted for 50 percent of your total revenue being used for something other than living expenses.

The suggestion here is to not be discouraged because you procrastinated. Start saving now as your goal is modest and therefore attainable.

*(Andrew M. Hudick has a Master's in Retirement Planning and is a Certified Financial Planner. He is a member of Fee-Only Financial Planning in Roanoke.)*





Pamela Hartle

**Victor O. Cardwell:** "Most businesses realize the importance of employee safety, benefits and fairness, and consequently unions have been on the decline."

## A new emphasis on unions >

### Executive Summary:

*Lawyer Victor Cardwell says there is a lot to understand about how legislation will be enforced under the new administration.*

By Pamela Hartle

The Fair Labor Standards Act has been making news lately, at least partly because a change in national administrations invariably brings significant changes in legal emphasis.

Attorney Victor Cardwell, who specializes in labor and employment law, says that to ignore the new direction could be dangerous for your business. "FLSA penalties have always been too severe for employers to cheat under any administration," says Cardwell. "Our current president however, is very clear that [FLSA] will have a much more prominent role, and he warns that it's imperative for employers to keep abreast of policy changes, specifically pertaining to the FLSA.

"It's complicated with pitfalls, and employers should pay close attention to payroll practices, because not only scrutiny but enforcement is happening now."

This act establishes requirements for employers regarding minimum wage and hour issues, overtime regulations, and child labor protection.

Cardwell is a 48-year-old native of Lynchburg and a principal with Woods Rogers, Attorneys at Law in Roanoke. He has been with the firm since 1991. Cardwell was a football player at the University of Virginia, where he graduated in 1983 and he earned his law degree Washington & Lee in 1987. He has been with the U.S. Department of Labor Benefits Review Board and was a member of Governor's

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Council on Human Rights.

Cardwell is a Roanoke Jaycees Outstanding Young Man of the Year for 1998 and has been among "Best Lawyers in America" several times.

"In the 1940s, unions were in their heyday in this country," Cardwell says, "and there were some bad companies that took unfair advantage of their employees, so the reason for organizing unions was legitimate." But that was then. "Now," he says, "most businesses realize the importance of employee safety, benefits and fairness, and consequently unions have been on the decline."

Democrats are generally friendlier to labor and President Obama is no exception, says Cardwell. The president spoke at a

September AFL-CIO convention in Pennsylvania, supporting the Employee Free Choice Act, which has a lot of critics in Virginia. The EFCA is legislation would make it easier for employees to form or join unions, among other pro-union initiatives. "Businesses don't gain strong benefits from being tied to strong union organizations," says Cardwell, "and unions don't care about size; if your business has 5 or 5,000 employees," he says.

Cardwell travels to lecture and counsel human resource departments, managers, business owners, and employees. He emphasizes that it's important for both managers and employees to learn their rights and responsibilities, to operate as a well functioning team which will ultimately benefit both, and insure they're informed and compliant with all federal and state laws. ■

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**Dr. Richard Eckert:** "It's clear that there are some diseases that don't have a full range of treatments. It's always nice to have another tool."

Gene Marrano

## 'The next leading edge of medicine' >

### Executive Summary:

*Dr. Richard Eckert closed his practice to become involved in clinical research and discovered "a while new world."*

By Gene Marrano

Dr. Richard Eckert closed his Roanoke County clinical orthopedic practice almost a year ago, but he didn't retire by any means. Instead Eckert decided to get into the clinical research business, focusing on arthritis and pain, conducting research trials with new medicines and treatments not yet available to the general public.

Pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies pay Eckert's startup, HypotheTest, LLC, to conduct clinical trials as part of a multi-step process before the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) considers approval.

Internal review boards and state regulatory panels may also require trials.

Eckert earned an MIT engineering undergraduate degree (his thesis was on artificial knees) and a master's at the University of Southern California before he went into the Air Force as a B-52 navigator. Then it was on to medical school and orthopedic surgical residencies in Texas and Hawaii. He landed in Roanoke in 1992, following four years in Germany.

Since shutting down his southwest Roanoke County practice (Eckert performed surgery at Carilion Roanoke Memorial) he has been soliciting volunteers, including past patients, asking them to participate in these trials.

Those who take part receive regular examinations, study medications—or placebos—and are not charged for any of the procedures. Where applicable, HypotheTest even picks up travel costs. "Without volunteers like you there would be no new treatments to fight diseases and ailments!" implores Eckert in the mailer he sends to former patients.



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It's not just popping experimental pills: "A lot of these studies involve very rigorous examinations and laboratory tests," says Eckert, "[and] they're extremely generous to give up their time."

Clinical coordinator Deborah Price helps run the show, as they oversee trials involving anti-inflammatory medicines, new delivery systems for narcotics (patches, injections, etc.) and some "novel antibody studies that we're very excited about."

Eckert calls it "the next leading edge of medicine." He realized about eight years ago that he wouldn't be a surgeon forever and stopped operating several years before shutting down his practice, seeing people on an outpatient basis after that. Still, Eckert wanted to find another way to put his medical knowledge to work and came across the concept of clinical research.

Over the past few years Eckert has conducted dozens of clinical studies and now devotes all of his time to it. Pharmaceutical companies budget for the type of research being conducted by HypotheTest as a business expense. It's a methodology mandated by the FDA, a three-phase process that takes place before the agency will consider

reviewing a drug for approval. Many studies have moved offshore to save money but the FDA likes to review U.S.-based test data before making any decisions.

Eckert is typically testing drugs in the third phase, just before it goes to the FDA—or back to the drawing board. He also says there is plenty of research that still needs to be done: "It's clear that there are some diseases that don't have a full range of treatments. It's always nice to have another tool."

As a practicing physician and surgeon Eckert often saw that, despite the advances made, there was a need for further research and development when it came to pain management. He is excited about biological treatments, antibody medicines that he calls "a whole new world. It may allow us to use less opioids or other medicines with side effects."

At 61, Richard Eckert has found a new wrinkle late in his career. "I am helping to do the heavy lifting on studies that may help people further along down the line."

(Call HypotheTest, LLC, 4370 Starkey Rd., Suite 4-C, Roanoke. Phone: 989-4100 for more information about volunteering.) □

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Rachael Garrity

**Mary Miller:** "Simple enough to be operated without the services of an IT professional"

## The answer to a technology prayer >

### Executive Summary:

*IDD's new content management tool is simple enough for marketing to operate and complex enough to do what it promises the IT boys.*

**By Rachael Garrity**

It's one thing to build a strong business based on providing customized service to clients. It's another to realize a variation on the program/service created for one client and

market it to other clients.

It's a third—much more imaginative and challenging—step to recognize that one particular service you provide is flexible, functional and robust enough to be packaged and offered on a subscription basis. And, that done, it takes a healthy combination of experience and chutzpah to position your service head-to-head with industry giants.

Experience? Chutzpah? Accurate, but insufficient. Add charm, optimism and a daily mental jousting between "Of course we can" and "This is certainly different," and meet Mary Miller, founder, owner, spokesperson and Mother Superior of IDD Inc. an IT firm in Blacksburg.

"From the beginning," she emphasizes, "I've said to my staff that our job is to deliver value." Throughout her company's 19-year history, that value has been defined as creating software answers to specific challenges and designing customized education and training tools. Clients are as diverse as Virginia Tech, the National Science Teachers Association, Hewlett Packard, National Bank, and the Library of Congress. This year the company has added a subscription product, specifically an online content management system entitled iCMS.

"Never in my most can-do moments did I envision creating a product that might compete with the likes of Microsoft," Miller admits, "and it's a bit of a misnomer to say that iCMS does. In fact, it is designed to do for small and mid-sized companies what Microsoft's

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Sharepoint does not do—offer a content management tool that is simple enough to be operated without the services of an IT professional to install, populate and keep it running.”

At the Department of Agriculture of the State of South Carolina, another IDD client, iCMS is already in operation. The individual in charge of its operation is the head of the public relations department—more or less the antithesis of the in-house IT professional.

In some ways, iCMS is in a league of its own. Is it like Front Page? Yes, in that it can be used to create, update and populate a Web page. No, in that Web page design is only one part of the portfolio of services.

The name technically stands for *interactive Content Management System*. It is a SaaS—Software as a Service—product, so that the user does not buy the software and mount it

on often-scarce corporate electronic storage space. And, Miller stresses, it is scalable, meaning that as the organization grows, so does the product.

At a time when the conversation in the average corporate suite is held beneath a black cloud, Mary Miller paints with a different color brush. “I can’t think of a better time, to put a product like this out there,” she insists. “It saves money from the very beginning, is flexible enough to work in all kinds of sizes of organizations, and requires no huge up-front capital expenditure or additional IT staff.”

Miller has on her desk a set of notepads she designed emblazoned with *T. G. I. M. “Thank Goodness It’s Monday,”* she grins. “My goal when I started this company was to do good and enjoy it.”

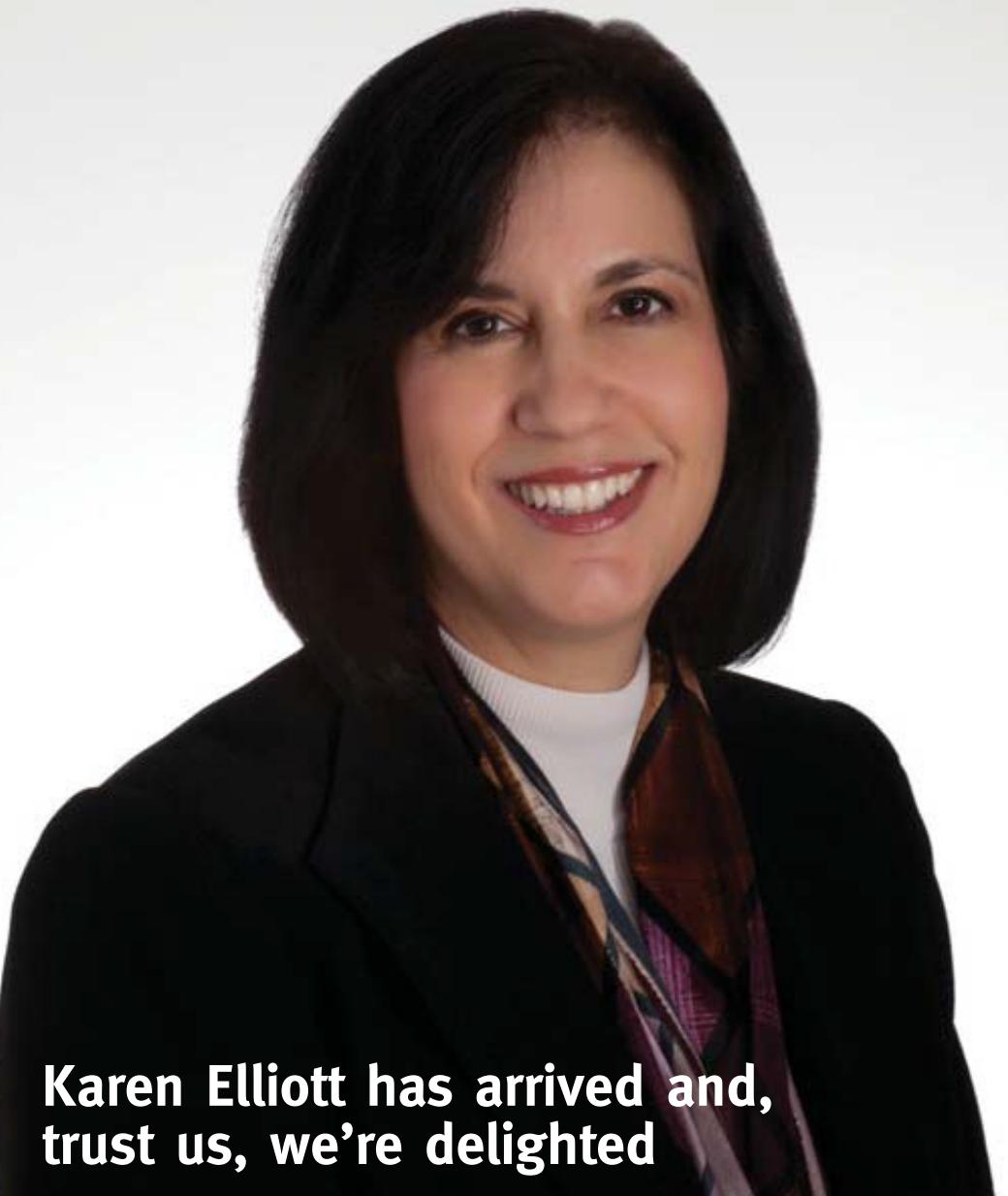
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Here's the whole dirty gang from SERVPRO in Roanoke

## Disaster relief: The ultimate dirty job >

### **Executive Summary:**

*For Quinn Mongan, it's not about the muck and dirt; it's about putting people's lives back together.*

**By David Perry**

Maybe someone should call Mike Rowe and tell him about SERVPRO.

The host of the Discovery Channel's "Dirty Jobs" has tackled a few nasty gigs, but he's yet to stand up to his waist in raw sewage in someone's basement.

"I called our buddy at Tidy Services, and he brought a vacuum truck to suck the majority of it out," says Quinn Mongan, president of SERVPRO in Salem. It's all in a day's work for Quinn, who's celebrating his 10th year of

cleaning up from fires, floods and other disasters.

SERVPRO is a national franchisor for cleaning and restoration services in 48 states. Quinn bought the local franchise, which serves Roanoke, Montgomery and Pulaski Counties, in 1999. When a pipe bursts, there's a fire, or someone dies an untimely death, Quinn Mongan is the man to call.

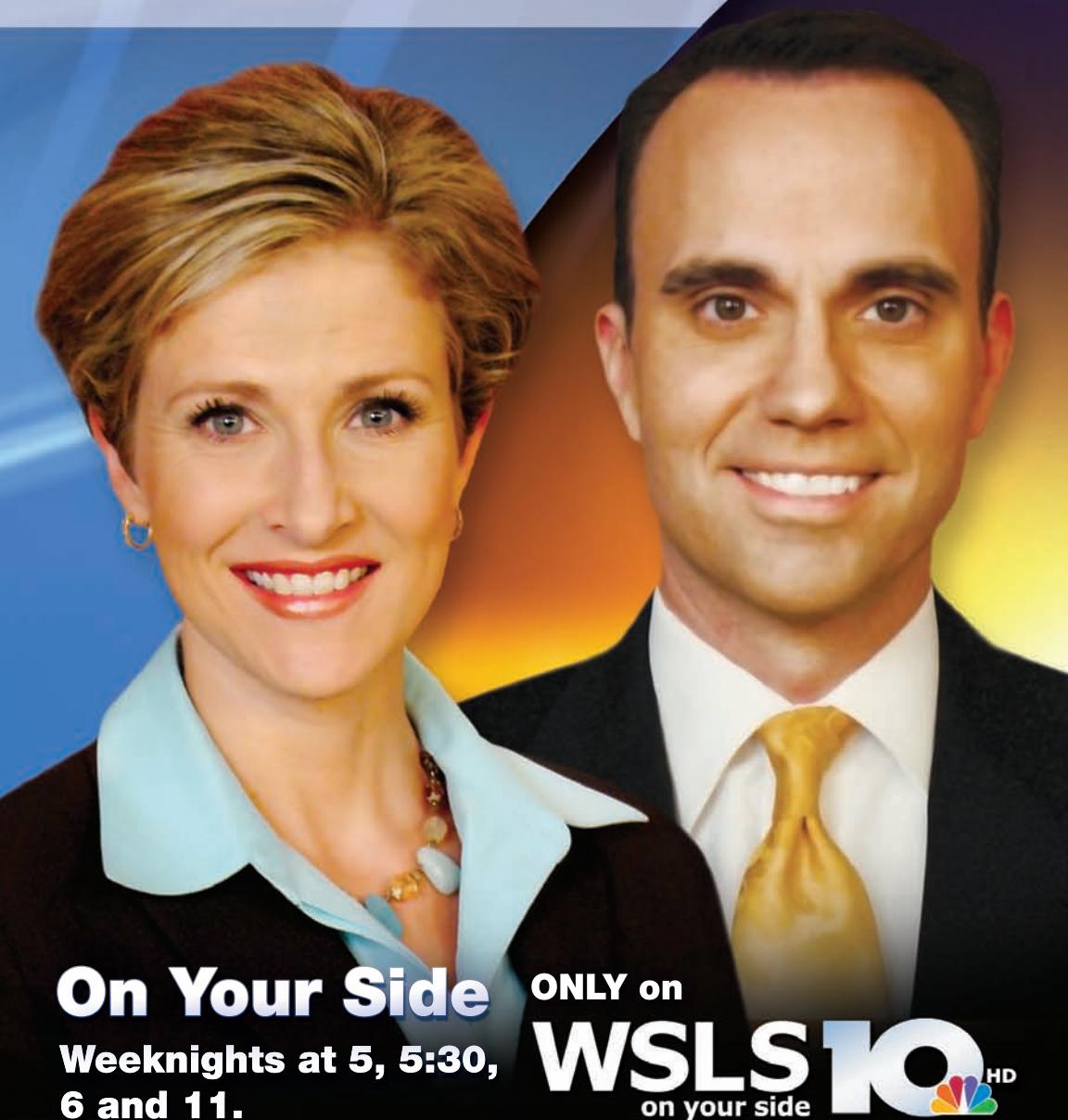
SERVPRO's philosophy is to save whatever can be saved, from carpets to hardwood flooring, furniture and drywall. "We have a record of over 50 percent of carpets that we save," says Quinn. "We're saving space in landfills and everything else."

A Salem native, Quinn took classes at Virginia Western before heading off to Old Dominion University and completing a degree in geology. From there, he started a long career in environmental work for companies like the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, AEP, and Coca-Cola Bottling Company Consolidated.

While at Coca-Cola Bottling, he earned his MBA from Averett University in Danville.

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**Quinn Mongan:** "If you don't want to do it, call us and we'll do it."

David Perry

Shortly thereafter, he struck out on his own, founding Creative Cost Control Corporation, helping local businesses save money and resources.

For one local company, "I took a trash budget that was \$7,000 a year and cut that in half, and then I was able to get them an income from their recycling," says Quinn. Problem was, if Quinn couldn't find a

## In Brief

**Name:** Quinn Mongan

**Age:** 48

**Company:** SERVPRO of Roanoke, Montgomery and Pulaski Counties

**Location:** Salem

**Type of business:** Cleanup and restoration

**History:** This Salem native "smells people's seats and shovels poop for a living." A long career in corporate environmental work, combined with construction jobs to pay for college tuition as a kid, led Quinn to SERVPRO, the ultimate dirty job. Today he's married with a daughter at Salem High and a son at Roanoke College, and like many Salemites, is active in the local sports scene.

be there in about three hours," Quinn says. "The property manager called back and said that would be too long."

Some times of year are busier than others. Winter means frozen pipes and what Quinn calls "fire season," when more families cook inside the home. Last Martin Luther King Day weekend, he received so many calls for frozen, burst pipes he had to call in a tractor

“ ”

...and then I was able to get them an income from their recycling.

—Quinn Mongan

company any savings, he didn't get paid. When he discovered the local SERVPRO franchise was for sale, he did a little research and bought the business.

Today Quinn's staff of 35 are prepared to handle emergencies at any time: "My first year in business I was out on Christmas Day extracting water out of a warehouse," says Quinn.

It's SERVPRO policy to respond as soon as possible to a call—but it's not the fire department. One apartment renter "called about three in morning. We were going to

trailer with extra dehumidifiers and air movers to supplement the dozens he keeps on hand.

Quinn's staff also handles about two dozen crime scenes a year, where the challenges involve cleaning up blood, fingerprint dust left behind by the police, and even cars riddled with bullet holes.

"The dirtier the better," laughs Mongan. "If you don't want to do it, call us and we'll do it."

Get Mike Rowe on the phone. ■



**Eldon Karr: "It's not a linear process. It doesn't begin in January and end at any particular time."**

David Perry

## A belief in the value of the city >

### Executive Summary:

*Eldon Karr is looking for another Renaissance in downtown Roanoke—and he's willing to lead it.*

By David Perry

Roanoke's "Design '79" planning effort brought new life to downtown Roanoke, resulting in new parks, new pedestrian connections, greener urban spaces, and above all, a revitalized City Market.

"Design '79 was extraordinarily successful," says Eldon Karr, a Bent Mountain architect and planner. "It was a shot in the arm for downtown." Eldon thinks it's time for another effort. Enter the Heart of Roanoke, a grassroots organization aimed at moving the downtown area forward again.

Even though Karr earned his degree in architecture from Virginia Tech when slide rules were commonplace, he's embraced

the Internet and social networking sites like Facebook to drive the Heart of Roanoke.

"I didn't think it would be that interesting, except I could check on my kids," he says of the wildly popular Web site. "This is a major paradigm shift ... it will change the way we govern ourselves." His Facebook Heart of Roanoke group had 373 members as of mid-October.

The discussion forum topics include the amphitheater, greenways and green spaces, and one titled "How do I get there from here?" which seems to be both metaphorical and literal. Says Karr, "When you have some thoughts on downtown, you jump on there and put them down."

He sees Facebook as an egalitarian means for people from all walks of life to participate in the Heart of Roanoke, especially those who may be reluctant to speak up at a traditional public meeting or input sessions.

"It takes some of the political wrangling out of the process," he adds.

Karr has long had a stake in the downtown area, opening a practice, the Architects Design Group, on the market in 1978. The

success of the Design '79 initiative, and the discussion it fostered three decades ago, motivates him to make the Heart of Roanoke a pure citizen-driven effort: "I'd like it to be understood more as a civic activity, as compared to having the city go out and hire a consultant and do a process under the city's direction."

One of Karr's goals is to reconnect Henry St. and the neighborhoods "north of the tracks" with the rest of the downtown area. "Right now we have a pedestrian pattern that goes from the Hotel Roanoke to the market and back to the Hotel," he says. "There's nothing really drawing anyone off of that route."

But his vision isn't just about buildings or pedestrian walkways. It's about the underlying issues and conflicts that have shaped the Heart of Roanoke. And the questions he's asking don't have easy answers: "Why is there an antagonistic relationship between the black community and the rest of the community? What happened?" he says. "How big an area is the Heart of Roanoke? What are the boundaries?"

Heady questions indeed. Whatever the answers, Eldon hopes the discussions persist and evolve long into the future.

"This process will be continuing. It's not a linear process. It doesn't begin in January and end at any particular time," he says. "The Heart of Roanoke will always be on Facebook." 

## In Brief

**Name:** Eldon L. Karr

**Age:** 67

**Company:** Appalachian Architect

**Location:** Bent Mountain

**Type of business:** Architecture and planning

**Title:** Project Administrator & Principal Architect

**History:** Brought to the Roanoke Valley when his father transferred in with the Boy Scouts in 1958, Eldon Karr has a history of involvement with downtown Roanoke that dates back more than 30 years. Father of four, grandfather of three and great-grandfather of one, this former director of the Roanoke Fine Arts Center co-authored an amendment to the Roanoke City Charter to create the Roanoke City Arts Commission. He's been involved with numerous groups related to laying out the future in one form or another, from the Roanoke County Board of Zoning Appeals to the Roanoke County 2010 steering committee. A favorite quote is from Winston Churchill: "The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you can see."

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The transformed Fire Station No. 3 is now IDG.

all photos: Dan Smith

## Work Spaces

### With a salute to the original >

**Executive Summary:**  
*IDG's new workspace was accomplished with a look to the future and a nod to the past.*

By Dan Smith

The entire restoration project, says Bill Hume, hinged on three necessary outcomes: "Come up with a design so we could operate

as a business. Show the kind of work we can do as an architectural firm. Show respect for an historic fire station."

The results of the conversion of Fire Station No. 3 on Sixth Street in downtown Roanoke to Interactive Design Group, an architectural firm, speak for themselves. Not only has IDG increased its work space by about 60 percent from its previous home on Warehouse Row, but it has added both a professional and a homey feel; demonstrated a great deal of creativity; and retained the feel of the 1909 fire station.

In fact, the station is so sacred to these architects, that the cube in the center of the main floor—the one holding their offices—does not touch the sides of the building; the yellow lines on the concrete floor, marking where fire trucks parked, remain; the wrought iron staircase to the basement is in place; and the building simply looks like what it was.



An architect's office.



The front desk was made from an old boiler.

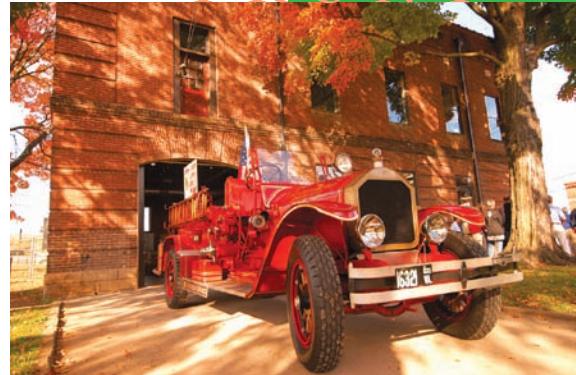


**Fire pole imprint at the foot of an architectural drawing desk.**

The design was the result of an internal competition, won by architect Stephen Feather. It has 5,500 square feet on two floors with another 500 or so in the basement that could be finished.

There was a good bit of replacement done by necessity. The upstairs floor had sunk a remarkable four inches and was eaten alive with termites. It had to be restructured with additional beams and, of course, raised. The spectacular bay doors had to be replaced with new ones built by Ideal Lumber. Marvin Windows replaced the original windows with more functional and modern ones. Thor Inc. did the structural repairs and Lionberger Construction the build-out from inside. "We spread the work around as much as we could," says Hume, who owns IDG with his wife, Jill, who serves as CFO, "because we work with these companies."

The Humes bought the building from the City of Roanoke for \$171,000 and put about \$250,000 into renovations, says Bill Hume. It is not in an historic district, so the exterior repairs did not bring out preservationists with pitchforks and



**This 1927 fire truck, owned by the Shriners, actually worked out of Fire Station No. 3.**

tiki torches to the front lawn. It did, however, qualify for a façade grant from the city.

There are wondrous touches all over the building. The lobby desk is constructed from parts of the old boiler. In one corner of the lobby, there rests turnout gear sitting over what will eventually house a firehouse pole (they were all removed during the renovation). Roanoke's fire chief is looking for a suitable pole, says Hume.

The offices are standard architectural work spaces and are surrounded—outside the cubes—by conference rooms and a full-sized (and fully stocked) kitchen. The Humes have not rehabilitated the upstairs area yet, but they plan to install a small apartment there ("you'd be surprised how often we wind up at the office late," says Hume, who lives on Bent Mountain. Feather lives in Ferrum). In addition, a workout room, lockerroom and shower room are planned.

"This is what we were looking for," says Hume. "The outcome is wonderful and we have space to grow. We don't anticipate leaving." □



**Wrought iron staircase leads to the basement.**



**Conference room.**



Nicole Litwiller and Sybil Barrett of the Mojo Café in Roanoke

David Perry

## A cup of coffee and a clean planet to go >

### Executive Summary:

*A couple of young Roanoke women take their earth-friendly philosophy and make coffee with it.*

By David Perry

"We work our butts off and sacrifice everything else in our lives for this."

Sound familiar? It's the basic small business mantra, this time spoken by no-nonsense Nicole Litwiller, co-owner of the Mojo Café in Roanoke. The Mojo is something of a rarity among coffee shops, which tend to come and go. It has come and stayed: five years and counting. It's also consciously environmentally friendly and conscious of healthy foods.

Nicole, at 37 is two years older than partner Sybil Barrett, and the Cave Spring High School grad says keeping the focus on the customers has been the secret.

"People like to be recognized when they

come in the door," she says. "Knowing people's names and what they like to eat and drink has always been a big deal to us; that and making sure that people feel like they're in their living rooms."

Nicole met Patrick Henry High grad Sybil, 35, in 2004 when they were living on the same street in Roanoke County. One day while chatting over a bottle of wine, they decided to open a coffee house. Both had spent time in the restaurant business, Nicole as a bartender and Sybil at several Mill Mountain Coffee locations and another shop in Greensboro. By August they had a business plan and a signed lease, and they opened their doors in November of that year.

News of the business spread quickly through word of mouth. "We both have such huge mouths," says Nicole. "We didn't advertise for a whole year."

A 2005 robbery was great for business—someone threw a rock through the front window and stole the cash register, garnering news coverage from both Channels 7 and 10 television stations.

Today the Mojo's menu consists of coffee drinks, as well as a wide variety of food, although that wasn't Sybil and Nicole's original plan. "We didn't want to have any

food" says Nicole. At first "we did a limited breakfast and realized that wouldn't pay our bills," says Sybil.

They expanded into lunch and now consider their food business to be an important part of their overall operation: "We have vegetarian fare and we'll even deal with celiacs (people with gluten intolerance) and vegans if we have to," says a laughing Sybil.

Adds Nicole, "We can't change our menu very much. People would be devastated. We'd love to scale it down but we can't."

Five years on, the ladies are pleased with what they've accomplished.

"We're proud of being the pioneers of organic, fair trade and shade-grown coffees in the Roanoke Valley," says Sybil. "Now we use the cornstarch wares so we don't have the petroleum in the wares. It does require

## In Brief

<b>Names:</b>	Sybil Barrett and Nicole Litwiller
<b>Ages:</b>	35 and 37
<b>Company:</b>	The Mojo Café
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke
<b>Type of business:</b>	Coffee house/restaurant
<b>Titles:</b>	Co-owners

a little more work and a little more money, but we also have a clientele that appreciates that."

Their greatest accomplishment? Outlasting every other coffee house on the block. Says Nicole, "To all those people who said those crazy girls will never do it five years ago: here we are!" 

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**Green Ridge Recreation Center's Pete Haislip:**  
The water slide's as high as the building.

Jay Conley

during his recent campaign? The facility is expected to have operating costs in the red until the 2011-2012 fiscal year, though money to cover that has already been set aside through other county program fee reserves.

At least one county official says those questions and concerns miss the big picture that Green Ridge was created to fill.

## Green Ridge: A destination attraction? >

### Executive Summary:

*There's been a lot of grumbling about extravagance in reference to Roanoke County's new recreation center, but those supporting it think it could be an economic advantage.*

**By Jay Conley**

Candidates running in the November election for the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors were critical of the county's new \$30 million Green Ridge Recreation Center that's due to open in North County in January.

Is it just another fitness center dotting the Roanoke area's landscape? If so, aren't there enough options out there already? There are YMCAs in Roanoke and Salem, a number of Gold's Gym venues, Roanoke Athletic Club, Botetourt Athletic Club, Planet Fitness, and more.

So, is Green Ridge an unnecessary extravagance the county shouldn't be spending money on during these tough economic times, as Windsor Hills Supervisor Ed Elswick, a Republican, charged

Pete Haislip, the county's director of parks, recreation and tourism, says the 76,000-square-foot, LEED certified facility behind the Valley Pointe business park on Peters Creek Road has the usual suspects: a fitness center, "something we've been offering for 30 years;" wellness programs, teen programs, and child care amenities. "We're about families and seniors," says Haislip. "Always have been."

But take a look at the towering water slide outside the building that stands as high as the roof—it's hard to miss—appropriately named "Splash Valley." While it's no competition for a full blown water park like Emerald Pointe in Greensboro, Haislip says it will appeal to families and kids beyond the Roanoke Valley.

"There's no question, the outdoor water park will be a destination attraction," he says. "We think we will pull people in from a good hour or so away."

The expectation is that these day trippers will come for a splash at the rec center, then stick around to visit nearby Valley View Mall, grab a bite to eat and drop some cash on gas to drive home.

The county is banking on beefing up its regional sports marketing appeal. Haislip already works with Salem, Botetourt County and Roanoke City to attract regional and state baseball, softball and basketball tournaments to the area (the region was host to about 40

tournaments this past summer). Green Ridge can be another amenity where players and their families spend their down time when they aren't on the field, Haislip says.

"We're using this facility as an enticement to get more of these tournaments to come to the valley," says Haislip.

Tournaments bring plenty of disposable cash with them. A men's softball tournament with close to 200 teams can generate more than \$5 million for the region, say Roanoke tourism officials.

The facility will be open to all valley residents, who can pay a daily rate to use the center or buy a membership (\$66 per month for a family in the county). Rates will be slightly higher for non-county residents. There is no initiation fee,

something Haislip says separates Green Ridge from the other fitness clubs.

"We're accessible and affordable to everyone," Haislip says. A number of valley residents appear eager to use the facility. More than 900 members (representing about 360 membership units) have registered, with home addresses ranging from Fincastle to Shawsville, from Hardy to Salem.

Green Ridge's location in North County puts it close to future business park development that borders the I-81 corridor. Haislip sees it as another recreation amenity, along with the valley's greenways and parks, that employers look for when sizing up a community's quality of life.

"This is nothing new," he says. "It's done all over the country. Why not Roanoke?" 



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James Werth (left) and Patrick Halpern outside Russell Hall.

photos: Lora Gordon

## Practical help from Radford University >

### Executive Summary:

*With mental health problems piling up during difficult economic times, the Mental Health Association of the NRV and Radford University have teamed up to fight them.*

By Stephanie Hardiman

Radford University's help couldn't have come at a better time for the Mental Health Association of the New River Valley.

The clinic provides free mental health services to low-income and uninsured residents of Giles, Floyd, Pulaski, and Montgomery counties in addition to the city of Radford. RU's new doctor of psychology program is helping provide the much-needed counselors and psychiatrists to the rural areas.

"We've had a tremendous increase in the number of people seeking our services. It's been steadily rising over the past three years," says Patrick Halpern, the executive director of the clinic.

The clinic has seen, on average, more than 200 patients each year since it opened in May 1998, Halpern says, but recently more have been coming in for help.

"In the past year with the economy—people have lost jobs, insurance, their homes—there's a significant increase in the amount of people coming in," Halpern says.

Local professionals volunteer at the Mental Health Association (MHA) during their spare time, but Halpern says patients often would have to wait anywhere from six weeks to three months to see a doctor because of the lack of psychiatric care in the New River Valley. It's a time frame he calls "unacceptable" considering the issues patients are dealing with: depression and anxiety stemming from poverty and joblessness, post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia, and relationship problems.

Help from the eight RU students has shortened the wait to about two to four weeks, which Halpern says is a wait time comparable to private practices.

The doctoral program began in the fall of 2008 after a re-evaluation of the Master's program in psychology. The program isn't accredited because the first cohort of students has not yet graduated, says Director Jim Werth, but he believes it will have no trouble achieving accreditation in the summer of 2012.



**Joshua Bradley (center) takes notes in Thomas Pierce's class.**

The doctoral candidates must have a master's degree in a human services field and have counseling experience to be considered for the program. On top of classroom instruction, students often teach or complete work with another faculty member in the department in addition to working at a practicum site, like the Giles Free Clinic or RU student counseling.

Werth says the program is unlike any other in the region because of the focus on rural mental health, social justice, cultural diversity and evidence-based practice, and these factors are drawing students to the program.

"I grew up in rural West Virginia, and Appalachian issues in general are very important to me," says Paige Cordial, a member of the 2009 cohort who received her master's degree in clinical psychology from RU in the spring. "Most of the theories and research have come out of urban universities, and there hasn't been a lot of attention paid to rural issues."

Cordial says that rural patients deal with a lack of work and educational opportunities, poverty and poor access to mental health professionals.

"There is a tremendous lack of psychiatric care in the New River Valley," Halpern says. "It was fortuitous that the Radford University

doctoral program in clinical psychology came online."

And through the program, the students are acquiring the necessary tools to become accomplished clinicians.

"The wonderful faculty, they're very good clinicians; the professors are accomplished and supportive of students," Cordial says. 



**Student Zetta Nicely asks Professor Thomas Pierce a question.**

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**Director David Nova:** "We're seeing patients who have health insurance but are coming to Planned Parenthood now because they don't want to use their health insurance."

Jay Conley

## Planned Parenthood leaner, stronger >

### Executive Summary:

*A major merger has helped Planned Parenthood continue to help families through the economic difficulties of this decade.*

By Jay Conley

Call it dumb luck, or just good planning. Donations are down this year at Planned Parenthood Health Systems, Inc., but it is weathering the financial storm, thanks to some soul searching in 2005.

That's when David Nova, who was then CEO of Planned Parenthood of the Blue Ridge and his regional board of directors, realized the best way for the organization to succeed in the future was to merge its offices in Roanoke, Blacksburg, Charlottesville and Lynchburg with a bigger and stronger Planned Parenthood affiliate in Roanoke County.

A merger followed in 2007 with the Health Systems network, headquartered in Raleigh, N.C.

"We fortunately looked at merger in a proactive way, and our affiliate is doing relatively well," Nova says. "It certainly has strengthened our stability in ways that would really have been tested if we were still a small organization in the current economy."

Alton Knighton, a lawyer with Wood Rogers in Roanoke who served on the Board of Directors for the Blue Ridge organization, and now serves on the Health Systems board, believes the reasoning for the merger holds up even stronger today than it did four years ago.

"We felt that it made sense for the long-term health of the organization," he says.

The trend toward independently operated Planned Parenthood facilities merging with bigger ones is growing steadily, Nova says. The benefits appear obvious: a larger overall budget, a reduction in duplicated

# CONTRIBUTORS

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**Rachael Garrity**

**NOVEMBER 2009 >  
Contributor of the Month**

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

Rachael is one of those accomplished professionals who are rarely drawn to small niche publications like ours, but who keep showing up for us to give our readers the kind of stories many expect only in national publications. Rachael, who has a long and varied career in journalism—among other things—is the outstanding contributor of the November issue, as selected by our editor and publisher. Her stories on YMCA recycling and the veterinarian school at Virginia Tech are typical of her crisp, knowledgeable writing. She's a pro in every way and we're glad to have her on our side.

You can read any of Rachael Garrity's contributions in selected back issues only at [vbFRONT.com](http://vbFRONT.com)

administrative positions and more cohesive lobbying efforts, among them.

"It has strengthened our ability to carry on our mission," Knighton says.

That mission, which includes abortion procedures and treatments for sexually transmitted diseases, still draws daily protesters in front of the Roanoke facility.

With Roanoke and its former Blue Ridge facilities added to it, Health Systems now operates 13 reproductive health and education centers in Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

A Lynchburg center that was originally part of the merger was recently closed due to the economy. Nova described the closing as a "gut wrenching decision" for the organization.

Another sign of the economy is a more than 10 percent increase in patients in the last year.

"We're seeing patients who have health insurance but are coming to Planned Parenthood now because they don't want to use their health insurance. They can't afford the deductible," says Nova. "Others are saying, 'I can't afford to have a child right now, and

I need to be on effective birth control.'"

Though medical treatment provides a significant portion of Planned Parenthood's income, donations remain important.

"In many cases," Nova says, "what we have done in terms of the recession is to change our approach to donors and to talk to them about clientele, to use patient testimonials, specifically with regard to how Planned Parenthood has helped them when they wouldn't have been helped otherwise."

Other donors just can't give to the degree that they had before.

"We've gotten letters from long-standing donors who just don't have the financial wherewithall," Nova says. "They've had to make cuts and decisions."

Nova, who has worked at the Roanoke office since he started in 1990 as a public affairs officer, says he doesn't regret the transition from being a CEO in control of four centers to staying on as a vice president.

"I can see the patients coming in, and they inspire me. Even though I'm not helping them directly, I'm constantly reminded how important our work is." 

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## Change agents >

# My View

By Dan Smith  
Editor

BLOG: [ [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com](http://fromtheeditr.blogspot.com) ]

**Executive Summary:** *Not all change is created equally. Some of it kills us. Some makes us stronger. Some tickles our fancy.*

In his 2007 book *Change or Die*, journalist Alan Deutschman tells of a study in which patients were told by their physicians that they would have to make major life changes or die. Simple choice: change or die. Complex solution: 91 percent chose not to change.

The changes we're facing these days are coming so fast and so voluminously that there's not much opportunity to be as frightened by them as we might. This is not just politics, either, where in Virginia we went from enthusiastic Democrats to rebellious Republicans in a year.

It's the physical state of our region's largest city, which will undergo dramatic and traumatic convulsions during the next three years as our sacred downtown goes through a long-needed renovation ... maybe even a Renaissance. Business people will be hurt, maybe financially devastated by it. But we've put it off for so long that we've ensured the pain will be multiplied.

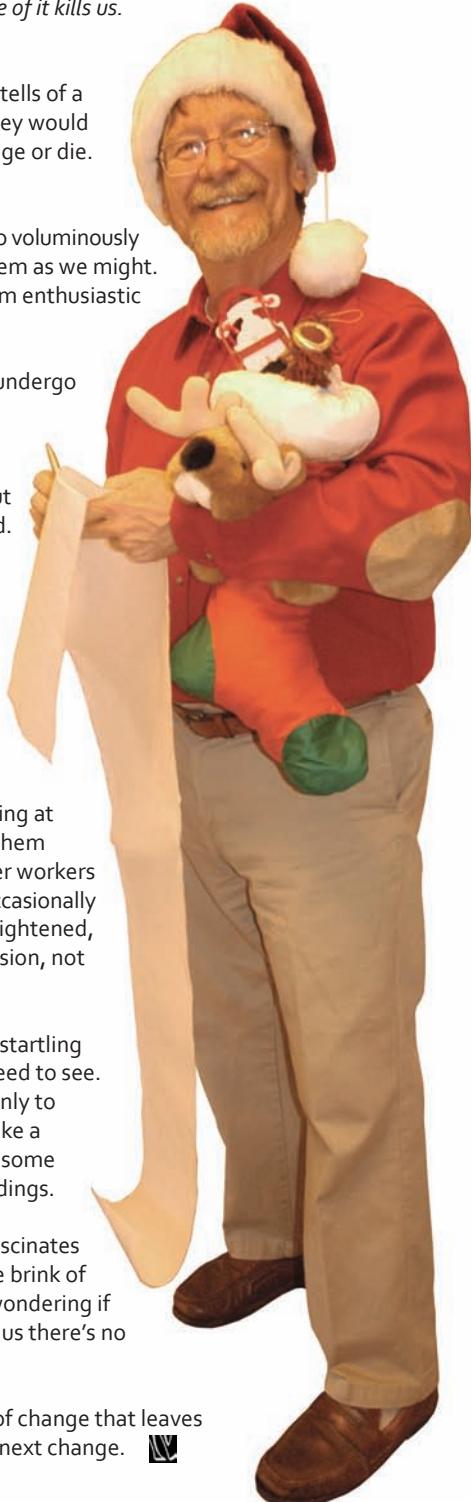
It's how we communicate as we watch electronic and social media grow in use and our daily newspaper lose 10 percent of its Monday-Friday circulation in the last year. Niche publications continue to show up, though most are virtually useless, devoid of real information. We seem to be learning that the message is not the medium. The medium can change, but the message remains what it is.

Change is manifested on the faces of recent graduates looking at one of the bleakest job markets in memory ... and some of them adjusting by starting businesses, much as dispossessed older workers are doing. They seem to be learning from each other. I talk occasionally to college journalism students who have every right to be frightened, but they want to know about the excitement of their profession, not about the current difficulties.

The change in the intellectual properties professions are so startling that even the resident Ph.D.s have trouble seeing all they need to see. They keep up and they slip back with a new development, only to invent something important and jump to the front again. Take a look around the Corporate Research Center at Virginia Tech some clear day: there's electrical intellectual friction over the buildings.

Our culture is spinning at a rate that scares, frustrates and fascinates many of us—often at the same instant. We are sitting on the brink of understanding what we need to do to save the planet and wondering if it's too late to do it, all the while fighting the forces that tell us there's no problem.

The depressing mixes easily with the exhilaration of a kind of change that leaves us all better and keeps us reaching for the next day and the next change. 



## Less Tidings &gt;

By Tom Field  
Publisher

On Tap  
from the Pub

BLOG: [ [ontapfrompub.blogspot.com](http://ontapfrompub.blogspot.com) ]

Less Tidings to you, gentle reader! 'Tis the season for best wishes, and I hope you experience the joy of less tidings, my friend.

I wish you less reality television. Why waste the electricity? If you want reality, step outside... and look.

I wish you less text messages. Can you or your kids communicate without thumbs? We could use a little more of that first "T" in TTYL.

I wish you see less layoffs. Is there anyone of us who doesn't know someone who's lost his job? I hope these "reassignments" really do result in new opportunities.

I wish you see less products that are made elsewhere. Do you own anything that was made by a neighbor or came from a nearby town or state? It's shameful that we can't even make that simple pen you're holding, the device you're texting with, the car you're driving, the furniture in your house and the very clothes on your back.

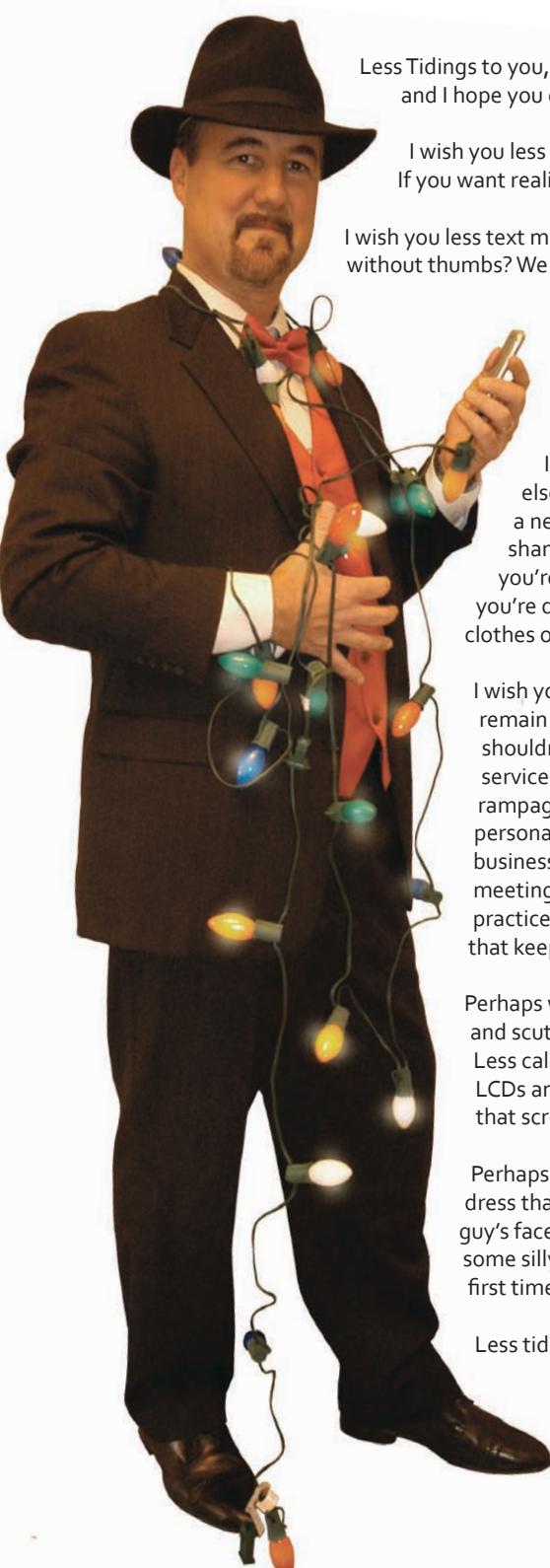
I wish you less stress and strife. Is your attempt to remain engaged disrupting your peace? Being informed shouldn't mean the only information you hear is our service men and women being killed in action, suicidal rampages, diseases and epidemics, child abductions, personal bankruptcies and foreclosures, job losses and businesses going under. Being connected shouldn't mean meetings every night, our children off at games and practices every day, and memberships and associations that keep us out of our homes as much as possible.

Perhaps we should see less movement. Less scurrying and scuttling. Less zipping and zigging and zagging. Less calendars and e-mails and beeps and LEDs and LCDs and whirrings and whizzes from components that scream at us to *just keep up*.

Perhaps we should see less movement. And see the dress that girl's wearing. See the expression on that guy's face. See that child's hand reaching out to touch some silly simple little thing that he is touching for the first time in his whole life.

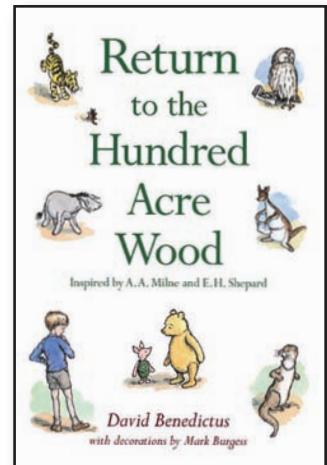
Less tidings are the best tidings.

This season—I hope you get a *lot* less. 



## Books @ the FRONT >

**Following are book recommendations from our publishers and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit 125-word reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to Editor Dan Smith at [dsmith@vbf़ront.com](mailto:dsmith@vbf़ront.com)**



### Child's play

I read books about weighty matters: Islamic terrorists, world wars, history, the Bible, rarely reading fiction. Rarer still: children's fiction. When presented a new Winnie-the-Pooh adventure, I was inclined to say, "This book, Mrs. Mandelbaum; this one I'll read."

David Benedictus has captured the rhythm, the syntax and the vocabulary of Pooh's creator, A. A. Milne. ("One morning when Winnie-the-Pooh was Doing Nothing Very Much, but doing it rather well . . ."). *Return to the Hundred Acre Wood* (Dutton Children's Books, \$19.99) is a collection of stories that will entertain and delight the child in you, and perhaps reawaken some insights into human nature and business planning that you will never find in adult books.

You will enjoy it by yourself, and again when you read it to your children or grandchildren. That's a good cover story for a book seller who casts a curious eye on the Brooks Brothers suit buying a children's book.

—Michael L. Ramsey

### A story of books

The People of the Book was a term coined during the Ottoman Empire to designate the three cultures whose religions were encapsulated in texts. This was a time of unusual religious tolerance and certainly the

subsequent and less friendly Islamic, Jewish and Christian interactions are a major part of Geraldine Brooks' latest novel, *People of the Book* (Viking Press, \$15 paperback).

The protagonist of the novel is Hanna Heath, a rare book conservator named by the United Nations to examine and prepare for display an ancient Jewish codex called the Sarajavo Haggadah, found during the 1996 Bosnian war. The structure of the novel is a series of vignettes interspersed with Hanna's story, and going backward in time to answer questions Hanna's research generates.

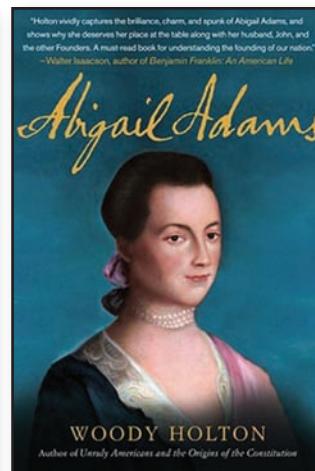
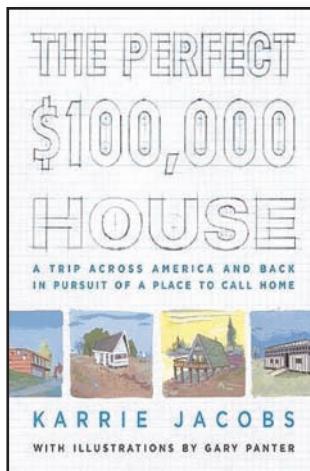
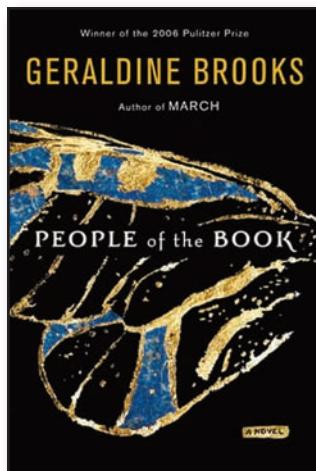
These stories are more elegantly drawn than Hanna's own back story, but her work and the processes that are involved in it will fascinate people who see books as art forms. Brooks' research is prodigious and makes a fascinating story that demonstrates the range between human capacity for cruelty and creativity.

—Becky Hepler

### Not so modest house

"Someone, somewhere will have to reinvent the subdivision." In *The Perfect \$100,000 House* (Viking, \$25.95), author Karrie Jacobs leaves her job as editor of Dwell magazine and sets off on a months-long road trip around the country looking for houses that offer an antidote to years of feverish overbuilding—houses that are simple and compact, but

# REVIEWS & OPINION



also distinctively designed, well sited, and sensibly priced. Modest living with flair.

In terms of general subject matter, there are some similarities to Sarah Susanka's 2001 hit *The Not So Big House*, but *The Perfect \$100,000 House* is very much its own book. Ostensibly motivated by the goal of finding a home for herself, Jacobs offers an engaging daily diary of her travels, introducing the reader to dozens of architects and builders who are gamely struggling to produce small, livable residences against a host of opposing forces. She elevates her first-person narrative by weaving in some modern architectural history, but never sacrifices the conversational tone; and although the book uses illustrations rather than photos, it's easy enough to find images on the Internet of the people and places Jacobs visits, and a number of Web sites are included in an appendix.

You don't have to be a geek for this stuff to appreciate Jacobs' thoughtful ruminations on how we live. And while there may not be a perfect \$100,000 house, there's a great deal to be said for looking for one.

—Christina Koomen

## Strong woman

There are a couple of points that will become obvious quickly in Woody Holton's marvelous *Abigail Adams* (Free Press, \$30): he's a top-notch historian; he has a lively regard for

strong, creative, effective women. The former had already been established with Holton's *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* and the latter could have easily been assumed, since he is the son of Jinx Holton (wife of former Gov. Lynwood Holton) and brother of Anne Holton Kaine (current First Lady of the Commonwealth).

Holton, who grew up in Roanoke and is a history teacher at the University of Richmond, comes at his books from an odd angle and is a simply fascinating writer. Using little-recognized documents others have ignored, Holton paints a portrait of an Abigail Adams who essentially established herself as her husband's equal in ways that would have been unseemly in most quarters. She was an accomplished writer and an engaging conversationalist (holding people like Thomas Jefferson's interest), a feminist who insisted on women's right to an education and a business woman who defied custom and law to amass a fortune. It is easy to understand—with the clear prism of time—why this was a beloved woman then and now.

—Dan Smith

(**The reviewers:** Michael Ramsey is a business-to-business salesman and chairman of the Roanoke Public Library Foundation. Becky Hepler is a school librarian and a freelance writer who lives in Newport. Christina Koomen works in Roanoke City's public information department. Dan Smith edits FRONT.)

# REVIEWS & OPINION

## Letters

### Printing the pages

Editor,

Thanks to you and your team for pulling together such interesting reading each month. I think this publication is turning into a wonderful economic development resource showcasing the character of the [Roanoke and New River] Valleys (and the interesting characters who choose to reside here—such as Ken Ferris, "In the beginning, there was Ken Ferris") and it highlights the plethora of opportunities we enjoy here.

And, I just finally figured out how to print certain pages [from the Web site].

**Karin Clark**  
**Luna Innovations**  
**Roanoke**

### Clarification

Editor,

In reference to FRONT's October cover story "The Growing Demand for the Consultant," let me note that what makes CIE Partners unique is the scope of our clients and the fact that we work with both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. The article only mentioned our

work with small businesses and entrepreneurs. At least half of our business comes from nonprofits.

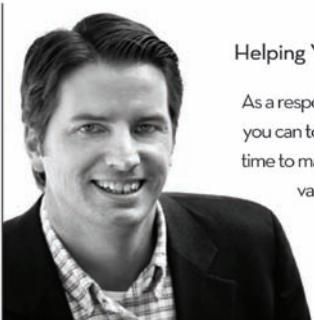
**Jenny H Bradley**  
**CIE Partners**

### Correction

Lisa Garcia, coordinator of the VT Midas Institute, has pointed out corrections and clarifications in an article in the November issue of vbFRONT. She says the institute works with "successful, mid-sized companies in any industry—owned by anyone" not just Virginia Tech alumni. The company is housed in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. The institute's complex pay structure "varies by client and case ... depending on the size of the company and the work needed to achieve the stated value goal." The Web site is [www.vtmidasnation.com](http://www.vtmidasnation.com).

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

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## Twitter in business: What are you doing? >

### **Executive Summary:**

*Twitter often appears to be frivolous, but it can become a valuable business tool when used correctly. (This is the third in a series of columns by experts on social media.)*

**By Janeson Keeley**

Twitter, the micro-blogging site founded in 2006, asks its users to answer the simple question, "What are you doing?" Apparently, a lot of people are answering it. According to the social media site mashable.com, Twitter posted a 1,382 percent year-over-year growth rate in February, 2009, with more than seven million unique visitors that month alone.

Although not originally intended as a business tool, Twitter's real-time search and 140-character status updates have been adopted by businesses such as Zappos, Amazon and Comcast to help them monitor their online reputations, create relationships with their customers and business partners, provide customer service, and disseminate information.

**Monitor your online reputation.** You don't have to have a Twitter account to benefit from Twitter. Visit <http://twitter.com> to access its powerful real-time search engine. Search your company name and your competitors' to see what people are saying. Set up an account with TweetBeep (<http://tweetbeep.com>) and have updates emailed to you on an hourly or daily basis. You can view another company's tweets by going to <http://twitter.com/username>, where "username" is that company's Twitter ID.

**Create relationships.** Once you've taken the plunge and set up a Twitter account, you'll want to connect with clients, prospective clients and business partners. Find them using the real-time or "Find People" search tools and follow them. Many people will follow you back. Engage the people you're following with @replies (@username) by asking questions or commenting on their



**Janeson Keeley**

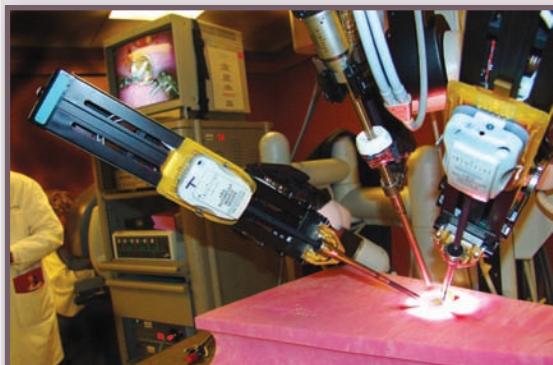
Dan Smith

tweets. Do not use heavy-handed sales tactics here. This is not about generating an instant sale; it's about starting a conversation.

**Provide customer service.** If, in monitoring your online reputation, you run across someone making negative comments about your business, connect with them. Offer to be of help and take the conversation offline. By providing timely, direct service, you'll make a proponent for, rather than a detractor of, your company and establish your company as responsive and responsible. If someone is saying good things about your business, it's a perfect opportunity for you to express your appreciation.

**Disseminate information.** Tweet about the great special that your company has going on. Post links to your blog entries. Post pictures of new products or conduct surveys. Don't forget to request and respond to feedback. Unlike traditional media, Twitter is a social medium. No one likes a person who only talks and never listens ... in real life or on Twitter.

Although it can be intimidating at first, for an investment in time alone your business can potentially achieve very real benefits in business intelligence, brand awareness and management, customer relations, and yes, sales. 



photos: Tom Field

## Carilion's Riverside opens >

On the morning of November 7, Carilion invited the public to its Riverside Center Grand Opening, featuring music, refreshments, health screenings, children's activities and demonstrations. By far, the most popular demo on the tour was the robotic surgery (pictured above) where visitors watched a grape being peeled.

## Drive Talkin' >

Front Editor Dan Smith (center) poses with author Sharyn McCrumb and NASCAR driver Adam Edwards, her co-author on *Faster Pastor*, their new novel due out in April. McCrumb and Edwards gave a talk to the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge's Writers Workshop Series Nov. 17. Next up on Dec. 15 is social networking activist and writer Jill Elswick. Call the Arts Council for details.



photo: David Perry



photos: Deborah Vaughan

## Botetourt gathering >

A chamber of commerce mixer in Botetourt County at Fralin & Waldron's Daleville Town Center drew a crowd of 200 people, including this group of women (from left) Kathy Hayden Terry with state attorney general's office visiting with nTelos' Suzanne Poff, Treva Carter and Linda Steele. Another group featured (from left) Kathy Gentry of Fralin & Waldron, Pat Doughton of Williams Supply, Dan Naff of the Botetourt Chamber and Robin Maxey and Aimee Poff of Williams Supply.

# FRONT'N ABOUT



photos: Dan Smith



## Green Living Expo >

Stacy Hairfield, publisher of Natural Awakenings, and her son Noah examine a wind generator from Chesapeake Renewable Energy Nov. 6 at the Green Living Expo at the Roanoke Civic Center. FRONT Publisher Tom Field and Editor Dan Smith made the rounds and Al Steed of AMSOIL entertained his granddaughter, Heather Meikle, who is nearly 3.

## Patrick Henry on the loose >

An actor hired by developer Ed Walker to announce that the Patrick Henry Hotel in downtown Roanoke would be the subject of a \$14 million makeover (and \$1.3 million purchase price) took his speech to Roanoke City Market following the press conference at the hotel Oct. 28. The old hotel is expected to reopen with 100 apartments, several upscale businesses and a restaurant and bar in about 19 months.



photo: Dan Smith



photo: Emily Field

## FRONTLine Party Down >

Caricature artist Kyle Edgell (sitting) poses with several Valley Business FRONT staffers (from left) ad rep Deborah Vaughan, editor Dan Smith, publisher Tom Field and senior ad rep Jane Dalier as their Holiday Open House wound down Nov. 17. A packed house showed up to bless the FRONT's new digs at the Jefferson Center.

*Valley Business FRONT is FRONT'n About at many events each month.  
Check the blog links at [www.vbFRONT.com](http://www.vbFRONT.com) for more coverage.*



**Mike Maxey:** "If we don't teach them how to think ... then we've not prepared them."

David Perry

## Preparing students for inevitable change >

### Executive Summary:

*Mike Maxey's term so far at Roanoke College has been marked by the recognition of a number of realities, among them the school's economic impact and the economy's impact upon it.*

"There's been a whole new set of areas I had to learn about, and that's been one of the enjoyable parts of the job," says Maxey. "There will be days where you'll work with some faculty member talking about cellular chemistry, and then you'll be looking at real estate matters, and then a student will throw a pie in your face for a fundraiser, and you'll deal with some governance issue of the college, or some fundraising issue."

"Every day is like that."

By David Perry

Roanoke College's new marketing campaign features the theme of "Classic for Tomorrow." The same could apply to the college's 11th president, Mike Maxey, who took the job in July of 2007. With his modest, calm demeanor and bow tie, Maxey fits in well with the timeless brick architecture and mature trees that define a campus over a century and a half old.

Although Maxey had never been a college president before taking the helm at Roanoke, he did know the school well, having held various positions at the college for 23 years. Still, moving into the president's office has held challenges for him.

One of the first tasks Maxey performed after assuming the presidency was to arrange a faculty-lead study of Roanoke College's economic impact. The numbers are impressive: the school of 2,000 students have a \$98 million annual impact on the local economy, and generates 600 jobs beyond those at the college.

Maxey has found his interactions with the business community and donors to be particularly enlightening: "They're dealing with the economy as they think about their charitable giving. On the other side of it, I know we have families here who are experiencing financial stress."

"I'm able to go to those folks away from here and say 'We have families, if we don't help them financially, they can't stay in school.'"

# EXECUTIVE PROFILE



There will be days where you'll work with some faculty member talking about cellular chemistry, and then you'll be looking at real estate matters, and then a student will throw a pie in your face for a fundraiser ... Every day is like that.

—Mike Maxey

Despite the sluggish economy, Maxey has big plans for the college.

"I'm most interested in making sure we're a vibrant and relevant liberal arts college," he says. "The average young person today is going to have seven career changes. If we don't teach them how to think and how to analyze information and how to make judgments on that information, then we've not prepared them."

He also wants to see more Roanoke College students doing more independent studies, research, internships, and study abroad. "We need to make it easy for students to study abroad," Maxey says.

Roanoke has not built new residence halls in

## In Brief

**Name:** Michael Creed Maxey

**Age:** 57

**Company:** Roanoke College

**Location:** Salem

**Type of business:** Private, four-year liberal arts college

**Title:** President

**History:** This Bassett native and Salemite assumed the mantle of leadership at Roanoke in 2007 after 23 years with the college in various roles. A board member of the United Way and the Roanoke Regional Chamber, he earned bachelor's and master's degrees at Wake Forest. His challenge is leading Roanoke College into the future without losing sight of the school's traditions. He and his wife Terri have three sons.

30 years and Maxey hopes to build new dorms and renovate existing student housing. He wants a recreation and community center and renovation of science facilities.

"Being part of something that's been here almost 170 years ... is one of the magical parts of the job," Maxey says. "Colleges and universities last longer than almost any other human institution, other than religion. We hope the things we do last 100 years." □

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# Career FRONT

## FINANCIAL FRONT



Wilkes

### Accounting

**Vincent M. Wilkes**, a tax consultant and accountant with offices in Christiansburg and Roanoke, has passed the IRS Special Enrollment Exam. As an Enrolled Agent, he is licensed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to practice before the Internal Revenue Service.

### Banks

**Rob Shorter and Keith Grindstaff** of the Franklin Community Bank in Rocky Mount have graduated from the Virginia Bankers Association School of Bank Management.



Leonard

SunTrust Bank of Roanoke has named **Graham Leonard** a diversified relationship manager within its Commercial Division.

HomeTown Bank President **Susan Still** of Roanoke has been elected to the board of the Virginia Association of Community Banks. The bank has also made the following

changes and additions: **David Rakes** becomes vice president of marketing; **Shirley Larimer** is a financial specialist; **Samantha Thomas** is senior teller; **Amanda Brown** is new in deposit operations; **Amanda Altice** is a new financial specialist and **Kristen Langford** and **Matthew Hubbard** are new retail specialists.



Creasy



Evans



Holdren



McDaniel

### Insurance

Rutherford in Roanoke has announced the naming of following assistant vice presidents: **Gail Creasy**; **Rebecca**

**Evans**, **Debbie Holdren** and **Gary McDaniel**.



Parrott

Rutherford has named **John Parrott** division president for Rutherford's Roanoke office.

**Dawn Finney** has joined AXA Advisors in Roanoke.

named **Thomas J. Bondurant Jr.** to its white collar criminal defense practice.

**Travis Knobbe** is new in commercial litigation, bankruptcy and creditors' rights with Spilman Thomas & Battle in Roanoke.

## WELLNESS FRONT



Johnson

### Senior living

**Deborah Johnson** of Friendship Retirement Community in Roanoke has been named outstanding certified nursing assistant of the year by the Virginia Health Care Association.



Mabry

**Patti Mabry** has joined Warm Hearth Village in Blacksburg as Social Worker at the Kroontje Health Care Center.



Bondurant

### Law Firms

Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke has



Johnson

Warm Hearth Inc. in Blacksburg has elected **Janet Johnson** to serve

*Have a career announcement?*

as chairwoman of the board through October 2010. Johnson is the retired dean of the College of Human Resources and Education at Virginia Tech.



Craighead

**Mary Ann Craighead** has been appointed as marketing representative and options coordinator for Brandon Oaks Retirement Community in Roanoke.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Phlegar

*Electrical*

Williams Supply in Roanoke has made the



Cole



Hankins

following promotions:

**Kelly Phlegar** has been named corporate director of finance and HR; **Mark Cole** has been named corporate director for purchasing and logistics; and **Ed Hankins** has been named VP of sales.

*Technology*

**Thomas A. Carr** has joined SyCom Technologies as Vice

President of Vertical and Emerging Markets. He will also serve as a Partner and member of the Executive Team.

*Transportation*

**John Phillips** of Premier Moving and Storage in Salem and the New River Valley has been named president of the Virginia Movers & Warehouseman's Association. **John Lugar** of Virginia Varsity Transfer in Roanoke County is vice president and **Lewis Pitzer** of Pitzer Transfer in Salem is on the board.

**Carl Bumgarner** of Fleetmaster Express in Roanoke has been named chairman of the Virginia Trucking Association. **Harry Norris** of Howells Motor Freight in Cloverdale is first vice chairman; and **Russell Ellett** of Virginia Truck Center in Roanoke and Thomas Mohr of Highway Motors in Roanoke are on the

board of directors.

*Wholesale*

**Bob Archer** of Blue Ridge Beverage in Roanoke County has been named secretary of the National Beer Wholesalers Association.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Lighthiser

*Architects, Engineers*

**Jeffrey N. Lighthiser** has been named CEO and president of Draper Aden Associates in Blacksburg, effective Jan. 1, 2010. President and CEO **Bill Aden**, will continue to serve as chairman of the

# Looking for office space?

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# Career FRONT



Aden

board and work full time for the firm. The change is part of a long planned transition.



Shank



Lancaster

joined Waldvogel Commercial Properties in Roanoke as a commercial sales and leasing professional.



Conner



McCreary

**Benjamin F. McCreary** of Clark Nexsen in Roanoke has passed the Virginia Architectural Registration exam.



Tolley

**Michael W. Shank** and **William C. Tolley**.

restorer and master fire and smoke restorer.

## Economic Development

The City of Roanoke has selected **Robert B. Ledger** economic development manager for the Department of Economic Development, responsible for day-to-day management of staff assignments, and project and program coordination and implementation. The city continues to search for a department head.



Evans



Reynolds



Fletchall

Martin Bros. Contractors in Roanoke has named **Reggie Reynolds** and **Elizabeth Fletchall** project manager and marketing coordinator, respectively.

## RETAIL FRONT



Scott

### Auto Parts

Advance Auto in Roanoke has named **Walter Scott** as VP of e-commerce/commercial.

### Flowers

**Tiffany Bryant** has been named sales and marketing director at George's Flowers in Roanoke.

## EDUCATION FRONT

### Colleges

**Adrienne G. Bloss**, associate dean for academic affairs and general education at Roanoke College, has been selected as a Fellow for the American Council of Education



Johnson

**Construction**

Coleman-Adams Construction in Lynchburg recently had four employees certified as LEED AP by the U.S. Green Building Council. They are: **Charles A. Evans**, **James K. Johnson**,



Chocklett

### Damage Repair

**Kevin Lancaster** of SERVPRO of Roanoke, Montgomery and Pulaski Counties has attained the cleaning industry's highest technical designation, IICRC Master Status for both master textile



Chocklett

### Real Estate

**Jessica Chocklett** has

(ACE) for the academic year of 2010-11. Through the fellowship, Bloss will focus on an issue of concern to Roanoke College while spending the academic year working with a college or university president and other senior officers at a host institution.



Hong

**Dennis Hong**, an associate professor with the Virginia Tech's College of Engineering, has been named to Popular Science's 8th annual Brilliant 10.



Lionberger

#### Organizations

The Blue Ridge Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America has announced that **Charles "Chuck" Lionberger** of Roanoke County Schools is fully accredited in Public Relations (APR).

#### CULTURE FRONT

#### Organizations

The Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke has elected **Dr. Paul Frantz**, medical director of Carilion Clinic, president



Frantz



Boxley

of the Taubman Board of Trustees. Other officers are: **Abney S. Boxley III** of Boxley Materials, vice president; **George A. "Shad" Steadman III** of Thomas Rutherford Inc., treasurer; and **Valeta S. Pittman** of Halifax Fine Furnishings, secretary. Appointed to the board were: **Jay Cummins** of Kroger Mid-Atlantic; **Russell H. Ellis** of Xcellos Corporation; **Patricia P. Kermes**, a community volunteer; **Donna Kirk** of Baterbys Art Auction Gallery; **John E. Lichtenstein** of Lichtenstein Fishwick & Johnson; and **Onzlee Ware**, an attorney and Virginia Delegate. **Ann McCallum**, a community volunteer, is a new representative for the museum's volunteer guild and **Sean Doherty** of Bowles Nelson Powers is a representative for the contemporaries, an affiliate group for young professionals, on the museum's Board of Trustees.

The Virginia Museum of Transportation has named new members and officers of its board. They include:



Lanford



Elliott



Jones

president, **Ken Lanford**, Lanford Brothers; vice president, **Anderson W. Douthat IV**, Allegheny Construction Co.; VP of collections, **Robert G. Bennett**, Grand Home Furnishings; secretary, **Roy E. Bucher Jr.**, Chas. Lunsford Sons & Associates; treasurer, **Eugene M. Elliott Jr.**, an attorney; and **Thomas B. Jones**, retired Bell Atlantic (Verizon), has been elected to the executive committee.

United Way of Roanoke Valley has been presented seven new Loaned Executives for its annual fund drive. The executives and their sponsors are:

**Jeff DeBell**, **Rhonda Fisher**, **Katey Houck**, **Carol Huntley-Weber** and **Daniel Smith** (all Appalachian Power); **Bill Gore** (RGC

Resources); and **Tisha Wilson** (Allstate Insurance).

**Jessica Wirgau** has been named executive director of the Community Foundation of the New River Valley.

The Rotary Club of Downtown Roanoke recently inducted **Bruce Hunter** of The Roanoke Times and **Barry Wright** of RP Publishing in Salem.

The Kiwanis Club of Roanoke has elected officers and directors for 2009-2010. They are: president, **Ken Briggs**, Briggs Office Solutions; president elect, **Michael A. Loveman**, Lanford Brothers; vice president, **James Arend** retired from Atlantic Mutual Co.; secretary/treasurer, **Lloyd Enoch**, retired from Roanoke City Public Schools; immediate past president, **J. Andree' Brooks**, Brooks-Werness Associates; president Kiwanis Foundation, **Eddie Barnes**, Ameriprise Financial Services. Directors are: **Ezra Amiss**, Miller Capital Management; **Michael Bell**, Anderson & Reed; **Michelle L. Belton**, Companion Home Care; **Alex Bowman**, Anderson & Reed; **Larry Dancy**, RE/MAX Commonwealth Group; **Cynthia Gray**, WVTB Public Radio; **Michael McEvoy**, Western Virginia Water Authority; **F. Anderson Stone**, Montrose Advisers; **J.C. Taylor**, Young Realty.

# FRONT Notes

## Company gets investment

An infusion of \$2.5 million from **NewVa Capital Partners** of Radford has led Hampton-based **Keraderm Corporation** to make Blacksburg its corporate home. Virginia Tech master's graduate Bill Cumbie is president and CEO of Keraderm, which intends to go to market with a light treatment for skin infections. Keraderm has three employees at this point, but anticipates an eventual need to expand.

## ADMMicro sold

**GridPoint Inc.**, a smart grid company, has acquired Roanoke-based **ADMMicro**, an energy management systems organization serving the commercial and industrial sector. The acquisition extends GridPoint's service potential to a broader customer base. The company hopes to transform the distribution and consumption of electricity. ADMMicro helps clients manage their facilities to increase energy efficiency.

## CAER Center set

Construction has begun on the **Center for Advanced Engineering and Research** (CAER) at the New London Business and Technology Center in Bedford. Funding for the 25,000 square foot research center was provided through a \$7.6 million economic development grant from the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification

## and Community Revitalization Commission.

## Foundry to close

The **New River Foundry** in Radford, owned by Texas-based Intermet Corporation, plans to close in early December, eliminating not only 76 union workers, but also closing yet another automotive vendor in the region. Intermet has been in bankruptcy for more than a year, at least partly because of the harsh times in the automotive industry.

## ALI moves

**Advanced Logic Industries** (ALI) has moved its Blacksburg operations to the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. After being in business in Blacksburg for 18 years, the move puts ALI into a location in close proximity with other technology companies in an effort to support ALI's efforts to accelerate the development of new products and services with access to the latest in technology research, resources and a workforce for future growth.

## Attain honored

The Association of Independent Information Professionals (AIIP) has named **Attaain Inc.** of Blacksburg the recipient of the 10th annual AIIP Technology Award. Attaain was recognized for AttaainCI, its competitive intelligence and market

intelligence tool.

## Patrick Henry rebound

Developer Ed Walker has purchased the **Patrick Henry Hotel** in downtown Roanoke for \$1.3 million and plans to spend \$14 million in renovations, creating about 100 apartments, office space and a restaurant in the 1925-era building. He'll be using the same construction team he has employed for three other major Roanoke projects.

## Poff goes out of state

Once again, a contract for the rehabilitation of Roanoke's Poff Federal Building has gone to a firm out of this region—this time without any regional firms bidding. **TranSystems Corporation** of Kansas City won the \$2.9 million contract for the design, which will feature energy-efficient systems and a solar roof. The total cost of the project is expected to be slightly more than \$50 million.

## Spectrum project honored

**Spectrum Design** of Roanoke has been recognized by the Virginia Downtown Development Association (VDDA) with an Award of Merit for the preservation and restoration of Rocky Mount's N. Morris Building. It has also won a Virginia Society of the American Institute of Architects Jury Citation for the Roanoke Valley Visitors

Center and O. Winston Link Museum.

## Named property manager

Thalhimer has been selected by Branch Banking and Trust to manage **Bridgewater Pointe Condominiums & Bridgewater Grande Development**, a 125,196 square foot, 33.17 acre retail/residential property in Franklin County. The portfolio manager for this property is Gabe Niccum, CPM of Thalhimer.

## New Radford development

**Unlimited Construction, Inc.** is building Forest Hills Townhomes, a new community designed to provide affordable rental housing for working families in Radford. Located on Peppers Ferry Road, the 70-unit community will be built using EarthCraft Community principles of green building.

## Ukrop's closes

The question now for **Ivy Market** is a direct: "What next?" The Franklin Road development has now lost Ukrop's food market from its 58,000-square-foot facility and is faced with making good on a deal with Roanoke that offered up to \$600,000 a year in financial incentives. Developer IMD Investment Group is responsible for the facility. In order to qualify for incentives, a new resident in the

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

development cannot have a Roanoke facility, meaning a company would have to move in from out of town. The site remains a location for a bank and a drug store.

#### *Lowe's to open*

A new **Lowe's** is under construction at the corner of Fourth Street and US 11/US 460 in Salem, representing an \$18 million investment. It is expected to open in the first quarter of 2010. The store will have 175 workers.

#### *ND&P wins awards*

**Neathawk Dubuque & Packett** has won five 2009 HealthLeaders

Media Marketing Awards, including one in the medium hospital best service line campaign group, won by the Roanoke office.

#### *JA gets \$15,000*

Junior Achievement of Southwest Virginia has received nearly \$15,000 in grants and donations from regional companies. The **Wachovia/Wells Fargo Foundation** provided an \$8,000 unrestricted gift; \$4,320 came from the **Allstate Foundation: Pepsi Bottling Group** presented JA \$2,500 on behalf of the employees of the New River Valley Pepsi facility.

#### *Have an announcement about your business?*

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

#### *VDOT to close shops*

from 59 to 37.

#### *Roanoke honored*

The Roanoke Region has been named the favorite location by editors of **Business Facilities**, a national publication for site selectors and economic development officials.

*Compiled by Dan Smith*



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“ We'll even deal with celiacs  
and vegans if we have to. — Page 42



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