



Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

\$3 • Vol I: ISSUE 4 • JANUARY 09

Food Fight

CHAMPIONS
who's winning
your business?
check out our

FRONTList

BEST RESTAURANTS
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FRONTPoll Results

...Trailing Spouses

how some people get
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W E L C O M E

to the FRONT

On the cover of the FRONT >

From the beginning, we understood the importance of the images on our cover. It's our identity; it's a key to what's inside; it's a social commentary, a news stand lure, a graphic statement, and increasingly it's the "cover of the Rolling Stone" local edition.

Our goal is to put the best, the brightest, the most in tune business leaders on the cover. We want people you know and people you would like to know in surroundings that are friendly, sometimes offbeat, often irreverent.

Take a look at our most recent two covers: two of the biggest of the big wheels on the December cover in a Santa hat and reindeer antlers, announcing our first FRONTList selections; one of the region's best chefs, Mark Crim, covered in food as if he'd just won a mammoth Food Fight. Mark was the striking photo we hoped would get you inside to read about good restaurants for business people.

Coming up, we have some doozies and we hope you'll appreciate the humor, the appropriateness and the sheer audacity of some of what we have planned. It's fun for us and when it's fun for us, it's almost always fun for you.



Tom Field



Dan Smith

O n e i n s p i r e d c a m p u s .

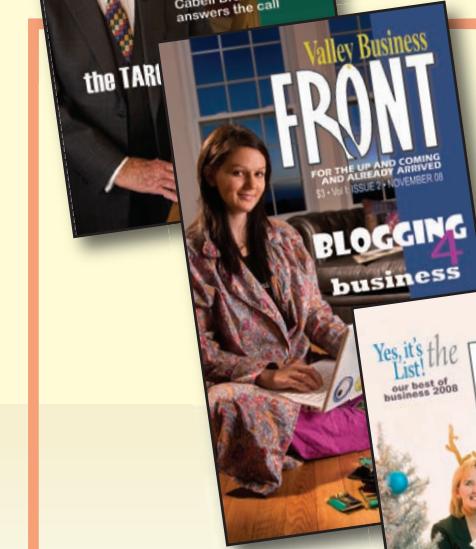
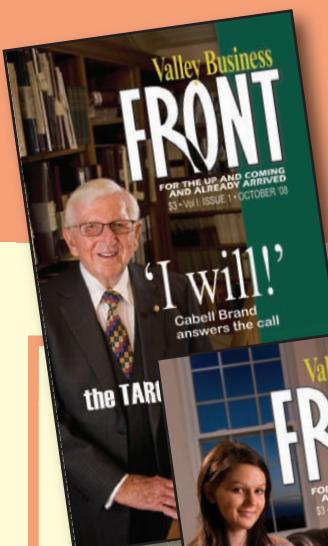


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Coming Up...

February 2009 Edition

**MEDIA
MATTERS:**
a look at
the ITCHEs
scratched by
the NICHEs

See back
issues
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Cover photograph of Chef Mark Crim by
Greg Vaughn Photography

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J A N U A



Anne Giles Clelland



Jane Dalier



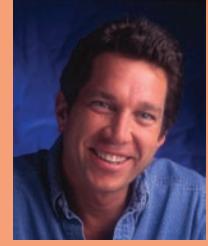
Tim W. Jackson



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Greg Vaughn

Editorial Advisory Board

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

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

RY CONTRIBUTORS



Donna Dilley



Jill Elswick



Tom Field



Rachael Garrity



Bobbi A. Hoffman



John A. Montgomery



Linda Nardin



Deborah Nason



Michael Ramsey



Dan Smith



Joel S. Williams

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 48.

“ People are pointing, some are smiling and waving... Maybe “ogle” is more fitting a term. — Page 44

2008 / 09 Members

Nancy Agee Carilion
Laura Bradford Claire V
Warner Dalhouse retired banker, community activist
Cory Donovan NewVa Corridor Technology Council
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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.

Food Fight!

Your position in the company's food chain is often marked by how much access you have to certain perks, especially an expense account for entertaining customers and prospective customers.

Where to entertain those clients is always a question the discerning business person asks (introspectively) before extending an invitation.

For Valley Business FRONT's first FRONTList of the new year, we set about to find the perfect business meal. Here are some suggestions based on my years of experience as a restaurant critic in the Roanoke and New River Valleys, the recommendations of trusted colleagues (especially the ones who are more rotund than I) and the opinions of readers.

By Michael L. Ramsey

Executive Summary:
The deal's on the line and you've scheduled an evening with your firm's best new client. Where do you go for dinner in order to ensure the best possible circumstance and atmosphere for your deal-making? Here's the FRONTList.

The caveat here is that there are many above average eateries where you can entertain for business. This list assumes that you are trying to close a large deal, take a business relationship to the next level, or show your appreciation to an important client whose business and friendship you value (and without which you might be pedaling a garden bike to work and dining at Mickey D's).

The list is in alphabetical order:

Arzu
213 Williamson Road
Roanoke
540-982-7160

The Blackwater Café
4730 Scruggs Road
Moneta
540-721-4333

The quiet ambience of this stalwart of the Roanoke dining scene allows you to have a private conversation without being heard by other diners. The club-like atmosphere is helped by the absence of crowding in the dining room. Located just around the corner from Roanoke City Market, the restaurant's décor and ambience is a reflection of the menu which offers elegant meals. The serving staff enhances the experience by being attentive without being intrusive. The best part is that you won't feel out of place in business attire.

If you are visiting Smith Mountain Lake, The Blackwater Café is a good dining destination. Chef Mark Crim (on the FRONT cover) offers a menu that changes throughout the year, but there are some staples, and this might be one of the last places in this part of Virginia where you can get a good plate of shrimp and grits. The Blackwater Café is a shining example of how much Smith Mountain Lake has changed the culture of Franklin and Bedford counties.

COVER STORY

FRONTList 2009

BEST RESTAURANTS FOR BUSINESS



A Champion.
A True Sport.

Recognize the chef?
Mark Crim, of Blackwater Cafe agreed to be used and abused as the recipient of our food fight, serving as our FRONTcover model. Champion chefs take great pride in their kitchens and their food preparation and presentation. FRONTreaders should know that Chef Mark was assaulted in a studio many, many miles from his restaurant.

Carlos
4167 Electric Road
Roanoke
540-776-1117

Once a destination eatery on the Historic Farmers Market, Carlos has always been distinguished by its menu and the chef-owner. Carlos became an icon of the Farmers Market when the Market was full of produce vendors. Carlos chefs would wander the street during the morning picking out fruits and vegetables the way an artist chooses brushes and paints. His meals were built on what farmers were selling. The current location sits on the brow of a hill overlooking the Tanglewood Mall area of southwest Roanoke County, and the dining room offers a nice evening view. The food is still the singular creation of the chef-artiste.

419 West
3865 Electric Road
Roanoke
540-776-0419

A part of the Corned Beef & Co. empire, this restaurant has some spectacular interior design elements and a menu that began as a Charleston (S.C.) transplant and has evolved into an elegant array of offerings. You can watch the cooks preparing your meal in the open kitchen. The wine cellar separates the bar from the main dining room and provides a sense of access (and control) for the discriminating diner. The room is a little on the noisy side, but in this restaurant that helps to isolate your conversation and makes it possible to discuss business without feeling any intrusion from your neighbors.

Who Made The List >

(Our top ten FRONTLeaders who won the fight for helping you make your best business deals)

Arzu
Blackwater Cafe
Carlos
419 West
Frankie Rowland's
The Landing
The Library
The Regency Room
Stephen's
The Summit

(And five more, just for fun)

Alexander's
Blue 5
Gillie's
Nawab
Trio





Arzu's: quiet and elegant.

Dan Smith

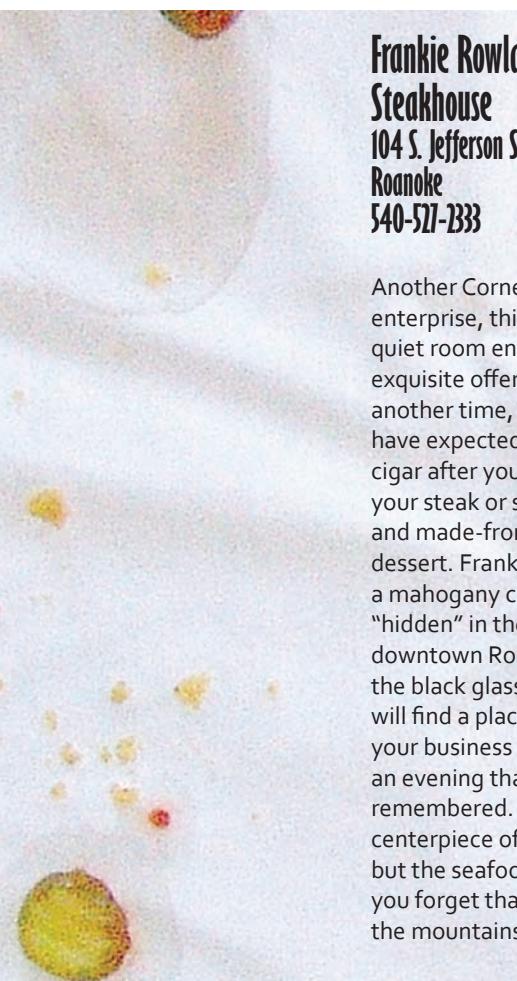


Shrimp and grits await you at The Blackwater Cafe.

Frankie Rowland's Steakhouse

104 S. Jefferson Street
Roanoke
540-727-2333

Another Corned Beef & Co. enterprise, this intimate, quiet room enhances the exquisite offerings. In another time, you might have expected to have a good cigar after you had finished your steak or seafood dinner and made-from-scratch dessert. Frankie Rowland's is a mahogany clad dining room "hidden" in the middle of downtown Roanoke. Behind the black glass façade, you will find a place to show your business associates an evening that will be remembered. Steak is the centerpiece of the menu, but the seafood will make you forget that you are in the mountains.



Steak or crab? Frankie Rowland's gives you both.

The Landing

773 Ashmeade Road
Moneta
540-721-3028

The first truly elegant dining destination at Smith Mountain Lake is The Landing at Bernard's Landing. The Landing offers views of the lake and a modern French-American cuisine. The menu features some unique dishes that will help with conversation prior to any business discussion that may be on the agenda.

Try the fruit salad when you approach The Landing.





Everyone knows Carlos.

Dan Smith



419 West: you should see the inside.

Dan Smith

The Library
3117 Franklin Road
Roanoke
540-985-0811

I have always enjoyed The Library. Over the decades, Lowell Hill has imparted his sense of style and class to all who come calling. Hill's attitude telegraphs the expectation that you will have a special dining experience. It helps that gentlemen are still expected to come in coat and tie. This restaurant was always the favorite dining spot for some of Roanoke's power elite (alas now departed), and it is the combination of food, host and clientele that make this place feel special. It will make your clients feel special, too.

The Regency Room
at Hotel Roanoke Roanoke
and Conference Center
540-985-5900

In a town the size of Roanoke, the uninitiated might expect a hotel dining room to offer blue plate specials, hamburgers and fries. Hotel Roanoke offers unexpected elegance for someone who has not eaten there. The food is always excellent, and there are time-honored specials (spoon bread, peanut soup) that will provide an opportunity for polite non-business conversation to warm the relationship. The atmosphere and seating placement make quiet conversation possible. The Regency Room always reminds me of my three favorite hotel dining venues: The Homestead, Hotel Hershey and The Willard.

Are you overdue at The Library? Come here to feel special.

The Regency Room's Chef Nazim Khan: excellence.





Impress your client with Stephen's Gulf cuisine.



Chef Abdul Sharaki of The Summit: Best dining in NRV.

Stephen's
2926 Franklin Road
Roanoke
540-344-7203

Stephen Foster (that's right) offers a variety of excellent menu items, but he is perhaps best known for his Gulf cuisine. You will know by the changing banner on the sign in front of the restaurant when the crawfish are being served. If you have a business associate or client who enjoys Mobile or New Orleans cuisine, Stephen's is an excellent place to dine. The subdued atmosphere will help carry on private conversations.

The Summit
95 College Street
Christiansburg
540-382-7218

Billed as "gourmet food from scratch in a Victorian setting," The Summit has definitely raised the bar for business or special occasion dining in the New River Valley. It was named the Best Restaurant for Business in our FRONTList 2008: The Best of Business. Even though you will find familiar menu items, The Summit also offers vegetarian meals and free-range chicken, a no doubt to the nearby university market. If you are doing business in the New River Valley, The Summit offers some distance from the youth culture of Virginia Tech. Consider The Wolf (as a "wolf in sheep's clothing")—a rack of lamb in curried cream sauce. □

Tips for dining with a client >

Here are some tips on how to make the dining experience with a client or prospect more likely to be successful. I have picked up these tips after years of entertaining customers during meals. You don't have to do all of them, but if you do nothing else, meet the maitre d' because nothing is more impressive than walking into an elegant dining room with a prospect and have the maitre d' call you by name.

Rule No. 1: Always tip.

Rule No. 2: Make an appointment to visit the restaurant during a non-busy time.

Rule No. 3: Introduce yourself to the maitre d' (be certain that it will be the same maitre d' who'll be working when you return with your guest.)

Rule No. 4: Review the menu with the maitre d' and ask his suggestions about meals that

can be presented well without too much time to prepare.

Rule No. 5: Ask about tipping customs at the restaurant (you will know Donna Dilley's guidelines, but listen to how the staff is compensated.)

Rule No. 6: Always treat the staff with respect.

Rule No. 7: See Rule No. 1.

—Michael Ramsey

Dining venues just for fun >

Sometimes you just want to enjoy the company of a client in a relaxed atmosphere—perhaps a couples dinner—where no business is discussed. But make no mistake, this is a part of your business relationship. With that in mind, here are some places to consider.

Alexander's
105 South Jefferson Street
Roanoke
540-982-6983

This quiet little dining room was a pioneer in downtown dining. I remember how we would squeeze into the narrow restaurant on East Campbell Avenue and be thankful that we got a seat for the evening. Now located on Jefferson Street near the art museum, Alexander's is more like a sumptuous dining room in a Victorian mansion in New Orleans' Garden District. And the food will sometimes remind you of the founder's New Orleans roots.

Blue 5 Restaurant
312 2nd Street
Roanoke
540-904-5338

I am certain that some graduate student or feckless university faculty member used a ridiculously large federal grant to study the effect of Blues and Jazz on appetites. While music is an important part of the venue at Blue 5, food always comes first. In addition to very enjoyable live music (that

respects the diners' right to carry on a conversation), you can order dry-rubbed baby back ribs glazed in moonshine. The bar also has a good variety of brewed adult beverages.

Gillie's
153 College Avenue
Blacksburg
540-961-2703

This Blacksburg destination eatery can cause confusion among some – there is no connection between this Gilley's and another place of the same name in Texas—which means no mechanical bull ride. But there are veggies, and brunch, and on weekends live music. Gillie's is a vegetarian restaurant where the queue is long on Saturday and Sunday for brunch. This would be a place where you can have fun celebrating regional culture with business associates who are – as they say Down East – "from away."

Nawab
118A East Campbell Avenue
Roanoke
540-345-5150

Roanoke is becoming more cosmopolitan every day, it seems, but it has not come so far that it can take for granted great Indian cuisine. Nawab has a large tandoor in the kitchen, and so the menu features Tandoori Ki Nazakat (tandoori specialties) which are served with the excellent bread baked with the meal in the tandoor. If you worry about spices, don't. The restaurant staff is sensitive to western tastes and will adjust the spices to your taste.

Trio: Bistro.Bar.Bottle
315 Market Street
Roanoke
540-904-5887

Over the past couple of decades, there have been several fine restaurants on this corner. Trio joins that parade. This is place to take your special guests who enjoy wine. Be careful here. Dining in a restaurant that has thousands of bottles of fine wine is a little like playing customer golf. You'll want to defer to your client's choice of wine—unless of course it's Mogen David or Boone's Farm (neither of which is stocked at Trio).

—Michael Ramsey



Networking can help uncover jobs for “trailing spouses” >

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary:

What happens when your significant other's job takes you to a new place? You make your own opportunity.

Here's the problem: you're being recruited to the New River Valley or Roanoke Valley from elsewhere. Maybe you are one of those coveted young professionals that communities like Roanoke seem to be pining for. But your spouse or significant other works too, and needs a job, or at least the prospect of finding one.

Some call that a “trailing spouse,” although to others it sounds too much like an anchor or a ball and chain. Virginia Tech likes the term “dual career couple.”

NCTC Executive Director Cory Donovan was one of those trailing spouses when his wife Julie moved to Blacksburg from Maryland to attend veterinary school at Virginia Tech.

Donovan, working for a satellite communications company, commuted on weekends from Maryland for two-plus years before he landed his position with the NewVa Corridor Technology Council (NCTC). “I really didn’t know what was down here,” he says now.



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“Trailing Spouses”



Donovan says it's all about networking—that's how he finally found out about the NCTC opening—and in fact he created a Web page at thetechnologycouncil.com/spouse that has links to Jobz Café, an online classifieds site, the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center and local employment agencies.

“It’s really kind of hard to feel the opportunity here if you don’t know the area,” says Donovan, who has been at the NCTC for more than a year. “As an outsider you really don’t get a feel that there is this [emerging] technology hub here.”

His advice to trailing spouses: “I think it’s important to get involved and make some contacts. This area is still very much community, people knowing who you are, what your skill set is. It’s good old-fashioned networking.”

Inside the Virginia Tech human resources department, Susan Richman functions as a Dual Career Coordinator. Sounds better than “trailing spouse coordinator” contends Richman, recruited from outside the state herself about a year ago. “I am a support system that helps to provide resources for their job search,” says Richman, who likes to consider herself “a conduit to potential employers,” whether the trailing spouse winds up at Tech or elsewhere. “The more irons in the fire... the more likely it is that you’ll [find a career option].”

Richman also likes to consider herself “a cheerleader” for those coming here with the primary hire, as she terms it. She likes to show off the region’s amenities as well to dual career couples.

Richman will even write or critique resumes and co-created an organization for those “trying to get a sense of community.” The Virginia Tech Newcomers Network features monthly get-together socials at a Blacksburg restaurant, although Richman says the main goal of the Dual Career Assistance Program is to help trailing spouses find employment when their significant other is being recruited to the staff or faculty at the school. The program is less than five years old.

Richman is also excited that Tech will host an international conference on dual career assistance next spring. “This is a big deal for us.” See www.hr.vt.edu/employment/dual-careers/newcomers for more on Tech’s Newcomers Network.



Couple #1:
Meet the Donovans.
From Maryland.
He: worked for a satellite communications company.
She: moved to Blacksburg to go to Virginia Tech.
Cory commuted on weekends for over two years before joining wife, Julie. He's now with the NCTC.



Couple #2:
Meet the Putneys.
From Charleston, SC.
He: Todd Putney.
She: Mary Stuart Putney.
Todd works for Shenandoah Life HR, where “we really sell the quality of life in the valley, then put [spouses] in touch as best we can with employers.”



At Shenandoah Life Insurance in Roanoke, Human Resources Vice President Todd Putney says they do plenty of "informal networking" to take care of spousal needs when looking to relocate someone to the area, "before we get too deep into the recruiting process."

The region's natural assets and cultural offerings are a plus: "We really sell the quality of life in the valley, then put them in touch as best we can with employers." Putney would like to see more companies in the Roanoke Valley working together, building a wider network of possible career destinations for trailing spouses. Of the region he says, "we're really undersold... it's just not known very well."

Putney will often call on Stuart Mease, hired by the City of Roanoke's Economic Development department to attract and retain young professionals. "He's done such a good job of building databases and tangible methods of attracting people to jobs."

Mease has created a number of networking websites and community Web pages (like roanokeva.gov/connect) that can alert trailing spouses to career opportunities. "It's part of a bigger issue, of people trying to find jobs. That's about job depth – you've got to have multiple opportunities to close the deal [on many dual career couples]."

Creating that deeper job pool is the challenge for the Roanoke and New River Valleys. Mease wishes corporations with positions to fill would use the Internet more effectively, whether to attract a trailing spouse or the primary job seeker. "That could be the difference," says Mease.

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Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

Executive Summary:
Whether or not you recognize it, the likelihood is good that you and those around you are occasionally rude. Here's how to tell and what to do about it.

Are you rude? Oooooooh, no! >

The recent trampling and subsequent death of a 34-year-old Wal-Mart worker by crowds of Black Friday shoppers speaks volumes about incivility in American society.

Eighty percent of Americans think rudeness is a serious national problem, but 99 percent of the same people say that they themselves are not rude. Writing and speaking about business etiquette and protocol may seem trivial considering the extreme behavior that has become commonplace.

P.M. Forni is the founder of the Civility Initiative at Johns Hopkins University and has written a best-selling book titled *Choosing Civility: The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct*. Forni outlines steps to follow when people are being rude using the acronym SIR:

- State the problem. For example, if someone is talking loudly on her cell phone and it is bothering you, let her know she is bothering you.
- Inform the person she is bothering you, but don't berate her. Tell her, "When you do that, it prevents me from relaxing, and I would like to have the opportunity to relax. Do you think you could refrain from calling unless it's an emergency?"
- Request the behavior be changed. "Say it very calmly with poise and project an aura of power and repose," Forni says. "The poised alternative is more effective in the long run."

Having manners doesn't come to people naturally; rather, it is a skill they need to be taught, Forni says. When people have manners, he says, they are better able to handle situations in life.

"We are wired for compassion and empathy, but we are not born to incorporate that instinct into everyday practice," he says. "Training in good manners is training in sensitivity."

For information on your local training expert in civility, contact me at donna.dilley@gmail.com 

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McCrumb



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Falling in love at work: Uh-oh! >

Dear Anne: I'm married, my co-worker is married, but when we're together at work, we have such chemistry. I'm not falling in love, but I'm so close to it. If anything happened between us, the repercussions at work and for both of our marriages would be disastrous. What am I supposed to do with these strong feelings?

Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:

Got a personal problem at work? Get to "The Heart of It" by e-mailing your question to:
theheartofit@handshake20.com

Dear Feelings: Falling in love at work is not the problem. How to handle falling in love at work is. Each of us falls in love at work. Human beings are built for love and love happens—with co-workers, neighbors, church-goers, soccer parents. In the midst of chemistry, individuals find it difficult to remember they are not part of a singular love story, but part of the human condition.

The Heart of It: Celebrate the feeling and do not act on it. Use it as a signal to consider whether or not other parts of your life are as fulfilling as you need or want them to be—including your marriage. If things need to change, change them. Then revisit the chemistry. Most of the time, for one or both of you, the bond just doesn't have the same attraction. □

What would
you give to
save a life

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "drug overdoses...are now the second leading cause of unintentional injury death in the United States, exceeded only by motor vehicle fatalities."

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Bethany Hall
FOR A NEW BEGINNING

At last, a silver lining >

For months the American economy has been in crisis. Home sales are down, the financial sector is suffering, businesses are failing, and unemployment is rising. The list of problems continues to grow. However, there is an unexpected silver lining to the black cloud overhead.

The Wall Street Journal reports that "with the unemployment rate in America at a 14-year high and more than a half a million jobs lost in the last three months alone, there has been a detectable shift in the way people are dressing for work." Suit sales in menswear and women's wear have increased recently and the interview suit is back. Hallelujah!

After almost two decades in which casual clothing has grown in acceptance in the workplace, Americans are facing a serious job shortage. Competition is fierce for fewer jobs. The right interview outfit can help you stand out in the crowd and look like the best-prepared candidate for the job.

In recent years opinions differed on proper workplace attire. Baby Boomers favor the matching suit, accessorized perfectly. Generation Y employees avoid matching any of their clothing, opting instead for a mix-and-match, casual appearance. According to the Journal, Generation Y wants to "show [its] inner soul" at work and believes that the business suit presents a "fake" image. Boomers, on the other hand, tend to keep their personal life separate and their inner soul tucked inside their business attire.

Time will tell whether the pendulum will swing back to a workplace where formal business wear becomes expected again. Until then, the unemployed are playing it safe and dressing to impress for the interview.

Some points to remember when choosing an interview outfit:

- Consider the type of workplace for which you are interviewing. For a corporate or financial office, a suit still gives the best impression. Choose a classic suit with traditional styling and create a dash of individuality with a tie or jewelry. For a creative or casual workplace, a suit is often unnecessary. Instead, classic separates and accessories with simple lines convey a relaxed, yet businesslike attitude. For a fashion or retailing position, a more fashion-forward outfit conveys expertise in the field. Adding a jacket to any casual fashion outfit helps make it dressier.
- Keep colors neutral and low-key, using accessories to accent your outfit and add personality. The interview is not the place for loud colors and bold patterns. Gray, navy, brown, taupe, and black are always appropriate. By adding a shirt and tie in



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Oh, joy! The elegant look is coming back with a vengeance—partially in response to current economic need.

this season's color, a man looks fashion savvy. For women, neutral suits can be accessorized with interesting jewelry to create a memorable image.

- For the interview, purchase pieces that coordinate with separates already in the wardrobe to maximize the usefulness of the new pieces.
- Don't wear too many accessories or show too much skin. They only distract the interviewer from your qualifications.
- Use the interview outfit to create the image of a capable and businesslike employee who will be an asset to the company.

“ ”

Create the image of a capable and business-like employee who will be an asset to the company.

—Kathy Surace

Every dark cloud has a silver lining, and the current shaky economy reminds employees and companies how important image is to success. In the end, the image we project helps others to see the professional we can become if given the opportunity. The time is right to spruce up our image to stay competitive. Our future success may depend upon it. □



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When there's no place to hide >

Executive Summary:
What do you do when traditional diversification doesn't work? Here's some advice.

By Joel S. Williams

Diversify your portfolio.

It is some of the oldest advice out there. When you look at the meaning of that sound advice as markets and trends have evolved over the years, it takes on an astoundingly different form.

In the beginning, investors could only diversify with large capital U.S. stocks and bonds. Then in the late 1970s the ability to add international stocks and small capital stocks became available.

This was further expanded to include publicly traded REIT's (real estate investment trusts) in the late 1980s. However, the advent of the Internet and the capability of information to move rapidly around the world has increased the correlation of these markets and therefore decreased their ability to provide true diversity in an investment portfolio.

This lack of diversity can be seen most dramatically in the recent months of plunging values with no place safe to hide. The market landscape is shifting with the force of something akin to a tectonic plate leaping up over its neighboring continent.

New horizons and valleys are forming. The aftershocks have many people crying out in fear and confusion. But, I say the new view is an opportunity and if you keep that on your horizon, you will not only survive, you will thrive.



The bottom line: one has to have less exposure to publicly traded stock markets and add more privately held investments.

—Joel S. Williams

In my opinion, we are experiencing a "resetting of world capital markets," something more than a traditional bear market. Traditional stock market diversification does not help much in this type of situation.

While diversification is still the aim, the strategy is more exposure to non-traditional "private" asset classes: oil/gas, real estate, private equity, hedge funds, managed futures. For decades, these strategies have been successfully employed by large endowments and the very wealthy. In the last 15 years, they have become more available to investors who can meet the Securities and Exchange Commission eligibility requirements (often a minimum of \$1 million in exclusive net worth). Keep in mind these asset classes have unique risk characteristics and their success is not assured.

The bottom line: one has to have less exposure to publicly traded stock markets and add more privately held investments, in my opinion. And yes, there are a few of these available to those with less than \$1 million of net worth.

Do not allow the changing landscape to keep you from enjoying the view. I am a firm believer that there is always opportunity on the horizon. 

Norfolk Southern Corporation >

Compiled by Deborah Nason

Overview:

Norfolk Southern Corporation, through its subsidiaries, engages in the rail transportation of raw materials, intermediate products, and finished goods primarily in the United States. Its operations consist of transportation of coal, coke, and iron ore products; general merchandise traffic, which consists of automotive products, chemicals, metals and construction products, agriculture and consumer products, and paper, clay, and forest products.

The company, which has a significant presence in Roanoke, also transports overseas freight through various Atlantic and Gulf Coast ports, as well as provides a range of logistics services. It operates and leases regularly scheduled passenger trains and commuter trains; acquires, leases, and manages coal, oil, gas, and minerals; develops commercial real estate; telecommunications; and leases or sells rail property and equipment. As of Dec. 31, 2007, the company operated approximately 21,000 route miles of track throughout the United States.

[Source: businessweek.com]

Market Commentary

Fuel surcharges, coal, ethanol, and the economy play important roles in Norfolk Southern's profitability, analysts say.

- “Fuel surcharges comprised 60 percent of revenue gains, and rate increases made up the rest. ... given the recent drop in diesel prices, rails are laying out less for fuel than the surcharges their customers are paying ... We think railroads' improved service and economy versus alternative shipping modes will continue to offer shippers value that commands fair compensation.”

[Morningstar]

- “In the energy sector, there should be higher production, driven by the resumption of mining at Consol's Buchanan Mine along with two additional mines that ramped up in West Virginia earlier in 2008. Export activity should continue to drive substantial growth in coal volumes and revenue for the remainder of this year and into

2009... Ethanol volume should continue to build as new plants ramp up and several new distribution terminals open in early 2008 and increased shipments of fertilizer will generate higher agricultural revenues ... Moreover, the company anticipates 2008 pricing gains greater than 7 percent due to contract renewals.”

[IStockAnalyst.com]

- “We expect results to benefit from continued strong pricing, though volumes should decrease due to economic weakness. Recent declines in oil prices will help costs, but hurt fuel surcharge revenues.”

[Zacks Investment Research]

Executive Compensation

Name	Title	Age	Total
C.W. Moorman IV	CEO	56	\$800,000
Stephen C. Tobias	COO	63	\$600,000
Donald W. Seale	CMO	55	\$425,000
Mark D. Manion	EVP Operations	55	\$425,000
James A. Squires	CFO	46	\$315,000

Board of Directors

Name	Primary Company	Age
Gerald Baliles	Hunton & Williams LLP	67
Gene Carter	Norfolk Southern Corp	68
Landon Hilliard	Brown Brothers Harriman	69
Alston Correll	Georgia-Pacific Corp	66
Steven Leer	Arch Coal Inc	55
J. Reason	Metro Machine Corp	66
Burton Joyce	Norfolk Southern Corp	66
Daniel Carp	Delta Air Lines Inc	59
Karen Horn PhD	Brock Capital Group LLC	64
C.W. Moorman IV	Norfolk Southern Corp	56

Institutional Stock Ownership: as of Sept. 30, 2008: 785 owners held 264,176 shares for a total of 71.35 percent.

Top 10 Non-Institutional Holders

Name	Shares held
David R. Goode	709,104
Stephen C. Tobias	216,418
L.I. Prillaman	249,278
KBC Group NV	153,152
BNP Paribas Arbitrage	131,375
Henry C. Wolf	149,804
C.W. Moorman IV	91,241
Donald Seale	83,333
Mark D. Manion	41,100
James A. Squires	18,198



Sources

[nsCorp.com] / [smartmoney.com] / [zacks.com]
 [quicktake.morningstar.com] / [istockanalyst.com]
 [investing.businessweek.com] / [finance.aol.com]

Note

This article is meant for information purposes only and is not intended as an investment guide.



Norfolk Southern

Elliston intermodal and the constitution >

Executive Summary:

Montgomery County says the Virginia Constitution prohibits actions that would allow a private company—Norfolk Southern—to accept funding from the state for its intermodal project.

By Gene Marrano

It is time to “stipulate the facts” in the matter of the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors v. all those in favor of the Elliston intermodal site.

Roanoke attorney Greg Haley of Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore, who is representing the Supervisors in trying to prevent construction of an intermodal rail/truck facility in rural Elliston, is ready for battle.

His opposition includes heavyweights like the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and its director Matthew O. Tucker and the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

The parties may be reluctant to talk now that the matter is before the Circuit Court of the City of Richmond, but Montgomery County hasn’t been shy in stating its opposition, in part due to traffic, environmental and other quality of life concerns.

The Supervisors are challenging public funding for the NS project, which, says chairwoman Annette Perkins, “is prohibited by the Virginia Constitution.”

The Commonwealth has pledged to fund 70 percent of the \$35 million Norfolk Southern project from the Rail Enhancement Fund, which Montgomery County insists is a violation of Article X, section 10 in the Virginia Constitution.

Former Attorney General Gerald Baliles (later governor) ruled nearly 30 years ago

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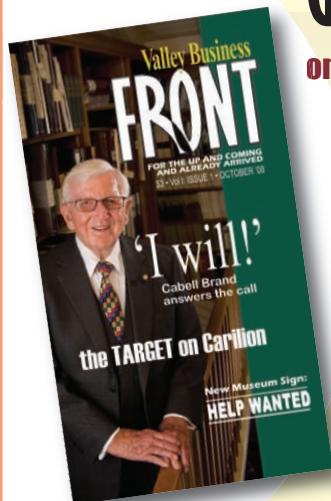
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“ ”

that such transactions were a violation, but other public-private partnerships using taxpayer money have worked their way around that barrier.

The project comes with several promises: taking tractor-trailers off crowded highways like I-81—which the Elliston site would connect to via a state-built road—and creating jobs. It is a component of Norfolk Southern’s larger Heartland Corridor project, which would improve freight rail service between the ports of Hampton Roads and the Midwest.

The two sides disagree as to how many new jobs would be related to the intermodal site, and expected spin-offs like truck stops and warehouses is not what the Board of Supervisors in Montgomery County had in mind when it comes to economic development.

The Department of Rail and Public Transportation has put the job creation total at 2,900. The intermodal facility could take 150,000 trucks off the road every year and create \$71 million in annual tax revenue, according to numbers from the department, now party to the Montgomery County lawsuit.

Speaking at the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce’s membership meeting (the Chamber supports the Elliston intermodal site) Norfolk Southern’s CEO Wick Moorman said, “Something like the Elliston terminal will make this region that much more attractive... ‘The Elliston terminal will be a great advantage to the Roanoke Valley... I think it will be a great thing for economic expansion.’”

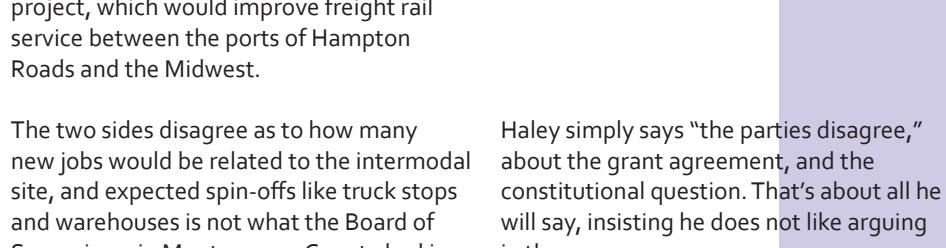
“We have serious questions about the purported economic and employment benefits,” says Perkins, adding that she would not oppose the facility where it would be welcome and consistent with the [chosen site’s] local land use and economic development plans.

“The state has ignored our concerns,” says Perkins, an outspoken critic of the project at public meetings. The Board of Supervisors has passed three resolutions opposing the Elliston site since 2006.

We have serious questions about the purported economic and employment benefits.

—Annette Perkins,
Montgomery County
Board of Supervisors

Annette Perkins



“ ”

The parties disagree.

—Greg Haley,
Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore

The Richmond Circuit Court will make the determination as to if and when the matter moves on to a trial “early this year,” notes Haley.

“We’re not against progress,” says Perkins, “just poor choices.” ■

Finding 'homes for technologies' >

Executive Summary:

Intellectual property has become an important aspect of business these days, especially businesses where new products are created or invented. At Virginia Tech, there's a mechanism to deal directly with it.

By Rachael Garrity

[First of two parts]

Don't look for nerds here. Just because the business mission has to do with intellectual property, and the halls echo with words that you hope no one ever asks you to pronounce, the professionals at Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties Inc., (VTIP) are focused on marketing. It's the kind of marketing that requires expansive understanding of multiple products and the ability to persuade as they inform.

Formed in 1985—on the same day in fact as the corporate research center at Tech—VTIP today employs five licensing associates, plus Mark Coburn, the CEO. The purpose is anything but simple, but it can be succinctly described. As Coburn puts it, "We find homes for technologies."

Two years ago when Coburn moved into his position, typically only six or so projects were being worked on at a time. Now that number has grown to 30 and counting. Or, to count it another way, in 2007 VTIP received 128 "invention disclosures"; in 2008 the number has catapulted to 202.

What exactly, then, is an "invention disclosure"? Essentially, it is an idea for creating something new. VTIP, cooperating with Tech researchers in multiple fields (engineering, software development, agriculture, animal science, life sciences), devises and shepherds a formal process of disclosure. That begins with evaluating the invention for patent protection and commercial viability.

The licensing associates are assigned to specific areas of research, but also work

together when a project crosses disciplines. For example, innovations in medical technology often involve both engineering and life sciences.

"Sometimes there are projects that just can't be categorized," Coburn admits.

"Recently, we worked on a new decadent dessert involving bananas and chocolate and yogurt. Great idea, wonderful potential, not the normal focus we work on."

"That's what's so interesting about being at Virginia Tech. There are a broad spectrum of ideas and possibilities. The researchers here are not just about making money. There is a measurable effort to make sure projects improve the human condition in developed and developing worlds."

Coburn has personal experience to lend credence to that point of view. When one of his children was born with what is called in layman's terms "water on the lung," he was met at the hospital by a former student, who assured him that he should not worry, because "they're using the pulmonary surfactant you taught us about in class."

What Coburn had taught was how a new idea had become a product, because a commercial partner had seen the potential market application—the happy result of a process just like the one VTIP is engaged in. Today, it saves multiple lives.

Quite often, there are also serendipitous connections that introduce unanticipated applications. Recently, for example, as part of their conversation with Northrop Grumman, VTIP representatives mentioned the licensing of noise canceling insulation with Dupont. Now that insulation is being tested in ships—a collaborative venture between Northrop Grumman, Dupont and Virginia Tech.

Because of the work VTIP associates do, ideas obviously can find multiple homes. And, when one company decides to withdraw its support, VTIP can—and does—find, in effect, a new home where the heat is still on. Sort of makes you want to rewrite the old General Electric slogan to make it "living better effectively." 

Nutraceuticals: Improving health >

Special to the FRONT

BioTherapeutics Inc., a new Blacksburg company, designed to develop nutritional interventions against chronic inflammatory and infectious diseases, hopes to improve health through the development of something called nutraceuticals.

Nutraceuticals are naturally occurring molecules that can be integrated into nutritional products and food ingredients. BioTherapeutics wants to develop novel, orally active, naturally occurring compounds that have proven scientific efficacy and have been shown by clinical research to have substantial health claims.

The products will be based on technologies licensed by Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties.

BioTherapeutics Inc. was incorporated in August with the purpose of introducing Virginia Tech-developed nutraceutical technologies into the marketplace. The company was founded by Josep Bassaganya-Riera, associate professor at the Virginia Bioinformatics at Tech.

"BioTherapeutics Inc. will provide a platform for translating new scientific knowledge arising from leading university research into products and technologies that improve people's health and well-being," says Bassaganya-Riera.

BioTherapeutics Inc. plans to partner with other nutritional supplement manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies in the development of nutritional.

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Using special equipment, EMS providers can diagnose your heart attack at your home and then contact physicians and staff at Carilion Roanoke Memorial while

en route to the hospital. Through the alert, the medical team springs into action and initiates a fast-track process that gets you treated an average of 30 minutes faster than the national hospital standard. And, with Carilion's Lifeguard medical helicopters, you can rest assured that no matter where you live, you're getting the fastest care available.

You always hear that seconds count. But when you have a health partner working with your community to give you a half-hour advantage, that's a life-saving difference. If you experience symptoms of a heart attack, do not attempt to drive yourself to the hospital. Call 911 immediately.

For more information on Carilion Clinic's Heart Alert™ program, please call 540-266-6000 or 800-422-8482.

An exam for the executive >

Executive Summary:

If you're dreading that colonoscopy or that annual punch and probe from your physician, here's a luxury alternative.

By Gene Marrano

When is a physical examination not a routine visit to the doctor's office? When it costs several thousand dollars and might include a stay at The Greenbrier Hotel resort for starters.

Since 1947 high-powered executives from all over Virginia and elsewhere have made their way to the Greenbrier Clinic, located at the West Virginia resort, directly above the military bunker.

The Greenbrier Clinic provides a more relaxing environment where a battery of tests can be run. Typical costs for the core examination can run between \$1,500 and \$3,000, depending on what items clients select from a menu, with the added attraction of spending much more time with the attending physician.

At the Greenbrier that might mean an hour or more initially, and a second visit the next day to go over test results. Clients leave with a multi-page report; a copy is sent to the family physician and health insurance providers will typically cover part of the cost.

Staying overnight at the Greenbrier Hotel—which can run pretty close to \$1,000—is an additional expense, but the lure of getting away from it all for procedures many avoid (colonoscopies, blood work, stress tests, bone density for women, etc.) is part of the attraction.

Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore senior partner William Rakes travels from Roanoke to the Greenbrier once a year for an extensive checkup (clients no longer have to be executives) turning it into a mini-vacation with his wife. Celebrities and Fortune 100 company officers are among those who have made the trip.

Rakes likes the "unhurried focus that the clinic physicians give you... unlimited time and a real conversation." Tests often focus on his allergies and respiratory issues. "You feel like your doctor really knows you."

After a half day at the Greenbrier Clinic there is time to play, with an exit interview the next morning and any follow up procedures.

Internal medicine specialist Thomas Mann says, "At the end of the day what we do is extremely individualized, very personalized health care." Mann is one of 12 physicians on hand and a 20-year clinic veteran. He estimates that 20 percent of all clients are sent by their companies, the rest come "on their own." With some firms the Greenbrier Clinic has pre-negotiated prices for a specific set of tests.

Mann tries not to step on the toes of a client's regular physician but does offer opinions on prescriptions they might be taking.

The clinic was founded by a former Undersecretary of State in the FDR administration, cognizant that many top executives neglected their own health. Says Rakes, a veteran attorney: "if you're busy, you don't sit around thinking about your health."

(For information visit the Web site www.greenbrierclinic.com.)

“ ”

At the end of the day what we do is extremely individualized, very personalized health care.

—Thomas Mann

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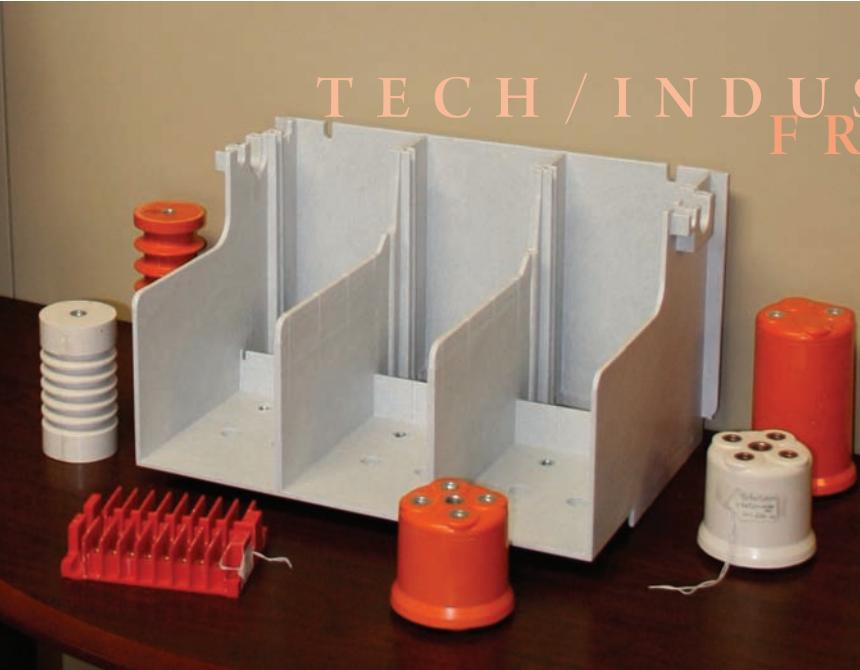
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Mar-Bal produces an array of products for companies that need insulators, including the power distribution industry

Tim W. Jackson

On a mission in Dublin>

Executive Summary:

Mar-Bal owner's dedication to business and the U.S. workforce benefits Dublin employees.

By Tim W. Jackson

Jim Balogh's founding of Mar-Bal didn't come easy. After being shot and imprisoned in his native Hungary during a 1956 revolution, he made a harrowing escape to Yugoslavia. He eventually made it to the United States and in 1970 founded Mar-Bal.

As one who understands the many benefits to living in and doing business in this country, Balogh has been committed to supporting the U.S. workforce and economy. One area benefiting from Mar-Bal's presence is the New River Valley. Mar-Bal has expanded from its company headquarters in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, to include the Dublin plant and one in Cuba, Mo.

Balogh, along with wife Carolyn, still owns the business, but most of the day-to-day operations are headed by sons Scott, who

is president, and Steven, vice president. At the Dublin plant, Eric Stump is plant manager.

In a difficult economy the 115 employees at Mar-Bal are working three shifts in Dublin, making electrical and structural reinforced thermosetting materials. The company has an array of proprietary products including UL-recognized flame-retardant wastebaskets, bulk molding compound materials, and electric standoff insulators.

Stump says he doesn't foresee any slow-downs in the plant and, in fact, he says there could be an expansion in 2009. "Our employees understand the economic situation," Stump says. "They hear the news. And they have absolutely bought in to what we are doing here."

The company provides products for the U.S. Navy, General Electric, Cutler-Hammer, and a number of other major accounts.

Stump says that even though most of the company's operations are now being overseen by Scott and Steven, he feels comfortable about Mar-Bal's future: "Scott's done a great job. He understands how this company was founded and what his father went through to start the company. He knows what it's like to operate a business in other countries and

shows more of a debt of gratitude to the U.S. and its economy. What his dad went through greatly defined their business, and now it's a family philosophy."

While the Dublin plant conducts about \$12 to \$13 million a year in business, Stump says he anticipates that within a few years the plant will increase that to about \$20 million a year.

"Our owner has had the foresight to invest in this company and do what it takes to make us successful to this point, so I don't see that changing," Stump says. "Sometimes it seems we're too busy. That's a good problem to have." □

“ ”

What his dad went through greatly defined their business, and now it's a family philosophy.

—Eric Stump



Eric Stump Tim W. Jackson

Filling the information gap >

Executive Summary:

Finding crucial competitive information is easy. It's the using of it that presents a problem, unless you're an expert. Here's the expert.

By Rachael Garrity

Operating a small or medium-sized business takes talent, toughness and more than a modicum of hard work in the best of markets. When the economic environment is as volatile as it is today, even a generous helping of all three may not be enough without the competitive edge born of information that is comprehensive and reliable:

- Who are your major competitors?
- Your potential clients or markets?

- How about sources of investment capital or partners?
- Attractive new lines of business?
- Promising technological advances? Trends to track?
- Challenges to keep an eye on?

Accurate competitive intelligence is obviously the answer, but one that has not always been accessible or affordable—or both—to those without large budgets. Enter Attaain Inc., a Blacksburg-based online service that offers information that is available all day, every day, constantly updated and provided in a form that allows for real-time collaboration among all levels of management, wherever they operate.

Daryl Scott, founder and owner of the business, moved to Blacksburg in 2001 from Silicon Valley, where he had worked as a consultant and CEO of venture-backed companies.

With nearly a dozen years of experience working in advertising, marketing and media analysis in New York prior to his time in California, Scott had developed a robust

“ ”

I've seen what finding and using just one really good piece of information can mean. It's exciting to be able to deliver it to multiple people in multiple offices in real time.

—Daryl Scott

Daryl Scott

understanding of what kinds of information lay at the heart of a competitive advantage.

"Not all that long ago, the issue was finding accurate information," explains Scott.

"Today it is just as much about coping with the information available and applying it in ways that work best."

He established Attaain a year ago, and smilingly notes it is "a blessing and a curse" that the service is useful to virtually every kind of business operation—technology, defense contracting, manufacturing, publishing, marketing, advertising, and pharmaceuticals, to name a few. And while the information Attaain provides is assuredly not useful only to small and medium enterprises, it is structured to be affordable for the full range of corporations.

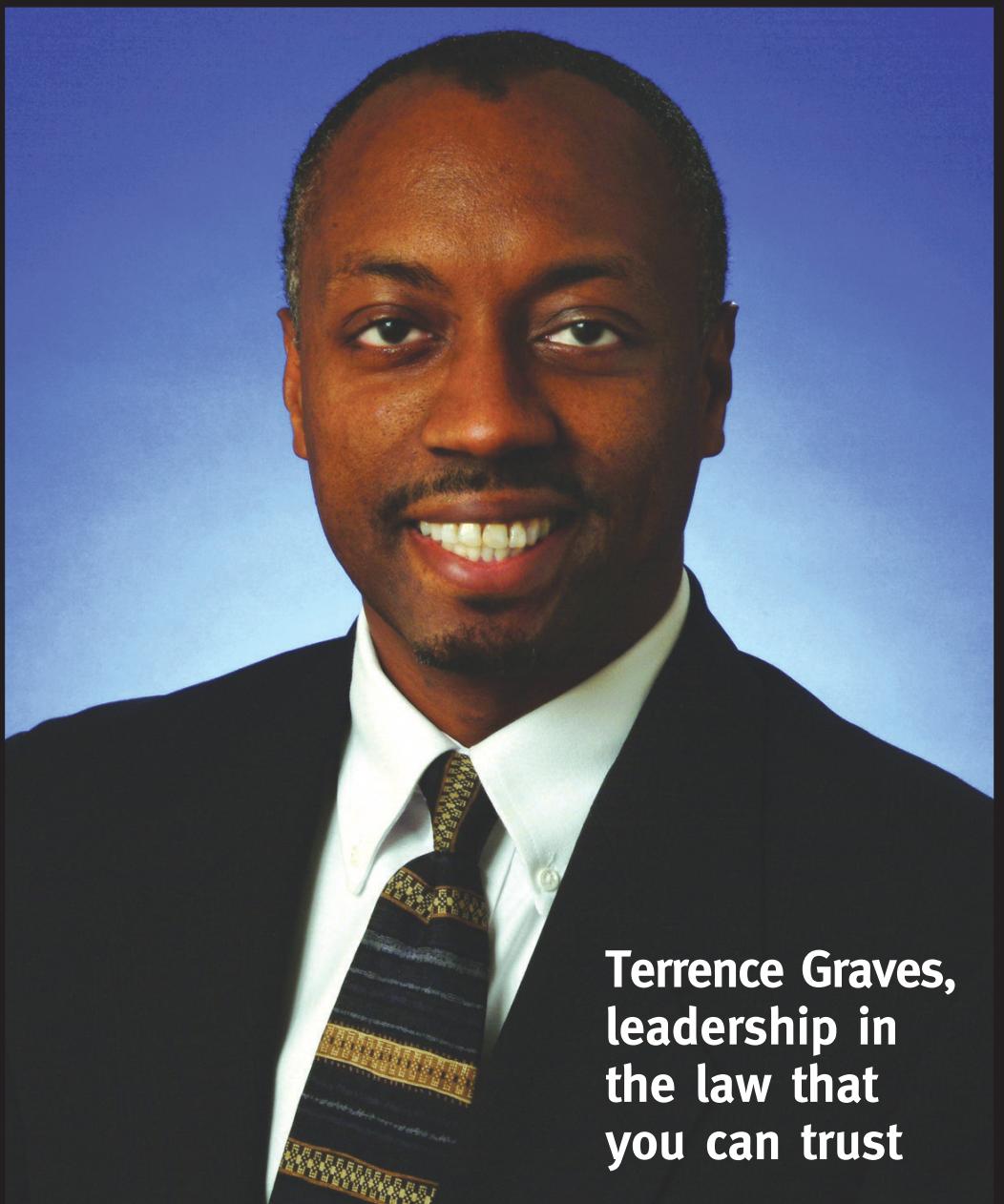
"When a company needs information delivered throughout the year to more than one user, it typically chooses what we call our 'Enterprise Model,'" says Scott. "Others may find it more cost effective to subscribe on a per user basis with a monthly fee. Either way, they are able to create a portal that is customized to their specific interests, markets and operations."



Dan Smith

Where does the information come from? Essentially everywhere. Traditional sources of competitive intelligence, business and general media, blogs, the works. Scott uses contractors for his own business operations, and has created an exchange with other online sources of information.

"There is a huge, untapped opportunity for this kind of service," Scott argues. "I've seen what finding and using just one really good piece of information can mean. It's exciting to be able to deliver it to multiple people in multiple offices in real time. No longer are data mining and knowledge management the province of the large-scale operation only. The net result is success for all kinds of companies and their customers." □



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We're especially proud that Sands Anderson Marks & Miller's Terrence L. Graves was selected as one of 2008's "Leaders in the Law" by Virginia Lawyers Weekly. Terrence, chair of our Risk Management group and a widely known commercial transportation attorney, completed service last year as President of the Virginia Association of Defense Attorneys, the first African-American to hold that distinction. We congratulate Terrence for this significant recognition, which was based on the same strong spirit of service and commitment to excellent that his clients have come to trust.

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Chuck Swain must be exhausted >

Executive Summary:

Chuck Swain takes heed of Mahatma Gandhi's words as he tries to be the change he wants to see in the world.

By Tim W. Jackson

It's pretty solidly established that Chuck Swain is a busy guy:

- He lives in Christiansburg and works at the James Hardie Building Products plant in Pulaski (HR manager);
- He travels to the Hardie plant in South Carolina frequently;
- He goes to church in Salem;
- He is a husband to Melissa and part of an ever-growing family: two children by birth—Dirk, 16, and Hannah, 8; adopted son Brad, 17; and another adopted son, James, 6, on the way.

That'd be enough to keep most of us occupied, but Chuck Swain isn't most of us. Led in part by his faith, he stretches to have impact on his community.

He has volunteered at the correctional facilities in Pulaski and Bland counties, giving seminars to inmates about how to re-enter the workforce.

"About 50 percent of the people who get out of correctional facilities are back in within three years," Swain says. "They face a lot of challenges coming back into society. We want to make them better citizens."

Swain is on the board of directors at the Pulaski Community Hospital and he dabbles in Chamber of Commerce events and economic development initiatives.

He's just finishing his second year as the state Society for Human Resources Management Workforce Readiness Director.

At James Hardie, which produces an array of fiber cement building products such as siding, backer-board, wallboard, and gypsum, Swain is usually responsible—either officially or unofficially—for heading up community outreach programs.

"We try to be a good business partner with the community," Swain says. That entails adopting a nearby elementary school; buying a scoreboard for the middle school football team; putting up siding for a couple of houses in the community; sponsoring Hooked on Fishing for kids in Narrows; using the company's warehouses for distribution of Girl Scout cookies; and sponsoring an athlete of the week through the local weekly paper.



Tim W. Jackson
Chuck Swain

Swain says he was attracted to James Hardie by the opportunity to build the work culture from the ground up. "A lot of times in HR, you end up trying to repair damaged cultures," Swain says. "I wanted to see what I could do from the beginning. And if things went bad I would have nobody to blame but myself. I couldn't say, 'Well, the person here before me really screwed this up.'" One of the first steps in establishing the right culture was to "be extremely picky" about who got hired at James Hardie. "We went through probably 6,500 applications to get 170 people," Swain says.

At James Hardie, Swain says, he has three key elements to promoting a harmonious workforce: "We treat each other like family. We treat the business like it's our own. We're responsible members of our community."

Swain wants James Hardie to be recognized as a valuable community member based on its actions, much the same as he wants his actions to be the change that he wants to see in the world. ■

Work Spaces

An artistic setting for the art community >

Executive Summary:

In Pulaski, there was a growing need for space where artists could thrive. A community effort is turning an abandoned automobile dealership into that artistic space.

By Rachael Garrity

When generosity meets creativity, the result can be extraordinary, and the New River Valley is about to be home to an excellent example of that process.

In 2006, when Ann Rutherford Rooker inherited the Pulaski complex that had housed her father's Pontiac dealership, she and her husband, Dennis, decided to make



Dan Smith

an unrestricted gift—no strings, do with it what you choose—to the Fine Arts Center for the New River Valley. The FAC was already housed in one small area on the property.

Keenly focused on a cost-effective use of the property, the center's board decided that rather than creating a new structure, the best move was to retrofit the space in a way that would be optimal for display, performance and education.

The board elected Edna Love, one of three elementary school art teachers who founded the organization more than three decades

ago, and Randy Vaughn, a veterinarian with offices in Dublin, to chair the capital campaign for the project. The board had determined that \$1.1 million would be needed for the renovation.

"The decision to move ahead," says Vaughn, "was based on our recognition that this particular part of the city offers just the kind of visibility the center needs; that the renovation can be done without massive cost because the structure is fundamentally sound; and that we had the opportunity to do something both inventive and environmentally friendly."

The building has 12,000 square feet of usable space, a tenfold increase over what the center now has. What was the main showroom for the automobile dealership will become both a sculpture gallery and a multifunctional room for concerts, dance and other performance arts. Here's some of what's planned:

- Garage bays will be partitioned for studios and classrooms. The car wash will be redesigned for workshops in stained glass, neon glass, etc.
- The area where cars were once painted will become a pottery studio. Similarly, metal storage sheds will be given over to welding



DEVELOPMENT FRONT

studios, so that safety issues regarding children can be addressed.

- An updated computer system will support a digital design studio.
- The lower floor will be divided into administrative space and a large gallery area.



"Until now, we have had only one classroom," Vaughn points out. "With this new design we'll have multiple classroom areas, plus, for the first time ever, a climate-controlled area to store the more than 300 pieces of regional art that constitute our permanent collection."

How can all this be done with \$1.1 million? More generosity:

- The town of Pulaski and a local travel agency have donated office furniture;
- Tom Douthat, a local architect, is working on what is, says Vaughn, "almost a pro-bono basis";
- All the commercial-grade carpet needed has been given at no cost;
- Virginia Tech students are doing the landscape design.

"In-kind donations are just one more example of how this is, indeed, a project focused on our whole community," says Love. "Art is not just about the product itself. It is much more about what getting involved in art does to people."

And, of course, what creative people do, given the opportunity. Who said art isn't business, or, for that matter, business isn't art?



Top center: artifacts await the new Center; **Far left:** members of the art committee; **Above:** the old Pontiac dealership; **site plans;** **Below:** Governor Mark Warner reviews plan; and "before / after" photo and conceptual drawing of the Fine Arts Center for the New River Valley.



AEP Spraying: A question of safety? >

Executive Summary:

People living along Crystal Creek are up in arms about the spraying meant to eliminate cutting brush, but AEP insists it is perfectly safe. The dead deer says otherwise.

By Gene Marrano

Southwest Roanoke County resident David Barudin says his neighbors along Crystal Creek Drive, many of whom have lived there much longer than the four years he has, had never before seen a dead fawn. Yet there it was last summer, a week or so after Appalachian Power sprayed a mixture of two DuPont herbicides along the power line right-of-way that parallels the semi-rural road, running beside Crystal Creek.

About 75 feet from the sprayed area a neighbor found the fawn lying on a small island in the creek, panting. The next day it was dead. Now Barudin, a former freelance journalist and travel writer who creates marketing plans for companies and trade associations, wants a complete ban on herbicide spraying in Roanoke County, for compounds labeled "environmentally acute."

Barudin, who travels to Washington for his job and probably knows a thing or two about media coverage, orchestrated a public meeting in November, inviting AEP representatives, a regional EPA official, Crystal Creek residents and Roanoke County supervisor Charlotte Moore.

Barudin recently stuffed a flier in mailboxes along Crystal Creek Drive, asking people to write letters to local papers, expressing concern about herbicide spraying. "They don't want to deal with people like me," says Barudin of AEP.

Several company spokesmen say herbicides Clearstand Lineage and Krenite S are safe as long as they are not sprayed directly into a water source like Crystal Creek.

"We have a lot to lose... if we don't follow guidelines for herbicides," AEP external affairs manager Terry Hall said then. AEP's Todd Burns says Norfolk Southern and VDOT also use herbicides along their rights of way.

Money saved by spraying instead of employing labor-intensive crews demonstrates that "AEP is interested [first] in shareholder equity," says Barudin. By agreement with Roanoke County, herbicides are not used in close proximity to Spring Hollow Reservoir, a principal water source for the valley.

Burns says it is not just a matter of saving money—treating trees and underbrush from

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DEVELOPMENT FRONT



David Barudin: "They don't want to deal with people like me."

Gene Marrano

a truck equipped with a boom-arm sprayer vs. using crews of workers armed with chain saws and weed whackers—it is about effectiveness, not having to come back several times to deal with new growth, leaving behind the types of plants that will ultimately help control right-of-ways on their own. "It's more than just a dollar difference for us," says Burns, "it's an environmental solution as well."

Burns says manual "re-clearing" with chain saws and trimmers is roughly 3 to 6 times more expensive than using herbicides over the long term, pegging the cost of herbicide re-clearing at approximately \$250 an acre, with manual re-clearing at \$750-\$800 an acre. Burns says herbicide re-clearing is less hazardous for employees and lasts about twice as long as manual re-clearing (7 years, vs. 3-4).

"It is an emotional issue," says Barudin, adding that AEP crews spray without warning residents, some of whom may have respiratory conditions or pets outside, leaving a "cloud of stuff," in their wake.

“ ”

It's more than just a dollar difference for us. It's an environmental solution, as well.

—Todd Burns,
AEP

Charlotte Moore says she will organize a Board of Supervisors work session early in 2009 and may call for the increased use of organic herbicides. "I really want to see this regulated more," she says. "I don't think we can ever be too safe." □

Just friends, but oh, what friends>

Executive Profile:

Cynthia Gardner demonstrated with her actions just how valuable a mentor can be. And now she's even sharing her space.

By Dan Smith

What could have been a miserable fall/winter for Laura Godfrey was turned into an object lesson in humanity, sharing and plain, old fashioned goodness by Cynthia Gardner.

Godfrey, who has owned and operated Claire V, a handbag manufacturing and wholesale company in Roanoke, for several years, wanted to expand substantially into retail, but had little experience with it.

Gardner, who was named the Business Person of the Year for this region several years ago and has operated in manufacturing, distribution, wholesale and retail at Twist and Turns, a specialty furniture company on Roanoke City Market, became something of a mentor for Godfrey.

Now, what started as loaned space for the holiday rush has turned into a permanent arrangement. Claire V was to have moved into Twist & Turns' Campbell Avenue retail shop at the beginning of the year, taking over the upper floor for offices and some main-floor space for retailing its purses.

It began during the Thanksgiving break (hardly a break for retail) of 2007 when Godfrey was invited to show and sell some of her handbags at Twist & Turns through the Black Friday weekend. She liked what she saw and what she learned.

This year, as the holidays approached and Godfrey found herself embroiled in a dispute with a landlord from whom she wanted to rent a building on the Market, she was again invited to join the Twist and Turns family for the holidays, at least until she could find a building.

It has been quite an experience for both women—one in her 30s, the other in late middle age—and one they value deeply.

"To be direct," says Godfrey, "Cynthia's just one of the nicest people I've ever known. This relationship started a couple of summers ago when I came down here to ask her for some advice" on retailing "and wound up shooting my catalogue in the store. It's just so gorgeous."



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RETAIL FRONT



Dan Smith
Cynthia Gardner (left) and Laura Godfrey at Twist and Turns

They talked for long hours about retailing, wholesaling and "where I wanted to go," says Godfrey. They did a series of ads about women working together. "We did one where I had to wear one of those welding helmets at Cynthia's [manufacturing] shop. That thing was nasty." Gardner smiles. She grew up on a farm in Franklin County and knows the real definition of "nasty."

Gardner says that because "I've made every mistake you can make and still survived" she has learned some things of value. But, she insists, "I've learned from her, too. She has the new techniques, knows the technology. She fixed my computer. I'm lucky if I can log on to AOL. I do stuff the old way.

"I'm very fortunate she's my friend, a word I don't use often." 

Q:

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Above: The Wildfire; Right: Caroline Curren; Lower right: Yes, there's a "truck" too.

The three-wheel... uh... thingy >

Executive Summary:

Well, it's not exactly a motorcycle, even though you need a motorcycle license to drive it. And, no, it's not quite a car, either. But it sure does attract attention. And it costs, gulp, \$7,781.

By Linda Nardin

It's a blustery late-autumn morning in Moneta and the vehicle is getting more than passing glances. People are pointing, some are smiling and waving. Even oncoming traffic is slowing down to a crawl. Maybe "ogle" is more fitting a term? Oh yeah, we're getting noticed big time.

All the attention no longer makes Caroline Curren flinch in the slightest. She brushes it aside with a wave of her hand as she prepares to shift from second to third gear. She says all the excitement is expected for the usually calm and collected Virginians she passes along the byways of Bedford County.

So what's transformed her into a people magnet? People are jazzed about Caroline's three-wheeled Wildfire. It's not a car, per se, but a 4-person, 5-door passenger compartment perched atop a 3-wheeled motorcycle engine and frame.

It has a ton of headroom and legroom, plenty of glass all around to see and be seen and even has a sunroof. There's an AM/FM radio, and a heater. What's even snazzier is that this little three-wheeler with a pint-sized net weight of only 700 pounds runs on regular gas and averages an unbelievable 70 miles per gallon at cruising speeds of 45 per hour, though the little buggy tops out at 65 mph. It generally comes in candy apple red, though Curren has had hers tricked out in a custom-painted iridescent orange.

Under the hood it's pretty simple—a 650cc Hi-Po water-cooled 4-stroke twin engine with CDI ignition. The little vehicle comes with a 2-year/24,000 mile warranty. All this for \$7,781 plus tax. All you need is a motorcycle license to drive it.

Imagine the efficiencies. Think about the worry-free ease of finding those pipsqueak parking spaces on downtown streets unattainable by the "big boys" when it's time to holiday shop. And, of course, there's the, "Hey, look at me" factor. Priceless.

But let's get back to the business itself.

Caroline and her husband Jeff Curren are co-owners of "The Third Wheel," their Wildfire distributorship/dealership at Smith Mountain Lake. It's one of only two firms in the state authorized to sell the Chinese-made Wildfire product line. The Third Wheel is housed with several other businesses in a strip mall near the corner of Route 122 on



all photos: Linda Nardin

Hendricks Store Road, about two miles north of the Hales Ford Bridge.

Neither husband nor wife comes from a long line of car dealers, though, ironically, Caroline's father was a full-time horse trader in rural Pennsylvania where both she and her husband grew up. Jeff's background has been all things related to car and motorcycle mechanics. Caroline's expertise is in residential construction.

In fact, the seed of the idea for this business sprouted as a result of Caroline plying the Web, trying to find an economical alternative to circumvent the high cost of clocking 500 miles per week commuting to her job at Roanoke-based Parsell & Zeigler. Though gas prices have tumbled as of late to near \$2 per gallon, the Currens' raison d'être is really more about energy conservation and just plain being committed to reducing the carbon footprint as effectively as possible.

They researched alternatives, made phone calls and settled on buying a Wildfire for their own purposes—and subsequently took the gamble and bought several for resale.

In addition to the Chinese-made WF-650-C "car," the Currens also sell its littermate, a peppy silver two-seater "truck" version (the WF650-T) which sports fold-down side rails and manages 60-miles-per-gallon of gas with its 26 horsepower engine. The truck is out the door for a mere \$7,166.



The Third Wheel / Moneta

Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm.

Saturday: 9am-3pm.

Phone: 540-297-9000

See a YouTube Video demonstrating the car's performance:

<http://video.aol.com/video-detail/wildfire-vehicle-test-drive/2581533894>

Walk around the inside of their tidy 1,200 square foot showroom to see the wide variety of motorcycles, scooters (including a powder pink model), mopeds and other easy-on-the-gas get-around vehicles. Also for sale are helmets and accessories. The Third Wheel also offers miniature motorcycles and camo-colored 4-wheelers for kids.

Despite challenging national and regional economies, the Currens have already sold 7 cars, 5 trucks and more than a dozen scooters—with several vehicles on layaway for Christmas. "We can order and then ship anywhere. And we find people are very excited... they want an alternative vehicle now," Jeff says. □

It's not just a 'hippie store' >

Executive Summary:

A longtime business on the Roanoke city market changed hands two years ago, but you'd never know it by visiting the store or speaking with the former or the new owner.

By Bobbi A. Hoffman

The change of ownership at Seeds of Light took place in March 2007, but the store's founder, Juniper Healy, and its new owner, former employee Glenna Johannessen, have been telling customers they're partners rather than risk upsetting the customers.

They talk like partners, or maybe more like sisters. Both use "we" when talking about



"We've been wanting to do it gradually," (Johannessen), "because it was just too dramatic," (Healy). "Juniper was smart enough to know that it might be very traumatic to her customers if they were to find out that she had sold the business," (Johannessen).



the store, as in, "We try to support fair-trade companies" and "We'd love to stay here."

They finish each other's sentences and talk over one another. "We've been introducing that we're partners," says Healy.

taught beading classes.

In 1995, Healy opened a second store in the City Market building in downtown Roanoke, adding clothing, books and work by local artists on consignment. She closed the

Twenty-five years ago, Healy started stringing beads in her Riner home as a way to make money while she home-schooled her children. The single mom sold her earrings at craft shows, then opened a store in Blacksburg in 1991 when she needed a steadier income. She sold beads, jewelry and gems, and



Dan Smith

Blacksburg store 10 years later to concentrate on the popular Roanoke location.

As Healy grew tired of the demands of retail, she started searching for a new owner. Johannessen had worked at the Blacksburg store while she was a student before she started working for Healy in Roanoke. Now Healy works for her.

Johannessen and Healy are planning a special celebration to mark the 25th anniversary of Healy's jewelry-making venture.

Some people still call Seeds of Light a "hippie store," but Healy never categorized it that way.

"Even though my emphasis at the beginning was mostly beads, I still had a section of books, and a little section of crystals and gem stones, and local art, and a little bit of jewelry, to try to appeal to more than just the bead crowd," says Healy.

Customers run the gamut: "We seem to have a wide range of customer ages, all the way from the younger teenager to the older folks who are more open-minded," Healy says.

The economic downturn hasn't affected Seeds of Light; in fact, business was up throughout 2008. Johannessen credits the store's diverse offerings and wide range of prices.

A two-year change of ownership isn't the norm, but it worked for Healy and Johannessen.

"I want to see the store succeed. I just think this kind of transition has been ideal for both of us," Healy says.

"It took me a while to get a grip on the whole thing. It's kind of like putting your kid up for adoption after you've raised him for 25 years."

Healy is studying reflexology and hopes to be certified soon, but she still works at the store three days per week.

"Eventually I will move on down the road," she says. ■

“ ”

It's kind of like putting your kid up for adoption after you've raised him for 25 years.

—Juniper Healy

CONTRIBUTORS

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Dan Smith is editor and co-owner of Valley Business FRONT. A native of Asheville, N.C., he has been a journalist for more than four decades. He spent 20 years as editor of the Blue Ridge Business Journal, and was Virginia's 2005 Small Business Journalist of the Year and has been nominated for the 2009 class of the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame. He has been nominated four times as the Roanoke Regional

Chamber's Business Advocate of the Year (his wife, Christina, calls him the Advocate's Susan Lucci). He has won many journalism awards (writing, photography and design), several awards for Public Radio essays. He is married, has two grown children and a grandchild. [dsmith@vbFRONT.com]

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Don Simmons

DECEMBER 2008 > Contributor of the Month

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

Don could easily be confused for the people he writes about best: guitar pickin', coon huntin', cigarette puffin', shine drinkin', authentic mountain rustic with a lyrical bent for the good story. His piece on Floyd County ("A Place Called Floyd") stole the show in a chock-full December issue.

If you missed it, you can read it online (December 08 issue) at vbFRONT.com

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

Valley Business FRONT manages a writing correspondent pool of approximately thirty freelance writers, columnists and feature contributors who are strongly connected to the regional coverage area. We are producing and co-sponsoring the **Roanoke Regional Writers Conference**, January 23-24 at Hollins University for writers at all levels who are interested in developing the craft. See Page 19 for information.



Bill Cochran

A hall of famer outdoors >

A guy who says he "never played ball" is in the newest class of the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame because he refined a genre of sports writing for daily newspapers in the state that had been relegated to secondary status for many years.

Bill Cochran, who is 71, retired from The Roanoke Times and ran a B&B on Blacksburg road between Roanoke County and Blacksburg in recent years, has

continued to write a blog for roanoke.com. He remains a freelance writer of national stature. Cochran is one of the featured speakers in the Jan. 23-24 Roanoke Regional Writers Conference at Hollins University.

FRONT Editor Dan Smith, who worked with Cochran for 10 years at the Roanoke Times, says, "Bill's the best writer I know or have known and there's no qualifier to that. His prose is simply splendid. Spelling is another matter. Bill may be the worst speller I know—and I'm in the Top 5. I am not alone in my opinion of Bill as a writer. In an industry where jealousies are outsized, the praise of Bill as both a writer and a good guy is always consistent. At least one Pulitzer Prize winner told me Bill's her favorite writer."

Cochran retired early from The Times in 1998, but didn't bother to slow down, running the B&B with his wife of many years, Katherine (they have a son, Preston, and a granddaughter) and has also run a Christmas tree farm in West Virginia. He has never been far from a keyboard, turning out copy for magazines and even business publications in Roanoke when asked.

Cochran wrote his first outdoor piece in high school at William Fleming High (where he "never played ball") and later graduated from Lynchburg College. □



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Sports Club secretary

John Montgomery

Running C'burg's new swimmin' hole >

Executive Summary:

Terry Caldwell took the circuitous route to directing the new pool, one of the best in Virginia, but she prepared well for the position.

By John A. Montgomery

So how does a Wisconsin woman who worked in recreational havens such as Colorado and Florida end up in Montgomery County? And how does that same person 20 years later land the job as director of aquatics for one of the largest swimming pools in the state?

It's more than luck, although Terry Caldwell smiles at her good fortune.

Caldwell's passion for travel, adventure, tackling new challenges and doing them well has led to her hiring by the Town of Christiansburg to oversee its new \$14.5 million aquatic center which is slated to open in the spring.

The 52,000-square-foot, two-story facility will host a million-gallon, Olympic competition pool ranging in depth from 7-17 feet and featuring five diving platforms. There will be spectator seating for 1,100, a family leisure pool with an elaborate water slide, and a 1,100-square foot therapy pool.

Other amenities include a sun deck, locker rooms, family changing areas, a wet classroom, an observation deck, administrative offices, a fitness area, a warming kitchen, a lounge and multi-purpose rooms.

"This facility will sell itself," says Caldwell, exuding the enthusiasm that enabled her to beat out more than 35 other candidates. Thanks to a 50-meter length, the pool will be home to Virginia Tech swim meets, including Atlantic Coast Conference competition. The Virginia High School League has already scheduled its 2010 state competition at the Christiansburg Aquatic Center.

The town is banking on the idea that its investment will spur economic development—not only as a draw for visitors, but also as a perk for residents, whose number currently is approaching 20,000. Aquatic center promotional literature touts 16 hotels and 109 eateries in town. "There's going to be an influx of people from the entire East Coast," Caldwell says.

Christiansburg has been toying with the idea for well over a decade; a survey from the 1990s survey revealed that "the need for a swimming pool was at the top of the [recreational] list," Caldwell says. Plans for the new structure have been on the drawing board since 2004.

It doesn't hurt that Christiansburg Town Manager Lance Terpenny was captain of the Virginia Tech swim team in the late 1970s. Tech is an ownership partner as well; the school will contribute \$250,000 a year over the next 20 years, helping absorb a major

RECREATION FRONT

portion of the construction cost. The Town of Christiansburg already owned sufficient land to build a facility that includes 400 parking spaces. Some detractors have argued that the building's design and location are out of sync.

Caldwell majored in recreation administration at University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and took a position with Montgomery County in the late 1980s after visiting. Caldwell distinguished herself as manager of the Frog Pond, Montgomery County's outdoor pool, and she has a record of getting things done.

Caldwell, who has a 17-year-old child, envisions extensive programming at the

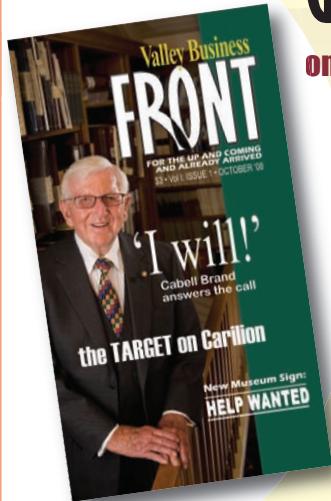
“ ”

The facility will sell itself.

—Terry Caldwell

aquatic center, including activities geared toward infants, youth, adults and seniors as well as niche water sport markets such as water polo, synchronized swimming and kayaking.

"We're going to keep the facility rocking," Caldwell says. ■



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The promise: A skill, a job, a new life >

Executive Summary:

A promising program at Virginia Western Community College gives students training and a job.

By Bobbi A. Hoffman

After nine years behind bars, Felix Campbell wasn't looking for a handout, but he

The joint venture began with a phone call from Jeannie Brown of Freight Car America (FCA) to Ruth Hendrick at Greenfield Education & Training Center—one of Virginia Western Community College's four workforce development centers. FCA builds boxcars for the rail industry and needed 80 welders. The company couldn't wait for people to complete Virginia Western's two-year program or even Greenfield's intensive three-month training.

So instructor Randy Sink, who teaches both programs, developed a two-week class designed to teach the specific skills FCA needed. The Workforce Investment Board (WIB) paid for most of the costs with federal funding it receives for area workforce



Felix Campbell: The perfect candidate.

welcomed a hand up when it came. He jumped at an opportunity to learn welding—a skill that could lead to a good-paying job, and a second chance.

Campbell, 32, was the perfect candidate for a unique workforce development initiative involving three nonprofits collaborating to train workers needed by a for-profit corporation.



Ruth Hendrick: "I saw the look in their eyes."

development. Goodwill Industries helped with funding and identified nine people for the training.

Students who completed the class and passed the final welding and math tests could look forward to jobs. Starting at \$12.75 per hour and increasing to \$16.50 after 200 hours, FCA's pay is substantially higher than other area entry-level jobs.

"The most I've ever made to this point was \$6 an hour in retail, so that's a little bit unbelievable for me," says Sarah Dooley, the only woman in the class. Dooley, 20, had long helped in her family's paint and body shop in Salem, which exposed her to welding. She was working with Goodwill Industries to identify an automotive college when she learned about the welding program.

The jobs weren't guaranteed, and everyone involved knew that. As it turned out, FCA, because of the cyclical nature of its business and a slowing economy, wouldn't hire the welders full time. Instead, they were told to report to an employment agency that would place them at FCA—at least temporarily.



A student welding.

all photos: Bobbi A. Hoffman

Says Hendrick, the students "had pretty good expectations that they would get permanent positions. I saw the look in their eyes at the same time I heard about it."

FCA's Brown says, "They have an additional skill, at no cost to themselves, that they can take with them. Any time you can give people an additional skill and a job when they didn't have one before—I don't see a negative to that... I think it's a wonderful

program, and it achieved what we wanted it to do," says Brown.

Hendrick says, "It was a foot in the door for them. It just didn't get them as far in the door as we had hoped."

Hendrick hopes to work with Goodwill Industries and WIB to offer similar training programs. "It's a great model we've developed that we can use for other businesses," she says. "We just hope those businesses have more permanent job opportunities."

Doloris Vest, president of WIB, says, "We are looking at doing this model with some other industries. We're looking for an



Sarah Dooley: "A little bit unbelievable..."

industry that says, 'If these people had this basic level of training, we could hire them as entry-level employees.'"

The story ended on a promising note: on the Monday following graduation, Campbell, Dooley and the other five welders reported to the employment agency, and began welding boxcars at Freight Car America for \$12.75 per hour. □

Dreaming theater dreams >

Executive Summary:

Kenley Smith was so interested in being in the theater that he decided to build his own, right smack in the middle of Roanoke's cultural alley.

By Dan Smith

Kenley Smith doesn't look much like a theater guy. Or a writer. Or much of anything else creative. On this rainy day, he's even wearing a NASCAR-like jacket broadcasting his former business, Car Guys, which taught people how to drive like maniacs on race tracks. He sold it eight years ago. Executive driving nutcases.

But Kenley Smith is, indeed, a theater guy. He is, at this very moment, building a new theater in the finest Shakespearian tradition, at 30 Campbell Ave. in downtown Roanoke, former home of one of the best places in the region to buy a pink and lavender zoot suit, New York Fashions.

Kenley has a master's degree in creative writing from Hollins and has taken a lot of courses in the theater master's program. Nevermind that he looks like a Civil War foot soldier with that long grey beard—reminiscing 20 years after the cessation of hostilities. He uses that image to his benefit, often employing it onstage at Mill Mountain Theatre's Waldron Stage as part of the troupe for No Shame Theatre.

It was his run there with director Todd Ristau, a Hollins professor, creative director and inventor of No Shame (out in Iowa some years ago) that got him interested in theater. Todd's the creative director at Studio One. Smith signed up for the master's program and Todd—and the brilliant Ernie Zulia—became his mentors.



Dan Smith

Smith says Studio Roanoke will not be in competition with Mill Mountain Theatre or anybody else locally because it wants to put on edgy plays, adult, original plays, "stuff that's not family friendly." Mill Mountain Theatre's support has been soft of late and its plays have been pretty much the same general fare: musical comedy or musical biography or musical drama or just a plain old Broadway musical musical. (Plays off the main stage—Waldron Stage—have a bit more diversity and considerably more imagination. They also draw almost nobody.)

Studio Roanoke will offer something different because its works won't just be challenging, they'll be new. Kenley plans to feature the work of students (Hollins mostly) and new playwrights (himself included) and



Dan Smith



Kenley Smith of Studio Roanoke: coming soon.

Dan Smith

he hopes to interest some hotshot directors to visit here and put some of these plays on.

Smith bought the New York Fashions building for \$295,000 and hopes to keep his total investment below \$500,000 ("that'd be good," he says). He will establish a non-profit 501(c)3 in order to qualify for funding for some of the theater construction that will be necessary. He can't get any breaks on it if he's simply improving the building to make

it more valuable, he says, but all the theater stuff will be portable and not tied to the building's costs.

Smith wants to open in June or July for a full-length play, but there will be soft openings with readings when he gets a certificate of occupancy. He'll also hold theater classes in the building and it will be something of an arts community center. **W**

Looking brighter at the Virginian >

Executive Summary:

A retired lawyer has been put in charge of bringing the fire-damaged Virginian Railway Station in Roanoke back to life and he is taking this voluntary effort very, very seriously.

By Bobbi A. Hoffman

Rail aficionado Jim Cosby looked over at the Virginian Railway Passenger Station filled with animal feed and other highly flammable materials and said to his wife, "This is a fire waiting to happen." He was right: On Jan. 29, 2001—45 years to the day after the Virginian Railway ran its last passenger train through Roanoke—a vagrant started a fire for warmth that turned into an inferno.

Except for the trees sprouting inside, the station hasn't changed much since the fire. The historic building—with crumbling brick walls, broken windows, and giant holes in its formerly impressive terra cotta roof—



Alison Blanton and Jim Cosby at “current” station (above); “before” (1956 above right); “after” (right)



has become little more than an eyesore at the well-traveled intersection of Jefferson Street and Williamson Road. It may look as though nothing has been done to restore the gutted building, but a group of railroad buffs and historical architecture activists has been working for the last eight years to restore the railway station that is an important part of Roanoke's history.

“A lot of people thought nothing was going on, but behind the scenes a great deal has been going on,” says Alison Blanton, an architectural historian with Hill Studio. Blanton was president of the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation (RVPF) at the time of the fire. “We were all very scared [Norfolk Southern] would use that as an excuse to just go ahead and demolish the building,” Blanton says. “It’s a great building in a great location with a lot of potential; there’s a lot of activity getting ready to happen in that area.” (Norfolk Southern owned the station but had leased it to a feed and seed store, explaining the feed and straw.)

Blanton put together the Virginian Railway Station Restoration Committee, comprised of members of RVPF, the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society (RC-NRHS), and individuals interested in restoring the station. Built in 1909, the station is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. Norfolk Southern donated the property to RC-NRHS in 2005.

Jim Cosby, a retired Justice Department attorney, chairs the restoration committee. He volunteers full-time, preparing grant applications, researching opportunities for funding, and writing a business plan.

The plan calls for a public-private, self-sustaining project. The original passenger station will be leased office space; its income

will fund the building’s operating expenses. The former baggage building will house a small Virginian Railway museum. It will also provide a comfort station for those using the Mill Mountain Greenway.

The initial phase of the restoration is stabilization: shoring up walls and building trusses and a temporary roof. It will be funded with \$267,000 from V-DOT’s Transportation Enhancement Funds. The group has applied to Roanoke City for a \$150,000 grant for lead and asbestos abatement – another part of the first phase. The project also received \$260,000 from the Federal Highway Administration for design work, and the committee has requested another \$500,000 from V-DOT to fund the remaining three phases. Additional money will come from selling historic restoration tax credits to investors. A capital campaign will be used to raise the remaining funds.

Blanton expects the terra cotta roof to be the most challenging part of the restoration. “It’s the most character-defining part of the building; it’s so visible, and it’s also the most vulnerable part.” Amazingly, the North Carolina company that made the original tiles is still in business.

Cosby says, “If we get the further funding so that we can proceed from phase one through phases two, three, and four seamlessly, without coming to a stop, we should be finished by late 2009, early 2010. We set our goal some time ago of finishing in 2009 because that would be the 100 year anniversary [of the station’s construction], but that’s a very optimistic schedule.”

Additional information about the Virginian Railway, its planned restoration, and the fundraising efforts can be found at <http://roanokenrhs.org/VGNStation.html>

Full circle for this artist >

Executive Summary:

Brett LaGue is close to making a living as an artist, but he still sees that four-year-old drawing in front of the TV and is happy things haven't changed all that much.

By Bobbi A. Hoffman

Prior to striking out on his own, mixed-media artist Brett LaGue of Roanoke had only sold "one or two" pieces, participated in "a couple of shows" and received "a decent response" at a show at The College of William & Mary. That was hardly a guarantee for financial success.

LaGue, a 49-year-old Indiana native, spent 23 years as a graphic designer and project manager for the former John Lambert Associates public relations firm, but he had always wanted a career as an artist. He saved enough money to support himself for five years; still, he wasn't ready to make the jump.

When Lambert sold his business in 2007, it was the impetus LaGue needed. Since then, LaGue has discovered it's not the income side of the balance sheet that's his biggest challenge. It's the expenses: travel to shows, marketing materials, a studio, shipping, frames and of course, art supplies. And then there are the commissions—galleries keep 40 percent to 50 percent of an artwork's sales price.

Classes at the Ringling School of Art in Sarasota, Fla., didn't prepare LaGue for an entrepreneur's balance sheets, business plans and budgets. "When I went, they trained you to have a decent portfolio so you could get a job, but beyond that, you're on your own."

LaGue likens his career change to going back to school. "I have to figure out how to make a living," he says. "I've always painted and



Brett LaGue

Dan Smith

drawn. Even while I was in advertising, I was always doodling in meetings. I did paintings and occasional shows. But you must really to concentrate on it, and to figure out what is important to you. [You have to] develop a body of work that actually seems to have some legs to it and then find a way to market. That takes some time."

LaGue uses ink, colored pencils, water colors and crayons to create his abstract pieces. He does a few landscapes, but with an abstract twist. "It's all my interpretation of my environment," he says. Surprisingly, the schedule posted in his studio dedicates only about half of LaGue's time to creating art. The other half is framing, marketing, researching shows, contacting galleries and paperwork. LaGue also "works" at the Market Gallery, an artists' co-op on Salem Avenue near the Taubman Museum of Art. The co-op artists hope the museum will bring sales their way. "Everyone is hoping that [visitors] will go to the museum and then come to see us." LaGue's wife, Mary, is the museum's registrar.

In 2008, LaGue exhibited his work from Louisiana to Illinois and won several awards, including the Award of Excellence from the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge's annual show. He will concentrate on approaching galleries in larger markets this year.

LaGue's goal is relatively pedestrian: "I aspire to be able to do this and make a living, to be able to do this forever." After two years, LaGue is getting closer and enjoying his journey. "When I was four," he says, "I would lie in front of the TV on the floor and draw," he says. "It's no different now. I loved it then and I love it now." ■

Getting a movie made here? Good luck >

My View

By Dan Smith
Editor

[fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

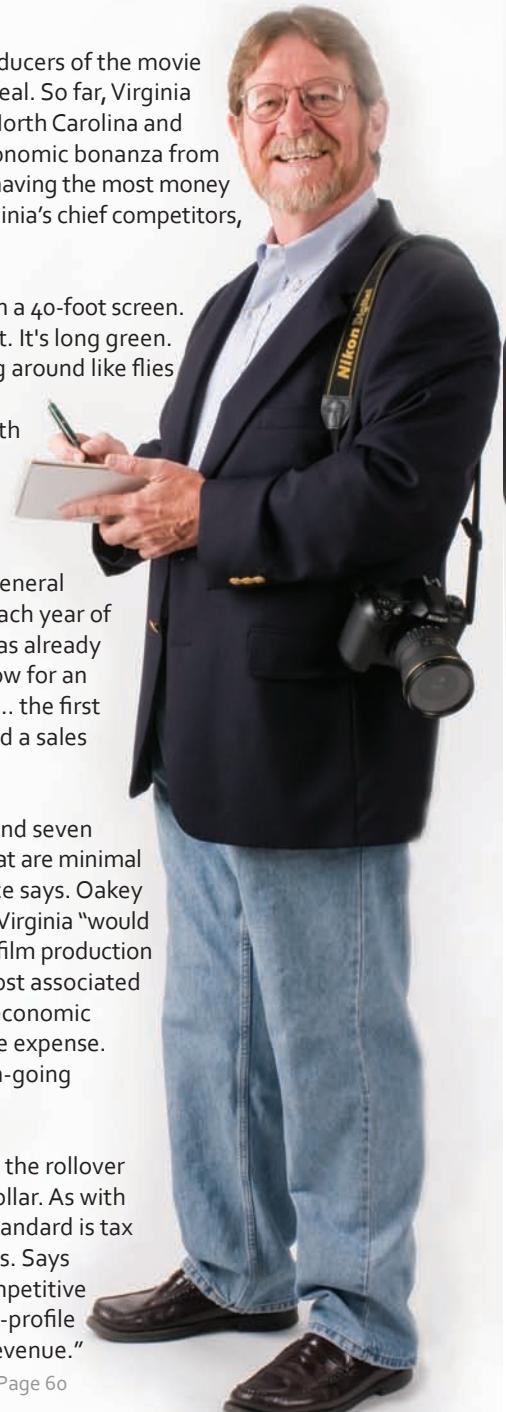
My friend, colleague and sometime cousin Sharyn McCrumb, whose novels you may have read, wants to get the movie treatment of her book The Rosewood Casket made in Craig County. It's looking like a losing battle for a variety of reasons, most of them having to do with competitive financing.

The book is set in a place much like Craig, but the producers of the movie are thinking economics and are looking for the best deal. So far, Virginia is charging into last place for deal-making. Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee are running a tight competition for the economic bonanza from this movie, with Georgia—the least appropriate site—having the most money to offer. Louisiana and Massachusetts are normally Virginia's chief competitors, but this is a mountain movie.

What's at stake is a heck of a lot more than exposure on a 40-foot screen. This is a green deal and we're not talking environment. It's long green. The movie companies are followed by money blowing around like flies on spilled spaghetti. A lot of it could land in our local economy. In 2006 and 2007, Virginia lost nine films with an economic impact of \$298 million and a job loss of 1,925, according to the Virginia Production Alliance (VPA), which is lobbying hard for state funds. Roanoke native Bud Oakey's Advantus Strategies (see story in December FRONT) is helping the alliance lobby the General Assembly. The goal is \$4 million in state support for each year of the biennial budget. Oakey says the lobbying effort has already helped get the sales and use tax law amended "to allow for an additional 10 years on the sales and use tax provision... the first time in the history of the legislature that it has allowed a sales tax exemption to last this long."

There are at least 39 states with incentive programs and seven others are considering them. Virginia has incentives that are minimal and not competitive even in the local area, the Alliance says. Oakey says he believes ("based on an unscientific study") that Virginia "would attract roughly \$150 million to \$250 million per year in film production if it had a competitive film program. There is a hard cost associated to the state, but unlike traditional bricks and mortar economic development, there is limited cost associated with the expense. The benefit is a higher paid labor force without the on-going infrastructure costs associated with the incentive."

A Virginia Commonwealth University study has found the rollover from film money is as much as \$14.30 per incentive dollar. As with other industries providing jobs in Virginia, the state standard is tax credits, rebates and other forms of financial incentives. Says Anne Chapman, president of the VPA, "Without a competitive media incentive program, Virginia will lose other high-profile projects that will ultimately mean continued loss of revenue."



continued Page 60

Red cap, blue cap >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

[ontapfrompub.blogspot.com]

It was an innocent affair. I was getting gas at a convenience store on my way home, when I remembered we needed milk. I went over to the coolers and instinctively reached in for the milk with the blue cap. And then I saw it. Illuminated by the heavenly radiance of fluorescent glow, there, right beside my fingers—A RED CAP! A red cap. Whole milk! Signifying everything we know as good and wholesome (that's why they call it "whole"). I snatched it up. I couldn't help it. It was a biological reaction.

In real grocery stores, the blue caps are well-separated from the red caps. Way ahead of the cultural curve, dairy segregation was eliminated in the more diverse, open, accepting coolers of inner city convenience stores as far back as the 1960s, I believe. Red and blue caps sit side-by-side.

My mind immediately raced for an excuse. A cover up.
An alibi. It came to me in an instant.

I forgot about my indiscretion until the next morning.
I opened the refrigerator, and before I could catch myself, I blurted it out to my daughter, sitting nearby.

"Hey, Lauren, you want your cereal to be extra good this morning?"

Being part of the blue cap generation, she had no idea what I could possibly be up to. But her mom's head swung around like an owl at the end of a seven day fast.

"What?"

She saw the red cap and actually screamed. It was time for my cover up. I told her I got it at a convenience store. They were out of the 2 percent or any other percent under 100. It was believable. It's a convenience store. It wasn't a bad lie. It was just a little milky white lie.

I should have left it at that, but I proceeded to remind my wife about all the benefits of "real" milk. "Besides," I said. "Where do they even find those cows for the blue milk? Is there some Richard Simmons ranch or something? It may not be as good for you as you think."

She didn't buy it. I think I had maybe three bowls of good cereal, and we're back on the blue cap, semi-translucent, partly white liquid. I wish they wouldn't even bother with putting that stuff in the same bottles and jugs as real milk. They're not fooling me.

If some of us are that concerned about what we put into our bodies, I wonder if we watch out that closely for our businesses? (What, you thought that whole first part was just a journal blog entry? Hey, this is a business publication, remember?) But it's true. Have you noticed how the most successful businesses are those that

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Smith / My View

from Page 58

Oakey adds that "having larger films like 'John Adams' or 'What About Bob?' filmed in our back yard, causes many smaller low budget films to be filmed in Virginia. This is the labor issue," meaning when labor is available for big movies, it's there for small ones, too, in this specialized industry.

An executive for "The Rosewood Casket" wrote in an e-mail (asking anonymity) that legislators "want to know how much money we'll be spending in state and I wish I could say. Best guess is anywhere from \$5 million to \$8 million [for "The Rosewood Casket"]... in spite of what some legislators might think, these rebates aren't hand-outs to greedy moguls. We'll literally spend the entire rebate in-state on production elements..."

Oakey says education of both industry insiders and the General Assembly is important here. "With an almost \$5 billion, three-year shortfall in [state] revenues, this is not an easy fix for anybody. The VPA has been working throughout this year with legislators to identify new sources of revenue to fund incentives. Legislators and the governor want to address this issue. It also has to be in balance with a \$35 billion annual budget." Oakey says that with a normal economic development deal "you get back over a 10 year period dollar for dollar spent on taxes and incentives... In film production, you're not generating long-term tax dollars." The movie "John Adams," for example "comes into town, spends \$80 million over time and receives the incentives over time. The real return is about a third for every dollar spent." He says the \$50,000 per year independent contractor—and there are a number of them—aren't considered as part of the equation." Oakey stresses that "this has been a very low-key industry. It has gone unnoticed... People are not aware of the thousands spent at Lowe's or the local cleaners, restaurants, gyms, plumbers, carpenters, hotels, rental car companies, labor pools, etc. If you ask most Virginians, they could not tell you what movies are or were produced in Virginia. An educational effort is necessary. Just look at what we are competing for—or not—right now."

Sharyn is dubious about the potential for getting "The Rosewood Casket" made here. "I promised the producer that I would do

what I could to get the movie for Virginia, because [the producer] really did love the setting in the Roanoke area," she says.

"Unfortunately, with a new novel due in July, I have neither the time nor the inclination to tilt at windmills. I doubt if by March we can change the culture of the Commonwealth. Maybe John Grisham [who lives in Charlottesville] could pull it off. He's a politician by nature. But God knows I'm not.

"People often become writers to avoid doing all the things they're not good at: cocktail parties, committees, sucking up, early rising, networking. It is ironic that once writers become successful, they are expected to be good at all the things they became writers to avoid doing. I've gotten a lot better at doing many of those things, but it will never come naturally to me." 

Field / On Tap

from Page 59

are blue cap/red cap-oriented? They are attentive. They seem to notice everything. They pay attention to every detail.

On product development, do you insist on the red or blue cap? Or, do you say it doesn't matter and either will do? When it comes to brand loyalty, you can bet your consumers notice. A burger franchise changes one ingredient in a french fry and watch what happens to its sales.

On customer service, do you have a red cap/blue cap way of doing business, or are you satisfied if the customer just gets in and out the door? A jeweler puts your purchase in its distinctive, first class boxes and bags whether you get the \$25,000 Cartier watch or the \$100 pendant on discount.

In your operations—from managing your utilities in the plant, to making a marketing decision—do you say red or blue will work? Or, do you take the time to see if red or blue works better?

Successful companies are red cap/blue cap organizations. Don't believe it? Try one that's not. You won't be going back.

Just like I'm banned from that not-so-convenient convenience store. 

REVIEWS & OPINION

Letters

Editor:

I fully agree with your publication relative to Oakey's Funeral Service & Crematory being very family oriented (FRONTList Best Family Owned Business, Dec. issue) and they are very well thought of in our community. They certainly deserve their name in the limelight—but why did you publish a picture of a facility owned and operated by John M. Oakey & Son, a non-related company?

Seth Oginz
Security Consultants
Unlimited
Roanoke

(Note: It was our error and we apologize. The funeral services have a common history and a similar name, but there is no excuse for the error.)



Oakey's Funeral Service & Crematory

Editor:

Valley Business Front is off to a great start. Your positive reporting on the business community and other significant assets of our area are a welcome breath of fresh air! We have to tell our own story to attract new business... and you all get it!

Samuel L. Lionberger, Jr.
Lionberger Construction
Company
Roanoke

Editor:

I missed your first issue (and I regret it) but issues two and three are excellent! You prove again that you have your savvy MarCom finger on the business pulse of our wonderful valley! "The List" is right-on!

Richard Seeley
Salem

(Note: You can see, read, print any current or back issue online at www.vbFRONT.com)

Editor:

I've seen them [FRONT magazines] all over my clients' offices and in friends' homes.

Kitty Durham
Cox Communications
Roanoke

Editor:

Congratulations on the launch of Valley Business Front. I have enjoyed every article. Thank you for all that you are doing to promote economic growth in our community.

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

Editor:

You have managed to make business reading fun, engaging and entertaining—all at the same time.

Thomas Becher, APR
tba PR + Advertising
Roanoke

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A recent survey* found that nearly 65% of investors are likely to change their primary investment advisor during this market downturn.

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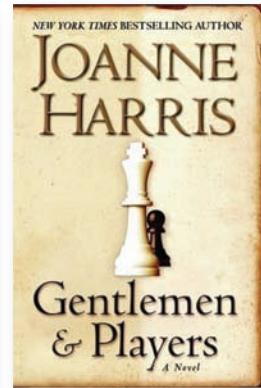
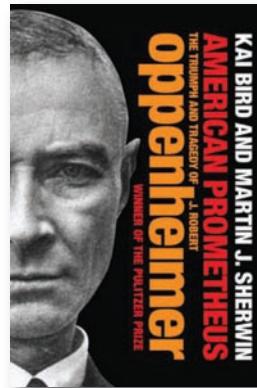
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Books @ the FRONT >

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



Oppenheimer's legacy

The story of J. Robert Oppenheimer is a fascinating, intriguing, and sad tale. Martin Sherwin's and Kai Bird's *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (Atlantic Books, \$47.63) is a wonderful read that leads one through the American Century and includes the exhilaration, terror, and sordid politics that packed the life of a most important figure of that century and, ultimately, ours.

Indeed, Oppenheimer was a modern Prometheus—one who, with his brilliance and intelligence, stole the atomic fire from the gods and gave it to man, only to have it used on an enemy and in ways he neither expected nor condoned. While he could control and direct the most amazing scientific development effort known to man, in the end, Oppenheimer couldn't control his past and his connections, which, in the hands of spiteful, jealous, little humans, doomed him in ways he could never have anticipated.

—Kurt Navratil, Virtual IT, Roanoke

A fine British romp

Admittedly, since reading *Rebecca* by Daphne Du Maurier as a pre-teen, I've been a fan of dark, plodding English mysteries and enjoy an English black comedy all the more. Little wonder that Joanne Harris' *Gentlemen & Players* (Harper Perennial, \$14.95 paperback) hits a home run. This suspense novel was nominated for the Edgar Allan Poe award (the "Edgar") given by the Mystery Writers of America. I picked the book based on reading Harris' earlier *Five Quarters of the Orange* and enjoying her cookbook and

memoir, *My French Kitchen* (both highly recommended).

Gentlemen & Players takes place at St. Oswald's, an exclusive British boys' school. Two main characters narrate the story in alternating chapters. One is a frumpy, aging "old school" teacher who slowly realizes that he can avert a murder and the school if he can thwart the murderer. The other is a mysterious new member of the faculty who, unknown to the current faculty and administration, lived on the school grounds as a child. The reader knows from the outset that a murder has taken (or will take) place and the suspense builds as these characters describe their thoughts and actions.

Like any good English novel, various subplots pepper the book. The conflicts of public versus private education, the fraying of the traditional boys' school as teaching the classics gives way to teaching computer science, the sad fact that fundraising trumps traditional priorities, and the petty jealousies of faculty give color to this deadly game of literary chess.

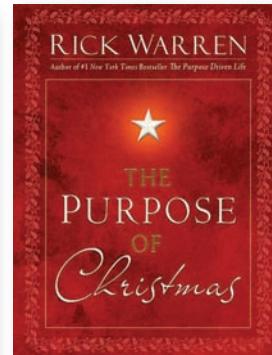
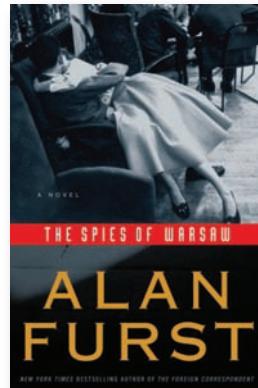
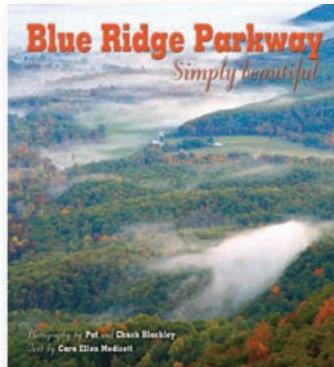
Even seasoned readers of mysteries will find a surprise ending to this funny, bizarre and well-written book.

—Nancy Agee, Carilion

Still lovely

The Blue Ridge Parkway has been photographed so often and so well that its pictures have become clichés of themselves. There are the cotton-like waterfalls, the mist-shrouded valleys, the spectacular fall color shots, the flora and fauna, the

REVIEWS & OPINION



rhododendron and the Linn Cove Viaduct and on and on. Another book of those photos could be just another book of those photos, but through the lens of Pat and Chuck Blackley accompanied by the soft and almost lyrical words of my friend and colleague Cara Ellen Modisett, this big coffee-table volume is a keeper.

It's called *Blue Ridge Parkway: Simply Beautiful* (Farcountry, \$32.95) and contains 120 pages of big-format, beautifully printed photos that will rest well in any spot where people have a few minutes to comb the pages.

—Dan Smith, FRONT editor

Spymaster

Fred Hitz, Inspector General of the CIA from 1990-98 and author of *The Great Game: the Myths and Reality of Espionage* taught a course at UVa comparing spy fiction with spy fact. After hearing him, I asked for a copy of the syllabus. Three fiction writers were represented: Graham Greene, John LeCarre, and Alan Furst. Furst's name was new to me.

Since then I have enjoyed 10 books by Furst, all dealing with the run-up to and including the years of World War II in Europe. Furst's novels evoke the mood, the places and the period convincingly. He is a scholar of his subject matter. These are stories of people unintentionally caught up in intelligence activities, often without access to the big picture. Endings are not fully resolved; like life, they are more likely to be pauses rather than dénouements.

The Spies of Warsaw (Random House, \$25) is Furst's latest. The mission is concluded, but will the powers that be acknowledge the intelligence produced, or ignore it as contradictory to accepted doctrine? Follow Colonel Mercier, French military attaché in Warsaw, as he works to discover the German army's planned invasion route into France. And prepare to buy nine more books.

—Bill Elliot, Davis H. Elliot

Christmas redux

Rick Warren, minister at Saddleback Church, follows up his bestseller *The Purpose Driven Life* with a spinoff of his classic: *The Purpose of Christmas* (Howard Books, \$17.99). The book challenges readers to view and experience Christmas as a time for celebration, salvation and reconciliation.

Warren shares from his youth how his family had birthday parties for Jesus which his family continues to celebrate to this day. He tells a personal story of management guru Peter Drucker's faith walk in which Drucker said, "The day I finally understood grace, I realized I was never going to get a better deal than that."

Finally, Christmas calls us to be peacemakers and to bring people together rather than divide. "Reconciliation ends hostility. It doesn't mean you have resolved all the problems in the relationship." Overall, Warren produced another classic in time for the holiday season.

—Stuart Mease, City of Roanoke



Tom Cain

Dan Smith

Preparing for 'an ethical economy' >

Executive Summary:

'We should resolve to develop our local economy and society carefully to send solutions downstream—both physically and metaphorically.'

Tom Cain, director of Impact + Amplify in Roanoke, began to study "genius loci," the spirit of place, while getting his architectural degree at the University of Tennessee. He is aware of the edges of watersheds as real lines in nature—ones that define the area surrounding Roanoke as "the headwaters region."

Impact + Amplify "is exploring the creative and the destructive potential of the edge between nature and culture, working with partner institutions on a common teaching garden and environmental play-scape," he says.

Cain's ideas about the value of the watershed to the region led us to ask him five questions. Here they are:

What is the "energy economy?"

The economic impact projections for a Green Economic Recovery from the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts focus entirely on energy. That is useful only as far as it goes. Such a narrow consideration may direct attention away from consideration of the full potential of a "green and ethical economy."

Eighty-five percent of Virginia land is either forested or farmed. It produces bio-fuel more valuable than the percentage of forest or agricultural production that might be consumed directly by an energy economy.

Food and timber production, tourism, health care and education are commonly counted as components of the traditional economy. Each should be recognized and developed as crucial components of our evolving notion of a potential green and ethical economy.

What are the other components?

Obviously, energy is an important element. But in a balanced and inclusive consideration, it is only one among many.

Though it has yet to receive the attention it deserves, water is a critical element of a green economy. That is especially significant for local residents because headwaters of three major river systems define our region

Guest Commentary

“ ”

Our local economy can be strengthened and made sustainable by being developed to go with the flow.

—Tom Cain

and endow it with strategic economic advantages. That gift of topography and geography should be recognized, valued, vigorously guarded, developed and enhanced.

Clean air, water and food fuel a safe and healthy, green and ethical economy more directly, and with as at least as much economic and social potential as energy, industry or commerce.

We should resolve to develop our local economy and society carefully to send solutions downstream—both physically and metaphorically. By preserving, restoring and enhancing the quality of our natural and social environment we can enhance the safety, health and well-being of local residents and of people in the watersheds of the Ohio and Mississippi Basin, Chesapeake Bay and the Outer Banks.

Will you put this in a local context?

Quite literally, our local economy can be strengthened and made sustainable by being developed to go with the flow. If we are to sustain life, we must respect the fact that the Earth is an enclosed sphere. “There is no away.”

Nature captures energy from the sun to produce food and oxygen. Natural capital services include clean water, recycling of waste carbon and mitigation of the potential for disaster from excesses of weather. All of that is true everywhere on this planet.

The headwaters region of Virginia has a special responsibility to use its natural advantages to explore its potential for safety, health and well-being. We don't yet have polluting industry or industrial agricultural production upstream. We must work with our neighbors to protect that fortunate situation and to creatively explore its latent value.

What else figures into this equation?

As we learn to preserve, restore and enhance local development by low-impact means, major elements of our existing economy (health care, tourism, education, etc.) can be improved by conscious integration within collaborative efforts organized at eco-systemic (watershed) and cultural scales. We must become whole systems thinkers.

For instance, integrative medicine has yet to have an opportunity to work within an environment and society being holistically developed to produce healthy air, water, soil and food. We could create that opportunity here.

What, practically, can we do?

In doing so, we could advance the frontier of public health and make a contribution to the crisis in health care in the most cost-effective way, keeping people healthy.

We must understand the potential value of our situation before we lose it. In assessing future development proposals, we need the context provided by feasibility studies of the potential of an inclusive and integrated green and ethical local economy and society. Consider this is a call for self-interested pro-action. □

And now, your FRONT Poll

With our inaugural issue, October 2008, and continuing through December, we posted a survey question for each of our nine industry fronts. We've collected the responses from that quarter (over 150 of them) and here they are:

"a lot" 45%

"not that much" 15%

"just don't know" 40%

a pertinent observation: "aw shucks,
my retirement just got extended a bit"

FINANCIAL POLL

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

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "FINANCIAL POLL" in subject line

most popular response:
bankruptcy (by far)

distant "seconds": intellectual property /
environmental / estate planning / litigation

comment suggesting the most opportunity: "suing ourselves;
who else remains?" (*She should teach law at Yale*)

LEGAL POLL

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

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "LEGAL POLL" in subject line

"yes" 43%

"no" 19%

"perhaps" 38%

comment suggesting a trend: "I have

moved 150 degrees from 'heck no' to maybe"

(*Hmmm... more than 90, but less than 180... so he hasn't reached 'heck yes'*)

WELLNESS POLL

Universal health care:

Yes, no, or perhaps?

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "WELLNESS POLL" in subject line

"more difficult" 13%
"less difficult" 33%
"about the same" 54%

(*Not much discussion here. Where's
all the workforce 'filling the pipeline' problems?*)

TECH / INDUSTRY POLL

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

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "TECH / INDUSTRY POLL" in subject line

"out of hand" 26%
"not so bad" 74%
most perplexing response: "not so good"
(*Meaning we need more sprawl or less?*)

DEVELOPMENT POLL

"Urban sprawl" in your town:

out of hand, or not so bad?

e-mail your answer to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "DEVELOPMENT POLL" in subject line

Results

RETAIL POLL

Will your business spend more, less, or about the same for the upcoming holiday season?
 e-mail your answer to:
poll@vbFRONT.com
 put "RETAIL POLL" in subject line

"more" 6%
 "less" 34%
"about the same" 60%

(At least Santa doesn't need more reindeer.)

RECREATION POLL

What is the single greatest sports team in the history of southwestern Virginia?
 e-mail your answer to:
poll@vbFRONT.com
 put "RECREATION POLL" in subject line

Most responses: Virginia Tech

(Most cited the football program, no doubt.)

Second place: specific rec clubs

(Surprisingly... "my son's soccer team"; "daughter's basketball"; "baseball"; etc.)

The most telling comment as to why a rec club ranked so high, perhaps:

"We have no truly significant sports heritage" (A big "ouch")

Other answers: Patrick Henry H.S. football (early 70s); Jefferson High football (1948); Blacksburg High soccer; Roanoke College basketball; Salem Avalanche; Salem High football; William Fleming basketball; Woods Brothers Racing

EDUCATION POLL

Should the State of Virginia lower tuition at public institutions by increasing taxes?
 e-mail your answer to:
poll@vbFRONT.com
 put "EDUCATION POLL" in subject line

"yes" 36%
"no" 64%

(This question elicited the most comments and elaboration of all; including the following:)

clarification: "[use] grants and low interest loans" / "Virginia has a lot of public institutions, so maybe we don't need as many"

most illustrious response: "system is broken and run by a bunch of liberals who cannot get a real job" (FRONTReaders are passionate about education)

CULTURE POLL

Ampitheatres: love 'em, hate 'em, or make little difference?
 e-mail your answer to:
poll@vbFRONT.com
 put "CULTURE POLL" in subject line

"love 'em" 31%
 "hate 'em" 13%
"little difference" 56%
comments: "risky" / "can't afford it" /

"low priority" / "[we already have] at least 8 places... (yes, he cited each one)... if someone thinks it is such a great idea, let them spend their own money on it"

Our January 2009 FRONTPoll Question:

Do you like these polls? Are you interested in the views, opinions, and positions of FRONTReaders?

e-mail "yes" / "no" / "doesn't matter" to:

poll@vbFRONT.com

put "JAN POLL" in subject line



Dan Smith

The Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce's *Business After Hours* often features unusual sets of people. In this case at the November gathering in downtown Roanoke, fierce competitors WFIR Radio (right-wing talk) and WVTF (left wing Public) chat amiably. That's WVTF's **Roger Fowler** on the left, with WFIR's **Leslie Coty** (center) and **Bob Clark**. The conversation avoided politics.



Some of those in attendance at the **VT KnowledgeWorks Showcase** in November are seated in the Gordon Ballroom of the German Club Manor for **Edwin Whitelaw's** presentation about "Meeting the need in your own backyard—entrepreneurial adventures in the local community." Whitelaw is the founder of New River Valley Unwired.

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FRONT 'N ABOUT



Dan Smith

The **City of Roanoke** and several corporate sponsors might have been a bit on the surprised side at the number of people looking for work at the late December Holiday **Career & Lifestyle Fair** at the Roanoke Civic Center, as witnessed by the line of people piling into the underground facility. Among the job seekers were **Heather Beckner** (top right), and **Steve Haynie** (above right), who talks to an Orvis representative. She says, "We've just passed our busy season but we want resumes for the future."



photos: Dan Smith

Access, a Roanoke advertising and public relations agency, has moved its offices from Grandin Village to a former automobile dealership on Campbell Avenue. The act of moving forces small business people into unaccustomed tasks. For example: owner **Todd Markham** (above) had to pick up a broom; **Terri Jones** (upper right) a national public relations award winner, dusted some cubby holes; and designer **Erica Gleiner** (right) became something of a pack mule.





Jim Shaver at expanded Goodwill: "There's something that's good for your soul in a job."

Dan Smith

Jim Shaver: Teaching people how to work >

Executive Summary:

At Goodwill Industries it's about a whole lot more than simple, repetitive skills these days. There's a whole new world of work out there.

By Jill Elswick

Jim Shaver spent a 33-year career in the news business, starting as a writer for the Floyd Press when he was 15 years old and eventually became head of news and programming for WDBJ7 in Roanoke. "I've done everything from setting lead type for newspapers to receiving satellite transmissions from all over the world," says Shaver.

But when the television station eliminated his position in 2002, Shaver found himself having to start over at a time when most would be closely examining their retirement funds.

Shaver found a job as a communications director at Virginia Tech for a couple of years,

then saw an opening at Goodwill Industries of the Valleys. The position, vice president of marketing and development, involved media relations and he was hired. "I was totally taken by the vision of where this place was going," says Shaver.

That vision includes renovating one of the buildings at Goodwill's 10-acre job site on Melrose Avenue into a satellite one-stop career center. The \$7.7 million center will create 50 jobs with an average annual salary of \$27,000 a year. It will house more than 100,000 square feet of classrooms, training facilities, workshops, and office space.

To build the center, Goodwill plans to raise \$1.3 million from the community and the rest from the government and bonds. So far, the organization has raised \$400,000.

Skills training programs at the center will focus on two fields: medical and retail. Occupations in these fields are expected to grow for years to come. The need for medical workers is rising as the population ages, while the retail industry remains robust.

"In the 21st Century, retail is not just stocking shelves and running a cash register," says Shaver. "It's information technology. It's loss prevention, communications, marketing, and human resources."

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

A series of 18 focus groups with businesses around Virginia revealed a need for "soft skills" training among workers. "From Abingdon to Winchester, almost every one of them said, 'We've got to teach people how to work.'"

"People will answer a cell phone in the middle of a job interview. They will come in wearing flip-flops and blue jeans. They have no comprehension of a clock."

Some of the training programs at the Goodwill campus will teach job skills such as treating fellow employees with dignity and respect, dressing appropriately, and dealing with customers, says Shaver.

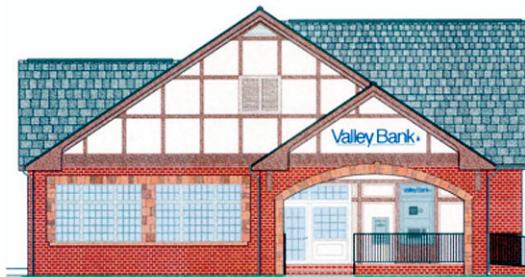
The center will also administer tests to reveal what workers are—and are not—interested in doing. Companies partnering with Goodwill will then be able to recruit workers from a pool of applicants based on aptitudes.

"There's something that's good for your soul in a job," says Shaver. "Maybe we'll be able to teach that." 

In Brief

Name:	Jim Shaver
Age:	60
Business:	Goodwill Industries of the Valleys
Location:	Roanoke
Hometown:	Copper Hill
Education:	Associate of Arts, Hiwassee College; bachelors in communication, University of Tennessee
Career Progression:	Began as a reporter for The Roanoke Times; joined WDBJ 7 Television as assignment editor in 1975 then became news director and, finally, vice president for news and programming; Virginia Tech's capitol campaign director in 2003; joined Goodwill Industries in 2005
Community Involvement:	Works with the Alzheimer's Association; local food bank; Habitat for Humanity
Philosophy:	"You have to understand people to be effective in anything you do, and that includes business."

A New Building for an Old Neighborhood



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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Wealth Management

Mary Plott and **Paul French** have been selected by Geneos Wealth Management to be members of the Geneos Ascent Club. Only 50 advisors company-wide are qualified. Their office is in Radford.

Frank Hughes has been named a financial services representative for Greystone Financial Group in Roanoke.

Banking

First Citizens Bank in Roanoke has named **Beth Ruffing** business banker.

Paul Economy has been named vice president and regional manager for Member One Federal Credit Union in Roanoke.

Laurie Hart has been named executive vice president and chief deposit officer at HomeTown Bank in Roanoke. Also promoted are **Terri Curro** to senior vice president and branch administrator and **Bill Jones** to retail credit administrator.

LEGAL FRONT

Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore Managing Partner **G. Michael Pace Jr.** recently received honors from Washington and Lee University and the City

of Salem. He was named the outstanding alumnus Honorary Order of the Coif award from the alumni, faculty and administration of Washington and Lee University. The award is periodically given to alumni whose high attainments in the profession of law and efforts reflect well on W&L Law School. In addition the Salem Educational Foundation and Alumni Association inducted Pace into the Salem Alumni Hall of Fame, citing his career achievements. He is a 1975 graduate of Andrew Lewis High School.



Pace

WELLNESS FRONT

Thomas Campbell is the new assistant director for research and operations at the Virginia Tech/Carilion Research Institute. He is also program manager for the Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science.

Associations

Dr. Thomas Eppes, a Forest-based family physician, has been elected president of the Medical Society of Virginia.

The American Heart Association has named **John Schmedtje** of the Roanoke Heart Institute a fellow.

Addiction

Jordana Anderson has been named program coordinator for the substance abuse recovery program at Avenues to Recovery Inc. in Roanoke.

Spencer's responsibilities include developing direct business-to-business sales throughout the market.



Spencer

Transportation

Robert Sutton, residency administrator for the Bedford office of VDOT, retired in January.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Architecture / Engineering

Gay & Neel Inc., an architectural and engineering firm in Christiansburg, has named **Trevor Kimzey** director of engineering.

Real Estate

Bryan Musselwhite has joined Poe & Cronk Real Estate Group in Roanoke where he will specialize in commercial and investment sales and leasing.



Kemper

Communications

U.S. Cellular has named **Jim Spencer** wireless business consultant for the Southwest Virginia and Western North Carolina areas.



Musselwhite

Have a career announcement?

Bitsy Foster of Long & Foster in Roanoke has been named to the 2009 National Association of Realtors Resort and Second Home Properties Committee.

Brenda Edmondson of Advantage Realty in Roanoke has earned her Accredited Staging Professional designation.

RETAIL FRONT

Advance Auto has named **Galen Grubb, Jr.**, vice president of Human Resources - Commercial.

RECREATION FRONT

Have news about a career development in the recreation front? Send it to news@vbFRONT.com

EDUCATION FRONT



Davis

Linda Davis, associate professor in the Administrative Support Technology Department of Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke, has received the Southern Business Education Association Postsecondary Teacher of the Year award.

Virginia Western Community College's new board of directors officers include: **Dennis Cronk**, Poe and Cronk Real Estate Group, chairman; **Lorraine Lange**, Superintendent of Roanoke County Public Schools, as vice chairwoman and **Dr. Robert Sandel**, president of VWCC, secretary. New to the board are, **Forest Jones**, retired City Manager of the City of Salem; **Larry Moore**, Franklin County High School ;and **Debbie Snead**, retired from the Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension.



Rigney Johnson

Mildred Rigney Johnson, Virginia Tech's director of undergraduate admissions, has been named to the university's board of trustees.

CULTURE FRONT

Facilities

Chris Connolly of Global Spectrum is the new manager of the Roanoke Civic Center, the first private management for the

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Roanoke-owned facility. Global Spectrum has a \$26,000 per month deal to manage the civic center. Connolly was with a facility in Ontario.

The UPS Store;
Brenda Bower, Brides House & Formals and
Tammy Givens, First Citizens Bank.



Hatchett

OTHER FRONTS



Knapp

Advertising / PR

tba PR + Advertising in Roanoke has named **Christina Knapp** interactive designer. Knapp comes to tba from Beck Media Group, where she designed Bella and helped to create Venue, an arts and entertainment magazine.

Associations

The Salem Merchants Association has elected the following officers and the Board of Directors for 2009: **Brenda Giles**, SERVPRO, president; **Robert Agee**, Agee Insurance Agency, vice president;

Jim Williamson, The Williamson Insurance Agency, treasurer. Board members are **Bob Garby** of Whitt Carpet One Home & Floor; **Steve White**,

The Roanoke Chapter of Executive Women International has elected as its 2008-2009 board of directors: president, **Wanda Hatchett**, Brown, Edwards & Co.; vice president/president elect, **Tonya Harper**, UBS Financial Services; secretary, **Libby Camper**, Hyatt Place; treasurer, **Michelle Chambers**, Martin Travel.



Baske Young

Chambers

The Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce has elected **Kathy Baske Young** of Blue Ridge Resources as its chairwoman for 2009. Other officers are: **Joe Miller**, E.J. Miller Construction; **Steve Anderson**, Integrated Textile;

Career FRONT

Kenneth Lanford, Lanford Brothers Co; **Harold McLeod,** Wachovia Bank; **Jim Lee,** JBL Consulting, all vice chairmen; **Charles Robbins,** BB&T, chairman-elect; **Lee Wilhelm,** McNeil Roofing, immediate past-chairman; and **Joyce Waugh,** Roanoke Regional Chamber of

Commerce, president and secretary. New members of the board are: **John Phillips,** Premier Transfer and Storage; **Stephen Jamison,** Appalachian Power; **Todd Foutz,** Neathawk Dubuque & Packett; **Heman Marshall,** Woods Rogers PLC; **Dan Motley,** Norfolk Southern Corp.; **Watts Steger,**

Bank of Botetourt; **Beth Doughty,** Roanoke Regional Partnership; **Bill Carder,** Downtown Roanoke, Inc.; and **Wayne Flippen,** John C. Nordt Co.

Floyd County Chamber of Commerce officers for 2009 are: **John McEnhill,** executive director of the Jacksonville

Center; **Don Johnson** of B. Don Johnson Communication, second vice president; **Janice Ketchum** of Dreaming Creek Timber Frame Homes, first vice president; **Linda Petrie** of Floyd County School Board, treasurer; and **Liz Gathly** of Faith Mountain Farm secretary.

Robers moves to FRONT >



Robers

When **Dick Robers** retired from Total Action Against Poverty at the end of December, he left a huge void at one of the best run, most innovative non-profits in Virginia. In his six short years at TAP, Robers' use of his business background, creativity and inside wonkish knowledge of how business works best has turned this solid, but sleepy charity into a dynamic economic workhorse.

Robers steps into yet another new career, joining Valley Business FRONT as a senior advertising executive. It will be his first foray into sales. "Dick's been selling something all his working life, mostly himself, and he does it very, very well," says FRONT Publisher Tom Field. "We are delighted to have him as part of our growing team."

experience (CEO of Maid Bess Corp.) TAP developed into a major real estate holder, among many other things. Robers has always been an innovator; the "Smart Road" at Virginia Tech was his idea, for example. Robers left Maid Bess, a Salem uniform manufacturer where he was CEO, to join TAP.

With Robers bringing practical business

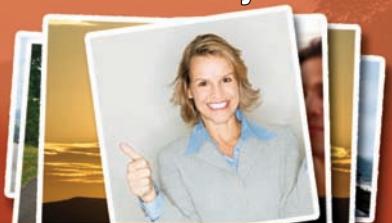
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Roanoker heads Davis H. Elliot >



Haskins

David Haskins has been named president and CEO of the Davis H. Elliot Company. Davis H. Elliot Company, founded in Roanoke in 1946, is an electrical contractor specializing in transmission and distribution line construction and maintenance, both overhead and underground and in substation construction.

Roanoke native Haskins has worked for Davis H. Elliot since he was a student in the 1980s. He graduated from VMI in 1983 and joined Shely Construction Company, an affiliate of Elliot located in Lexington, Ky. Haskins was vice president when Shely was merged into the Davis H. Elliot Company in 1996.

He most recently was VP and Chief Operating Officer.

Bob Kimmel, who has served as President and CEO of Elliot since Jan., 1997, will continue to serve on the Company's Board of Directors.

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FRONT Notes

The economy strikes hard

Layoffs, closings and threatened closings were the rule this Christmas/New Year's season in our section of Virginia. It was an almost constant drumbeat of distressing news in employment and failed businesses. Here's some of what happened:

Roanoke-based **Luna Innovations**, one of the state's more dynamic technology-based businesses, has had to lay off about two score employees. Luna makes health care, communications, energy and defense products. Luna has facilities in Roanoke, Blacksburg, Charlottesville, Hampton and Danville and has received a number of major business awards, including Best Technology Company 2008 from FRONT.

Roanoke **Ukrop's**, which is only a year and a half old, is looking at the possibility of closing if things don't approve soon. The much anticipated, Richmond-based supermarket, has been the victim of the economy, heavy competition from Kroger and others and a shopping center that can't seem to be finished. It has faced several delays.

Radford's **Internet Foundry** plans to lay off 140 people by the end of January

due to drooping sales because of the automobile industry's problems. The Roanoke and New River Valleys have a number of vendors to automobile manufacturers.

International Paper's **Shorewood Packaging** in Roanoke announced plans to lay off 45 employees by mid-January. Shorewood plans to move work to other facilities. It creates sheet paper for packaging products.

Blacksburg's **Federal-Mogul**, which supplies parts and components for transportation and industrial equipment, has laid off an additional 25 people, coming on top of 20 layoffs in November. That leaves 300 employees. The reason given was a receding market for powertrain sealing and bearings products.

Frank Chervan, which makes furniture frames in Bedford and has been one of the county's most stable and progressive employers for years, plans to lay off 90 of its 210 employees, closing all its Bedford operations. The company has a Roanoke facility that could absorb some of the jobs. Among the influences: health care costs.

Acument Global Technologies in Wytheville plans to close that facility by the

end of 2009, erasing 162 jobs.

Novozymes

Biologicals in Roanoke County has laid off 13 employees, reducing its level of workers to 170. Novozymes makes enzyme-based products for agriculture, consumers and industry and is in the midst of a restructuring. Company officials say Novozymes is actually growing and plans to add three people in human resources.

Fralin & Waldron of Roanoke County laid off 11 workers in the late fall-early winter period because of the housing slowdown. F&W is a developer.

The national retail chain **Steve & Barry's**, which has fallen upon hard times of late, plans to close the Tanglewood Mall store and 172 others. There was a closing of 97 Steve & Barry's in July following the filing of Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The stores must be closed by Jan. 9.

Volvo in Dublin was to have cut production for three weeks in January, February and March in order to avoid layoffs. The company has 1,400 employees at the Dublin facility.

The Elliston mill for **Southland Log Homes** has closed and laid off its five jobs. Company officials say the closing is temporary and that they anticipate a

re-opening of the mill when the business climate improves. Southland is based in Irmo, S.C.

Cycle Systems has laid off 35 people in its eight locations, nine of them at the home base in Roanoke. Decreased demand for metal from automobile makers was cited as a problem. Officials of the company say it is the first time in 92 years there has been a layoff of this magnitude. The company "lost 60 percent of the value of our commodities" in two months, according to reports.

Glassner Jewelers has closed or will soon close its stores in Roanoke County, Staunton and Charlottesville, citing a plunge in sales of 30 percent. Glassner has been in Roanoke County for 39 years.

The **Virginia Tech Transportation Institute**, citing an effort to ensure "stability by cutting costs," has trimmed 16 full-time workers and four part-timers from its staff. The institute has 250 workers.

High Country Concrete in Roanoke has cut its workforce by six workers (out of 84) and is looking at further cuts in the near future, according to published reports. "It's pretty bad out there," owner Bobby Stewart is quoted as saying.

An infusion of cash

Charlottesville-based **StellarOne**, which has offices in this region is in line to receive a \$30 million investment from the U.S. Treasury under the Capital Purchase Program, the stimulus plan.

engineering is from Virginia Tech. His leading staff members include Lisa Beckstrom, a certified wildlife biologist and ecologist and Jason Murphy, a licensed geologist.

Bought by employees

Valley Bank in Roanoke has announced it has received preliminary approval for a \$16 million investment from the fund.

Engineering office opens



S&ME Inc., an engineering and environmental firm (above: S&ME Manager Gary Bruce with colleagues Lisa Beckstrom and Jason Murphy) with 800 employees and 23 locations, has opened a new office in Roanoke. The company has completed numerous projects in the region, operating from its branches in Richmond, Greensboro, North Carolina and the Tri-Cities area of Tennessee. Roanoke native Gary Bruce is the branch manager. Bruce has 14 years in geotechnical and construction materials engineering and testing and is a registered professional engineer in Virginia and Tennessee. His Bachelor of Science degree in civil

Simon & Associates, Inc., an environmental consulting firm in Blacksburg, is now employee owned. The transition to an employee-owned company began in 2001. The company was founded by John J. and Cheryl A. Simon in 1986 and provides full-service soil and environmental consulting services to commercial, residential, and municipal clients throughout the mid-Atlantic region.

Employees of Simon & Associates, Inc. purchased a majority of company stock through an ESOP recently.

Gets new investment

Koofers, a company started at Virginia Tech and has since moved to Reston, has received a \$500,000 investment from New Atlantic Ventures, which has offices in three states.

Safe place to work

Three **Roanoke Cement Company** sites have achieved 11 years without a lost time accident and the Portland Cement Association has recently recognized RCC with a certificate commemorating the

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event. "This is a special milestone in that for 11 years, no employee of these three terminals was injured or had to miss work," says Ronnie Collins of Roanoke Cement.

Local bypass

Reports indicate that **Roanoke City Schools** did not solicit bids for local school roof projects recently (using cooperative procurement in concert with other governments) and that the \$2.3 million price may have been unnecessarily high. It also shut out local companies from the process, something that does not sit well with them. Tremco of Ohio repaired three of the roofs, using local labor.

Novozymes guilty

Novozymes Biologicals in Salem has been fined \$275,000 for violations of the Clean Water Act in 2004 and 2005. The company has already spent \$275,000 on remediation and has agreed to spend another \$275,000. President Ted Melnick, one of the prime movers on the area's greenway, says the

company will make amends and "I can't tell you how much I regret the incident took place."

Research



Carilion Clinic, which has come under criticism on a variety of issues in recent months, has released a report on its benefits to the communities it serves, and one of its revelations is that Carilion provides \$27.8 million more in benefits than it received in tax exemptions in 2007.

Products launched

VT KnowledgeWorks of Blacksburg has announced one of its member companies, **NanoSafe Inc.**, has launched its Nanosafe Tested Program and companion nano-technology product registry, the Nanotech Register. NanoSafe's program provides the expert testing necessary to validate the containment of nanoparticles.

FRONT Notes

High tech investment	Money to spare	Incubation award	RGC profits increase
Valhalla Partners and Virginia's Center for Innovative Technologies (CIT) GAP Funds have invested in MiserWare Inc. , a Blacksburg software company based on power-saving technologies for computing devices. These were invented by Kirk Cameron, associate professor of computer science in the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech.	While many companies and individuals are pulling in their donation arms, Norfolk Southern is apparently extending its. At a talk in Roanoke in December, Chairman Wick Moorman hinted that the company might be willing to cough up \$1 million for the Virginia Museum of Transportation in downtown Roanoke. The \$1 million would come in the form of a challenge with the community having to raise an equal amount. Mayor David Bowers immediately was reported as saying he'd favor looking into the city giving \$500,000.	TORC Technologies , a Virginia Tech spin-off company and a VT KnowledgeWorks member, has been presented the Donna Noble Incubator Client Award for 2008 by the Virginia Business Incubation Association. TORC Technologies is a robotics engineering and product development company, focused on unmanned and autonomous systems, with a mission to commercialize the various technologies into products that enable customers to use robotics-based solutions.	RGC Resources , parent of Roanoke Gas, saw its profits rise 10.5 percent in 2008, but there was a loss in the fourth quarter. Earnings improved from \$3.8 million to \$4.2 million (\$1.91 per share), but there was a \$78,000 loss in the fourth quarter.
<i>New partnership</i>		<i>It's a Star worksite</i>	<i>Fink's online</i>
Attaain Inc. in Blacksburg has formed a new partnership with 88owls.com to provide business and market intelligence for consultants using 88owls.com service. That service matches experienced consultants with the companies that seek them. AttaainCI is a web-based solution for competitive intelligence and market intelligence research and tracking. 88owls.com provides a web-based service allowing businesses and recruiters search for experienced.	Dealership land sale Dave Sarmadi Mitsubishi in Salem is planning to sell the land under its dealership and open a lot on Franklin Road in Roanoke, according to reports. Owner Dave Sarmadi says the heavy traffic at the Salem site and proximity to Roanoke buyers played a part in the decision.	The Virginia Department of Labor and Industry and Roanoke County have recognized Integrity Windows & Doors' Roanoke Facility as a Star Worksite under Virginia's Occupational Safety and Health (VOSH) Voluntary Protection Program (VPP), the program's highest level of recognition.	Roanoke-based Fink's Jewelers has gone online at finks.com with a virtual showcase to compare pieces, gift card registration, gift certificates and free shipping. Finks was founded in 1930 by Nathan Fink.
			<i>Available on DVD</i>
			The popular television show " Cookin' Cheap ," which had a 27-year run locally, is being made available by host Larry Bly, an advertising executive, on DVD. The first DVD can be purchased at the Web site www.cookincheap.net . The first DVD features four full shows and a blooper section.



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Chamber of Commerce
Business After Hours**
January 15
5:30 - 7:30pm
Courtyard Marriott
Blacksburg
Contact: Allison Long at
along@montgomerycc.org

**Pulaski County
Chamber of Commerce
Annual Meeting &
Awards Banquet**
January 15
6:00pm
Baker's Best
Fairlawn
Contact: 540-674-1991

**Rotary Club of the
Roanoke Valley**
Tuesdays / 8:00am
Hidden Valley Country Club
Contact: Bob McAdam
540-776-2583

Kiwanis Club of Roanoke
Wednesdays / 12:30-1:130pm
Schaal's Metamorphosis
Contact: 540-344-1766

**Cosmopolitan Club
of Roanoke**
Wednesdays / 12:15-1:15pm
Taaza
Contact: 540-772-2778

Real Estate Career Seminars
Tuesdays / 7:00pm
Moneta
Contact: 540-721-2560

**American Business Women's
Luncheon Meeting**
Wednesday, January 21
11:30am-1:00pm
Awful Arthur's Blacksburg
\$11 / all are welcome to attend
RSVP: 540-443-9832

Roanoke Toastmasters
2nd and 4th Thursdays / 7:00pm
540-342-3161

Valley Easy Speakers
1st and 3rd Thursdays / 7:00pm
540-389-3707

Blue Hills Toastmasters
1st and 3rd Fridays / Noon
540-983-9260

Talk of the Town
1st and 3rd Fridays / 7:30am
540-562-4276

Franklin County Toastmasters
Every Thursday / Noon
540-484-5537

Christiansburg Toastmasters
1st and 3rd Mondays / 7:30pm
540-231-6771

Blacksburg Toastmasters
1st and 3rd Thursdays / 7:30pm
540-231-6771

Virginia Tech Toastmasters
Every other Tuesday / 7:30pm
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