

So...
What's in
your future?
Hmmm...

Valley Business FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

\$3 • Vol I: ISSUE 8 • MAY 09

PREDICTIONS

a look into the region's
economic crystal ball

**Lewis-Gale's
100 Years**

MALS at Night

Key Man Insurance

Lisa's Incubator

**Melissa's New
'Station'**

and

**King of the
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Dr. Larry Lynch
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WELCOME to the FRONT

It's always fascinating to watch smart people react to adversity. Our economy equals adversity to most of us and we'll point to three people we work closely with who are confronting the reality of the money crunch by thumbing their collective nose.

Take the cases of Valley Business FRONT freelance writers Tim Jackson in Radford, Linda Nardin at Smith Mountain Lake and Rod Belcher in Roanoke. Each has taken a passion and turned it into a business.

Tim's New River Voice, an online newspaper that was once printed on paper, has become a leading voice in its area, especially with the marvelous recent reporting on The Roanoke Times' staff difficulties (something The Times didn't cover) and its in-depth coverage of the Radford shooter. Tim's a fine reporter and he has found his literal voice with this new-media publication. Tim's immediate goal is to create the region's first non-profit "newspaper," albeit an online version. It's innovative, entrepreneurial and at the front edge, so to speak.

Linda, who has spent most of her life at the upper end of corporate officialdom and most recently promoted the Smith Mountain Lake Chamber of Commerce, has dumped all that to form Blue Sky Public Relations, a PR firm in a locality that needs one. Linda says that for the first time in ages, she's invigorated and free.

Rod has struggled to make ends meet in the freelance writing market for years and now things are urgent: he's a doting single dad of two smart, lively kids and his new Cosmic Castle (see our Culture section for the story on page 50) is a venture close to his heart and to his wallet.

Three smart people who don't know "no." Entrepreneurs? Yep. Successful? In every sense.



Tom Field



Dan Smith



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Valley Business FRONT

DEPARTMENTS

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**An Incubator for
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**An Accessible
Workspace**

Cover photograph of Dr. Larry A. Lynch by
Greg Vaughn Photography

Valley Business FRONT

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Rod Belcher



Anne Giles Clelland



Gene Marrano



Deborah Nason



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen

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."

CONTRIBUTORS



Jay Conley



Jane Dalier



Donna Dilley



Tom Field



Rob Johnson



David Perry



Courtney Phillips



Dick Robers



Leigh Ann Roman



Dan Smith



Greg Vaughn

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 75.

2008 / 09 Members

- Nancy Agee** Carilion
- Laura Bradford** ClaireV
- Warner Dalhouse** retired banker, community activist
- Cory Donovan** NewVa Corridor Technology Council
- Nanci Hardwick** Schultz-Creehan
- Ed Hall** Hall Associates
- George Kegley** retired journalist, community activist
- Terri Jones** Access PR
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- Jay Turner** J.M. Turner Construction
- Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners
- John Williamson** RGC Resources

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

“her 73-year-old mother can still be found cleaning properties...”

— Page 49



Bob Fetzer

Dan Smith

PREDICTIONS

What We See in Our Region's Future

A look into the region's economic crystal ball >

Executive Summary:
We're getting dose after dose of national news about what to expect from the economy. Here's what to look for in our region.

By Rob Johnson

Asking business and economic leaders to look into their crystal balls these days usually elicits visions similar to the non-committal ones from the children's toy, the Magic 8-Ball.

The future of this region's fortunes appears little clearer to the experts than it often does in the dark liquid that fills Mattel's venerable black sphere and floats responses to a window when queried with a shake.

The Magic 8-Ball offers 20 possible answers to yes-or-no questions. After a few questions, the responses become familiar. They include: "Reply hazy, try again," and "Cannot predict now."

Uncertainty about when the recession will turn around in the Roanoke and New River Valleys seems deeper among seers here than it does within the granite and marble-laden institutions of Washington, D.C., where Federal Reserve Board Chairman Ben Bernanke forecast in mid-March that an economic turnaround will probably arrive in the fourth quarter of 2009.

Categorized here by the Magic 8-Ball's stock answers that might well sum up their outlooks are comments taken from interviews with of a cross-section of the region's business and academic figures.

SHALL KNOW VISIONS OF THE FUTURE





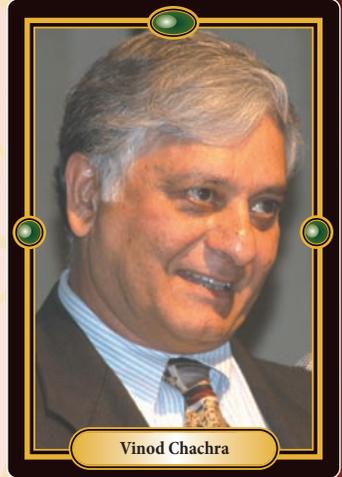
What they're saying

Compiled by Dan Smith and Tom Field



"The sales and delivery cycles in library automation are long—2 to 18 months ... and are in the process of delivering orders previously received and are doing rather well ... we are hiring ... there is a slowdown in the pipeline and if this downturn lasts long, we might see a negative impact ... towards the end of 2009."

Vinod Chachra
President/CEO, VTLS Inc.
Blacksburg



Vinod Chachra

"The region has three different types of businesses [that can be characterized thusly]:

"Declining employment over time: Utilities, railroads and banks ... are down slightly ... due to technological advances, reduced business activity, etc.

"Increasing but variable employment: Retail and high tech start-ups are now down a lot.

"Stable or increasing slowly: State government, education, health care represent a higher percentage of economic activity [here than elsewhere]. They will be down slightly ... an economic shock absorber of the region."

Richard E. Sorensen
Dean, Pamplin College of Business
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg



Richard Sorensen

"Business recruitment activities at the Roanoke Regional Partnership are stable. We still handle about the same number of inquires and projects as last year at this time. We're seeing some interest related to stimulus funds. Decisions are more drawn out due to global uncertainties. The process is slower. But there is activity out there."

Beth Doughty
Regional Partnership
Roanoke



Beth Doughty



We're on the front lines of the building industry, you might say. If the contractors aren't being awarded contracts, they're not ordering toilets.

—Richard Handy, Handy Johns

Outlook Not So Good

Bob Fetzer, founder and president of Building Specialists in Roanoke, a veteran of high-end residential and commercial design and construction, doesn't foresee the recession ending before 2011, maybe even 2012.

"It's going to take some time for recovery," says Fetzer, who has seen some clients table planned new homes or major expansions because the value of their stock portfolios has dropped dramatically. Some from Northern Virginia looking at a Smith Mountain Lake house, find themselves stuck in a housing market that won't fund their next move.

So for the foreseeable future, Fetzer is resigned to a decidedly lower-end staple: "A lot of door replacements and window improvements to conserve energy."

"My Reply Is No"

No recovery is in sight through 2010, says Richard Handy, manager of the Martinsville-based company that rents Handy John portable toilets to builders. Demand for Handy Johns has fallen sharply, and the construction-site bathrooms aren't being reserved for this summer in a volume that Handy finds encouraging.

"We're on the front lines of the building industry, you might say," Handy says. "If the contractors aren't being awarded contracts, they're not ordering toilets."

Handy has 12 full-time workers and during the summer he usually hires three seasonal employees, but this year he says he doesn't expect to hire any additional workers.

In another indicator of his lack of confidence in the business climate this year—and beyond: Handy has emptied the three storage lots he usually maintains in Roanoke, Christiansburg and Danville to be ready for quick delivery in those areas. He has pulled back to just one lot at the company's base in Martinsville.

Outlook Good

Relatively cheerful, from a moving company executive's perspective, is John Phillips, president of Premier Transfer and Storage in Salem and Christiansburg. "We're fairly



John Phillips

Dan Smith

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COVER STORY

"Hopefully, we will see some improvement in confidence in the national market which will lead to improved confidence in the Roanoke Valley. This will lead people to begin spending again and investing in their homes and businesses."

Harold McLeod
Wachovia Banks
Roanoke



"Our firm is busy right now with clients who want to take advantage of the market conditions. It's a great time to undertake a building project; owners can get a lot of bang for their bucks. Costs for materials and labor are running 5 percent to 15 percent less than a few years ago, depending on the size of the project. Smaller projects are seeing higher savings. Interest rates are about as low as I've ever seen them. We have one client who is actually expanding the scope of his project due to the reduced construction costs and low interest rates—he can afford a larger building today than a year ago."

Richard Rife
Rife + Wood Architects
Roanoke



"We are seeing growth in the economy and in our business in terms of R&D, product development and the economic space that new technologies create."

Nanci Hardwick
Shertz-Creehan Holdings
Blacksburg

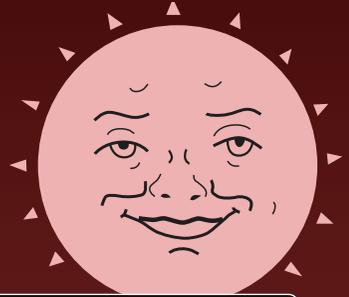


"[Job seekers] are beginning to realize they must look at continuing education, business opportunities and positions 'beneath' them to weather the storm. All of which are good for the long term. Job seekers not willing to adapt to the new paradigm shift of personal career management will continue to face fierce competition from more job seekers for fewer positions.

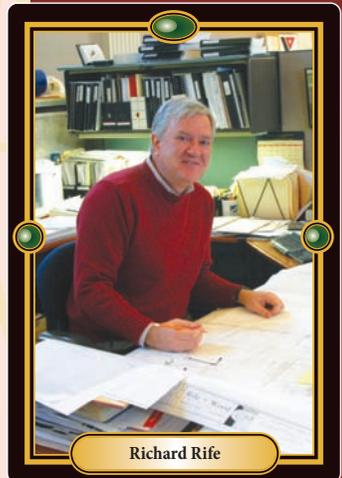
"Additionally, multiple part-time or consulting jobs from different employers will be a strategy used to replace the traditional exclusive arrangement with one employer.

"As employer pensions and health care are being eliminated, the exclusive deal of working for one employer in exchange for these items will be null and void. The job seeker must be proactive in making/creating his job/career."

Stuart Mease
Special Projects Coordinator
City of Roanoke



Harold McLeod



Richard Rife



Stuart Mease



Nick Conte

Dan Smith

Critics of universal health care such as Kassens fear that such a benefit could be a disincentive to employers to add and retain workers.

Ironically, if she's right, federally required health insurance could offset the positive impact on the Roanoke area's

optimistic about the spring market and feel it's showing some signs of picking up," says Phillips.

"We hope the economy will loosen up in the third and fourth quarters—and the worst is behind us," he says.

Although his business in January and February was sharply down from year-ago levels, Phillips says he has seen an uptick since then. "Corporate relocations have been pretty steady, human resources hiring plans seem steady. There's tempered optimism."

Premier is hiring seasonal drivers and packers that will raise its payroll to about 45, up 50 percent. That's a sign of improving outlook, but it's far below the level of 60 workers Phillips had in 2006.

He expects this year's economic bump will be modest. "I think two percent growth in 2009 would be great."

Ask Again Later

Although unemployment rates in our area have trailed the national level so far, the economic outlook here may depend on what Congress decides about various proposals to create a universal health-care system, says Dr. Alice Kassens, a Roanoke College economist.

"There's a tremendous amount of uncertainty. If the Obama administration creates mandatory health insurance" for which the financial burden falls even partly on employers, Kassens predicts, "I think that's going to drive unemployment through the roof."

major employer, Carilion Clinic, which has about 10,000 workers. "So far the health care industry has been a stabilizing factor in our economy. I recently saw newspaper ads for 36 openings for registered nurses," says Kassens.

"People have to have medical care, no matter what the economy is," she adds. But if companies are required to pay more, she says, the Roanoke/NRV region won't be immune from a job-amputating response.

Rapid Fire Responses

The new owners of Magic 8-Balls quickly find that the staple answers become redundant. So they ask with less anticipation, shake the orb less thoroughly and read the replies with waning enthusiasm. Many answers given by those interviewed for this story were similar, short and oh-so-self deprecating.

The real experts, those living close to the crisis, don't want to falsely raise hopes. They're well aware that virtually no one saw this downturn coming, so it's almost impossible to forecast where its going.

- The region could see improved demand for goods and services in the fourth quarter of 2009, but that doesn't necessarily mean a return to the upbeat economy, says Nick Conte, chairman of the Woods Rogers law firm and specialist in advising business.

While some of his clients are making a few hires and looking or strategy to increase shares of their respective

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COVER STORY

"Things in our region are going to get worse before they get better ... but more than ever, we need to have a relentless focus attracting and retaining young professionals in our communities. The world is changing. Jobs are changing. And faster than ever. Our region is dependent on old economy companies. These companies are great but we need more modern businesses to help us survive this recession and thrive in future years."

Pat Matthews
President, Mailtrust
Blacksburg



"We probably won't know until the first quarter of 2010 if we will see any significant increase in commercial property vacancies. We are fortunate to not have a large inventory of vacant space like we have had in some of the past recessions."

Ed Hall
President Hall & Associates
Roanoke



"We are being cautious on hiring and watching our cash position, but at the same time looking for opportunities ... as they become available. We have been through two previous recessions since I started the company in 1986, and I feel this one will be worse than the previous three."

Steve Critchfield
Chairman/Founder
Tele-Works Inc,
Blacksburg



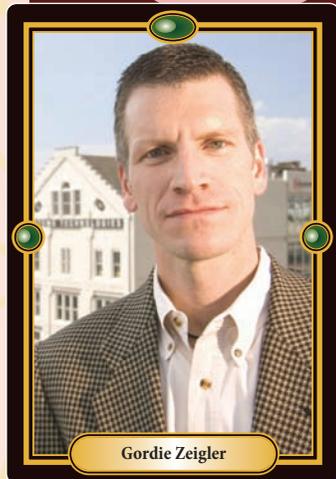
"SyCom's mix [posted] growth in 2008 [and] many of our customers in the engineering industry are reporting that business activity has 'picked up noticeably' in the last 60 days. Given the role they play early in the construction process, we see encouraging news of recovery in the next 9-12 months."

Gordie Zeigler
Sycom Technologies
Roanoke



"The Roanoke/NRV Regions did not experience the same inflationary growth in real estate values as the national economy has seen during the booming market, and likewise has not seen the same declines in values as other parts of the U.S. ... I am hopeful that our region's recovery will be ahead of the national economy."

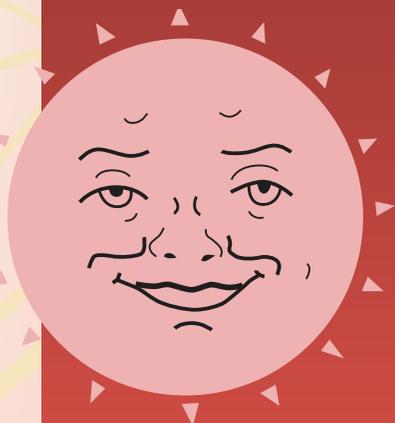
Barry Henderson
SunTrust Bank
Roanoke



Gordie Zeigler



Barry Henderson





Mike Pendleton

Dan Smith

markets, a standard tactic in past recessions, this time his clients' goals in emerging from recession are more modest. "Companies typically expand into the (down) cycle," Conte says. "I think the difference this time is they're not just throwing money at it."

- Aric Bopp, director of the New River Economic Development Partnership, has low expectations in the short term. "I think 2009 is going to be an incredibly challenging year. I think if we can hold our own, it would be a very successful year."
- Mike Pendleton, a financial advisor at the Edward Jones investment firm in Roanoke, says he tends to "agree with economists" around the nation who are on record saying "the recession

will last through the year and recovery will start sometime in 2010."

- "No one has any ability to predict either the occurrence of a recession or the timing of a recovery," says R.J. Kirk, the Radford-based venture capitalist who attained billionaire status in pharmaceuticals. "I can assure your readers that anyone who has a view on such things has at least a 50 percent chance of being wrong."

To be sure, the built-in sound bites of the Magic 8-Ball soon go stale. And the curio is often retired to a playroom shelf or toy box, where it may gather dust for years—until rediscovered by someone to whom the answers seem as fresh as their questions. 

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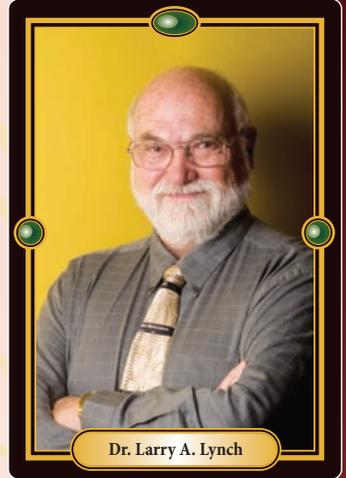
"The economy will most likely remain in recession until late this year or early next next year. The Federal Reserve and President Obama's economic advisers seem to have the tools in place to initiate the turnaround. I expect the stock market to remain volatile through the summer. However, since the market usually leads us out of recession by three to four months, we should find great buying opportunities between August and October."

Dr. Larry A. Lynch (FRONTcover model)
Professor & Chairman
Business Administration & Economics
Roanoke College



"The next two years are going to be tough. After that we're going to be ok. People in America have learned to live beyond our means. If we just go back to the basics, everything's going to be ok."

Madam Christine
Psychic Readings by Christine
Roanoke



Dr. Larry A. Lynch

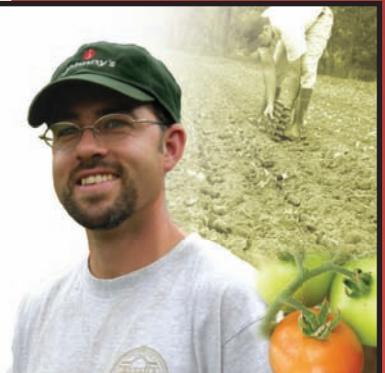


Madam Christine

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Getting the most from mixing >

In this age of instant electronic communications, it's important to remember that building relationships is a key factor for business success. Building relationships takes time and effort and is accomplished best with face to face interactions. One easy way to build relationships is to learn strategies for socializing at business and social functions.

Some basic guidelines to follow when socializing, whether at a business or social function, are outlined below:

Practice a self-introduction. At a social function, your occupation may not be as important as how you know the host. At a business function, highlight your name and what you do with enthusiasm.

Attend with a positive attitude. It's difficult to fake positive facial expressions when you are in a negative mood. One of the reasons to go out and meet new people is to have fun and make friends.

Practice your handshake. A good handshake shouldn't be too hard or too soft. Avoid placing one hand on top of another person's hand when greeting. Learn to manage your glass at a reception with your left hand or a napkin so your right hand doesn't get too clammy for greeting.

Carry your business cards. Be sure that your name, company name and phone number are readable. Select a font that is large enough so that Baby Boomers don't need a magnifying glass to read it. Remember to bring enough cards to the event and don't leave home without enough cards, which should be given out discriminately after a conversation in which rapport has been established.

Wear your name-tag on your right side. If you are asked to fill out your own nametag, use some creativity in describing your position or speciality under your name. It will help those you meet remember you.

Make eye contact and smile. You'll make a negative impression if your eyes are constantly darting around the room when you're speaking with an individual. "It's nice to meet you," seems phony when it's not spoken with a smile. 📺

Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

Executive Summary:

You can make the most of these spring and summer business mixers by following a few rules.

Contacts: Personal vs. business >

Dear Anne: *At business networking events, I met a person several times. We even talked about our LinkedIn connections. But when I e-mailed him a LinkedIn invitation, he didn't accept it. I've seen him since and neither of us spoke of it. I now find him very annoying. Who does he think he is?*

Dear Annoyed: As we increase our networks of people—beyond the hundred or so friends, family members, mentors, and close colleagues we know well—to those we know marginally, or not at all, the contact-to-conversion ratio works against us. If for every 10 invitations, we get one rejection, for every 100 invitations, we'll get 10 rejections. It's not personal.

Yet, it feels personal and begs a deeper question: Am I who I'm linked to? Is my value measured by the number and status of my contacts?

In business, the answer pretty much is "yes." "It's who you know" and word-of-mouth referrals aren't the grease of commerce, they're the machinery. Here, the contact-to-conversion ratio works for us. The greater our number of contacts, the greater our conversion-to-sales ratio. That said, is our value as humans determined by our contacts? That's a "no."

Getting a Grip: Who does he think he is? Someone who doesn't see his path linking to yours.

The only company we can fully count on to value us is our own. We continue to work on self-regard all our lives, but the alternative—other-regard or LinkedIn-regard—leaves us not only annoyed, but vulnerably dependent on the ultimately unknowable and uncontrollable reasons and whims of others.

Powered by self-acceptance and self-regard, we're free to continue on our paths, whether others choose to share them—or link to them—or not. 



Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:

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Liberty University fashion
Illustrator Brooke Kersey

Business Dress

What HR is looking for in dress >

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Whether you're interviewing for a job in banking or technology, there are some basics in attire.

If you are looking for work, virtually everyone offers advice on preparing for the job interview, often giving conflicting opinions on acceptable dress and appearance. Ultimately, the opinion that matters most is that of the human resources professional who does the interviewing and hiring.

We asked some HR professionals what they look for—and object to—in a candidate's appearance. Not surprisingly, they all seek candidates who are neat, clean and well groomed. Candidates should dress appropriately for the position they're seeking in clean, well-pressed attire. Clothing style should be current, but not flamboyant or revealing. Avoid visible tattoos and piercings, stained clothing and unkempt hair.

Brucie Boggs, senior VP of HR for Carilion Clinic, is responsible for filling a variety of positions for the healthcare provider, from medical professionals to IT, clerical to environmental services. She says that while some employees wear business suits to the interview, others can wear khakis, a button-down shirt and tie. "For environmental services jobs, we expect at least nice jeans and a polo shirt. Legitimate job differences exist and, for inclusiveness, Carilion is understanding about wardrobe issues," Boggs says.

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Exceeding the Expected



The economy has increased job competition and “over the last two years we have seen many more people dressing up for interviews,” says Rhonda Young, director of HR at Carilion.

At Hometown Bank, HR Director Ann Phipps says she expects conservative attire from jobseekers; business suits or business casual attire is the norm. Jeans, capris, sneakers and flip-flops are never acceptable. She suggests, “Invest in 2 or 3 good suits or nice outfits. Keep them cleaned and pressed, and change your accessories to create many outfits. It doesn’t have to be expensive.”

Marisa Keegan at Mailtrust in Blacksburg offers casual attire as an employment perk at the business e-mail provider. Employees can wear jeans, t-shirts and sneakers to work because “we see dress clothing as having the potential to restrict creativity.”

Keegan cautions, “Get one really nice, put-together suit and be ready for any opportunities to interview. Make sure it is comfortable. If all you think about is how uncomfortable your tie is, you won’t get your point across.”

Keegan asserts, “You want to put your best foot forward and dress up for an interview.” We couldn’t agree more. 



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John Williamson, CEO

Dan Smith

RGC Resources >

Compiled by Deborah Nason

Overview:

RGC Resources is a Roanoke-based energy services company primarily engaged in the regulated sale and distribution of natural gas to approximately 56,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers in Roanoke and the surrounding areas through its Roanoke Gas Company ("Roanoke Gas") subsidiary. Roanoke Gas holds the only franchise to distribute natural gas in its Virginia service areas, effective through Jan. 1, 2016.

Excerpted from the company's annual report.

Industry Background

Local distribution companies [such as Roanoke Gas] buy gas directly from producers or gas marketers and distribute it to local customers generally classified as residential, commercial, or industrial. The "penetration" of a local distributor is the percentage of homes in its territory that use natural gas. Large industrial users and electricity generators often bypass the local distributor and deal directly with pipeline companies and marketers. Gas is supplied to residential and small commercial users on a "firm" basis, and to large commercial and industrial users on a "firm" or "interruptible" basis, with different price structures.

[Source: hoovers.com]

There are about 1,200 natural gas distribution companies in the U.S., with ownership of over 1.2 million miles of distribution pipe. While many of these companies maintain monopoly status over their distribution region, many states are in the process of offering consumer choice options with respect to their natural gas distribution.

[Source: naturalgas.org]

In 2006, 257 firms classified themselves as investor-owned, 931 as municipals, 104 as privately-owned, and 15 as cooperatives.

[Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Dept. of Energy.]

Executive Compensation

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Mr. John Williamson III	Chairman, CEO	\$298.6K
Mr. Howard T. Lyon	CFO	\$127.1K
Mr. John S. D'Orazio	COO, Roanoke Gas Company	\$140.5K
Mr. Dale P. Lee	Vice President and Secretary	\$105.2K
Ms. Jane N. O'Keeffe	Vice President of Human Resources	\$105.9K

Board of Directors

<u>Name</u>	<u>Primary Company</u>	<u>Age</u>
Nancy H. Agee	Carilion Clinic	57
Abney S. Boxley, III	Boxley Materials Co.	51
Frank T. Ellett	Virginia Truck Center, Inc.	71
Maryellen F. Goodlatte	Glenn Feldmann Darby & Goodlatte	57
J. Allen Layman	Private Investor	57
George W. Logan	Valley Financial Corp. Pine Street Partners University of Virginia	64
S. Frank Smith	Alpha Coal Sales Co., LLC	61
Raymond D. Smoot, Jr.	Virginia Tech Foundation, Inc.	62
John B. Williamson, III	RGC Resources, Inc.	54

Institutional Stock Ownership

Institutional ownership of RGC at the end of [February 2008] stood at 294,071 shares or 13.28% of shares outstanding. This is in-line with the Gas Distributors industry norm.

[Source:investing.businessweek.com]

Top Non-institutional Stockholders

<u>Name</u>	<u>Shares held</u>
John B. Williamson, III (executive)	27,820
George W. Logan (director)	23,514
Frank T. Ellett (director)	18,117
J. Allen Layman (director)	14,723
S. Frank Smith (director)	13,112

Sources

[rgcreources.com] / [investing.businessweek.com]
[finance.aol.com] / [finance.yahoo.com]
[hoovers.com] / [naturalgas.org] / [eia.doe.gov]

Note

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



William Morrissett

Dan Smith

The value of key man insurance >

Executive Summary:

Selling off these policies is a quick, easy way to generate cash for business and it is increasingly popular.

Roanoke native William Morrissett is an Associate Advisor and licensed life settlement broker for Virginia Life Settlements in Roanoke County. VLS has been working closely with institutional partners for the past four years to settle life insurance policies in the region.

Morrissett received a B.S. in Finance from the University of Tennessee and is preparing for the first level of the Charter Financial Analyst program.

We asked him to answer five questions

about Key Life insurance, an important insurance product for small businesses.

What is a life insurance settlement and how does it affect key-man?

The life insurance settlement—a transaction where a policy holder transfers ownership of a life insurance policy to an institutional buyer for an immediate cash payout—has become an exit strategy for expensive, underperforming, or unneeded insurance policies. It pays the policy holder more than the cash surrender value.

There has been an increase in the selling of key-man insurance policies by businesses all over the country as they try to improve balance sheets and liquidity.

Why would a business sell its key-man policy?

A business may choose to sell a policy that insures a key executive for a variety of reasons. Selling a key-man policy will raise cash and cut annual costs—two objectives many businesses are pursuing in this economic environment. Some specific reasons for a



He continued, “I actually look at my clients with a criteria, too. My best clients are not the ones that just take my word for it. The best come to our educational programs, read our newsletters and ask me questions when we meet.

“I partner with my clients and keep them fully informed. They know we are on the same side of the table: if their funds go down, my revenues go down. We are glad we started incorporating non-traditional investing strategies into our clients portfolios about 4-5 years ago.

“Portfolios that include these non-market-related programs have not suffered nearly the hit of those that are fully invested in the market. It’s a different world out there today.

“We work with business owners and individuals in several different states. That’s why I created The Alliance; to be able to collaborate with a team of both local and national experts so my clients get the solutions they need.”

‘No One Cares How Much You Know, Until They Know How Much You Care’

The team at Joel S. Williams|An Alliance of Wealth Advisors started their team meeting with the above quote from Don Swartz. That’s because it begins every week’s meeting with a reflection on the “who” before getting to the business of the “what.”

That “who” has always been every client the company serves. In this economic climate defined by a disgraceful lack of accountability and integrity, there remain local individuals in the finance industry who honor commitments to their clients.

Trust and respect are not traits the professionals at Joel S. Williams|An Alliance of Wealth Advisors take lightly. “I look for two important criteria in every person I hire,” says Founder and President Joel Williams. “One: does this person have service as the number one motivator; and two: can the person play well with a team? My team knows our clients on a first-name basis and is looking/listening for what the clients are saying ... and what they are not saying.

“The other day one of the team members asked me to call a client, even though the client’s question had been answered. She had this gut feeling that something was wrong. I said, ‘I’m just calling to check in on you,’ and my client burst into tears. She was petrified that she was going to be left penniless.

“We brought in both the client and her family and were able to show—using a sophisticated cash flow analysis—that even using worst case scenarios her funds would continue to support her. We made plans to update this report annually.

“Several months ago I flew to Florida to assist a business owner client. That’s the kind of caring our clients receive on a regular basis.”



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settlement include: pay off debt, bankruptcy, insured employee's retirement, restructuring, obsolete buy/sell agreement, or need for liquid capital.

How does this transaction work?

After gathering the appropriate medical and insurance documentation, a policy is presented to institutional buyers, who bid on the policy. The market creates a bidding war among buyers to get the most money for the seller. Once the highest possible bid is obtained, the owner transfers the policy for cash. The entire process can take anywhere from one to six months.

What are the requirements to complete a life settlement?

Life settlements are available to insured individuals over the age of 65. But after age 70, buyers exist for a wider variety of policies.

Universal life policies hold the most value.

Buyers are looking at policies ranging from \$100,000-\$10,000,000 in death benefit. These options are available because there are so many buyers in this market, from investment banks to pension funds, and including other insurance companies.

How common are these transactions?

Although this is a relatively young marketplace, key-man life insurance settlements are becoming more common. For example, publicly traded X-Rite sold four key man policies over the past few years, generating more than \$20 million cash and saving \$6.7 million in premium payments. In the past, a company like X-Rite would have surrendered these policies for a substantially smaller return but the secondary life insurance market is slowly revealing the true value of life insurance policies. 

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James Creekmore: “You need to make sure you don’t have the same name as somebody in Utah.”

E-business legal issues add a wrinkle >

Executive Summary:

The Internet provides substantial possibility for many businesses. It also opens a can of legal worms that will require some help.

By Gene Marrano

Many concerns are the same as those confronting a brick and mortar business based solely on terra firma, but when building a Web-based company or establishing online commerce as a core component, there are specific legal issues to think about. That’s according to attorneys in this region who deal in such matters.

Protecting creative content on Web sites, trade-marking domain names, hosting advertisements, how consumer information is stored or protected and the fact that the site can be accessed worldwide factor into legal issues surrounding e-commerce.

LeClair Ryan attorney Tara Branscom, based in Roanoke, says many in her profession are



Once you have a Web presence you are no longer a local business, you are now an international business.

—James Creekmore

trying to wrap their arms around everything they need to know—before consulting with clients on e-commerce.

“You’re going to have privacy [and] security issues,” says Branscom, who focuses on intellectual property assets. European Union laws regarding the customer information collected is strictly regulated, she notes. The lack of face-to-face transactions and written contracts must be overcome with agreements placed online. A check-off box asking the reader to agree with the terms is suggested and may act as proof that they were actually read in case of a dispute.

Branscom notes that, in many cases, signatures are not required. What jurisdiction governs a transaction and how to follow through on warranty claims are just several of the “problems associated with invisible purchasers and buyers,” says Branscom. Credit card processors like PayPal allow companies to outsource many of the legal issues and hassles.

Leslie Spasser of LeClair Ryan (offices in Roanoke and Blacksburg) says, “The first thing you need to do is have your domain name registered [and] certified.” Registering variances of a name is suggested in some cases, depending on the brand strength of that name.

Federal “cybersquatting” laws enacted in 1999 allow companies to protect their names from nefarious types that might use it for their own gain. Determining what exactly a site is to be used for primarily—information gathering, image building, marketing or e-commerce—helps Spasser determine how she can help a client with legal advice.

“Once you have a sense of that, then you can draft a ‘terms of use and privacy’ policy ... in a way that protects you.”



Tara Branscome: "You're going to have privacy [and] security issues."

Dan Smith

James Creekmore says business in Blacksburg is so brisk at many high-tech firms, especially when it comes to e-commerce issues, that he moved his small law practice's primary office there from the Roanoke Valley. The Creekmore Law Firm specializes in intellectual property rights. "We have a substantial number of startups that we work with on just these types of issues," says Creekmore, a William and Mary law school alum.

Creekmore has this advice for those seeking

to go online: "Once you have a Web presence you are no longer a local business, you are now an international business." That can affect trademarks, advertising, the products sold, the company name and all copyrights.

Expect to spend several thousand dollars with a law firm to deal with Web business issues, says Creekmore. "You need to make sure you don't have the same name as somebody in Utah." Or London, he might have added. 



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Jim Cornwell

Property rights and the big box ruling >

Executive Summary:

The Supreme Court's "big box" ruling in Blacksburg means developers' plans must contain what they intend to build.

Jim Cornwell, who wrote the following piece, is a member of Sands Anderson's Local Government and Business and Real Estate practice groups, specializing in economic planning and development, local government

law, environmental law as well as zoning and land use issues. In addition, He is managing partner of the Blacksburg office of the firm. He represented Blacksburg in its recent effort to regulate the building of big box retailers in town.

Following is his take on the ruling:

The Virginia Supreme Court in the recent case of Hale vs. the Board of Zoning Appeals (the "big box case") has again spoken on when a property owner can rely upon governmental approval to construct and operate a project without fear that the government will change the rules for the project after approval.

The developer in this case did not meet the test established by the court, but this new standard will establish benchmarks to future developers.

As a quick overview of the facts, the owners/developers of a parcel of real estate on South Main Street in Blacksburg applied to the town to rezone the property to the general commercial district, which at that time included "retail sales" as a use without limitation as to the size of any structure.

The developer's plan described the development as a mixed-use town center with open spaces and buildings of various sizes. No structure in the plans submitted with the rezoning application exceeded 80,000 square feet of gross floor space. After approval of the rezoning, the developer



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submitted a site plan to the town which contained a large retail structure containing 176,000 square feet of floor space.

The submission of this large “big box” caused public concern and the town adopted an ordinance requiring commercial structures of more than 80,000 square feet to obtain special permission from the town to be built. The special permission could be denied or conditions could be imposed to mitigate any perceived adverse effects. The developer claimed that because of the town’s rezoning actions, any structures in the project were not subject to this new ordinance. This question before the Court was whether or not this new ordinance applied to the development.

The Supreme Court of Virginia ruled that the developmental plans submitted at the time of the approval by the town were only conceptual and that they lacked the specificity required under law so the town

could impose additional requirements on uses in the development.

Generally, developers submit conceptual site plans initially when applying for a change in the zoning classification of property, which may be grandiose and unsupported by economic conditions. After the re-zoning is approved, many times these plans are changed and local governments and the public feel that the developer misrepresented the project.

The effect of this decision is that developers are required to have development plans submitted to the locality as part of the approval process. These plans should be specific as to the extent of improvements to be constructed and the plans must be followed. Lack of specificity will put at risk project approval and may allow the locality to impose additional requirements on the project after the initial approval. 

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Dan Smith

Lewis-Gale at 100 >

Executive Summary:

While the physical changes at Lewis-Gale have been dramatic over the years, the mission remains the same: to make sick people well thoughtfully, with efficiency and compassion.

By Leigh Ann Roman

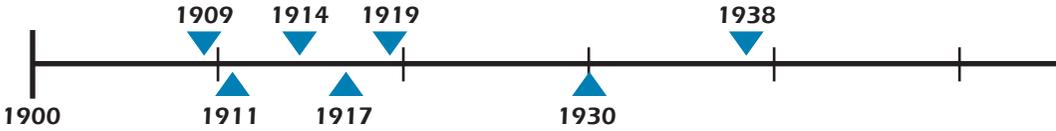
When Lewis-Gale Hospital opened in 1909 as a 26-bed private hospital on the corner of Third Street and Luck Avenue in Roanoke, physicians were at the heart of the facility. After all, the hospital was established by two assistant surgeons for Norfolk & Western Railway: Dr. Sparrell Gale and Dr. J.N. Lewis.

One hundred years later, physicians remain primary to the mission of this now 521-bed tertiary care center known as Lewis-Gale Medical Center. It is the flagship hospital for Hospital Corporation of America's (HCA) Southwest Virginia market. Nashville-based



In 1910, the pathology lab was considered "first-rate"

Lewis-Gale Timeline



- **1909:** Lewis-Gale Hospital, founded by Dr. J. Newton Lewis and Dr. Sparrell Simmons Gale, opens with 26 beds on the corner of Luck Avenue and Third Street in downtown Roanoke. The building is equipped with has an elevator, hot and cold running water and central radiator heat.
- **1911:** Lewis-Gale School of Nursing established.
- **1914:** X-ray Department established.
- **1917:** Emergency Department opened, offering 24-hour service.
- **1919:** Radiology Department established.
- **1930:** Orthopaedic Department established.
- **1938:** New addition built onto the hospital, including total, central, electrostatic air-cleaning equipment, said to be the first of its kind in the world to be installed in a hospital.



"Operation Transplant" moved patients from the old hospital in Roanoke to the new facility in Salem on Dec. 28, 1972



A typical patient room following the 1937 addition to the hospital



James Witten

HCA, founded in 1968, owns 165 hospitals and 112 outpatient centers in 20 states and England.

Pulmonologist James Witten has been with Lewis-Gale for 32 years. He started as a young doctor employed by the multi-specialty Lewis-Gale Clinic, which is now known as HCA Lewis-Gale Physicians and is owned by HCA's physician management services.

"I think the new administration feels very strongly that, second only to patient care, they want to make sure that the physicians are pleased with the day-to-day operations of the hospital," Witten says.

Good physician relations are a key to the hospital's success, says Victor E. Giovanetti, president of HCA Southwest Virginia.

WELLNESS FRONT

1968

1985

1991

2008

1972

1986

1996

2010

- **1968:** Lewis-Gale becomes part of the Hospital Corporation of America (HCA).
- **1972:** Patients are moved from Lewis-Gale Hospital in Roanoke to the new facility in Salem.
- **1985:** Lewis-Gale becomes the first non-training hospital in the nation to purchase an MRI machine.
- **1986:** Lewis-Gale is the first hospital to receive a permit to operate an ambulance service in Roanoke.
- **1991:** Open-heart surgery suite opened, with 185 procedures being performed in its first year.
- **1996:** Merges with Lewis-Gale Psychiatric Center to form Lewis-Gale Medical Center. Capacity expanded to 521 beds.
- **2008:** Becomes the flagship hospital for HCA Virginia's Southwest Market, including Alleghany Regional Hospital, Montgomery Regional Hospital and Pulaski Community Hospital.



Lewis-Gale ambulance, 1920s

"We will continue to position ourselves in a way that allows us to work in partnership with the physicians in the community— independent physicians and employed physicians," he says. "They are our partner in our endeavor to exceed our patients' expectations."

Giovanetti points to the ranking of all four Southwest Virginia HCA hospitals in the top 10 percent nationwide for quality heart attack and heart failure care, pneumonia care and surgical care infection prevention, based on the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare's benchmarks.

The four hospitals also were ranked in the top 10 statewide by Anthem's most recent Quality-In-Sights Hospital Incentive Program based on patient safety, clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction.



Victor E. Giovanetti



Patsy Saville



We used to have glass bottles for IVs and glass syringes that you would have to sterilize. All of that has changed. Now everything is disposable and we have all of the safety features on the needles and syringes.

—Patsy Saville



HCA Virginia Health System Southwest Market

Hospitals

- Lewis-Gale Medical Center
- Alleghany Regional Hospital
- Montgomery Regional Hospital
- Pulaski Community Hospital

Outpatient Centers

- Blue Ridge Surgery Center
- Lewis-Gale Breast Center
- Lewis-Gale Imaging at Brambleton (March 2009)
- Lewis-Gale Imaging in Daleville (late 2009)
- The Imaging Center at Montgomery Regional
- The Women's Center at Alleghany Regional

Cancer Centers

- Lewis-Gale Cancer Center
- New River Valley Cancer Center

Physician Affiliations

- Lewis-Gale Physicians
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The latest in technology can be seen in the hospital's foundation and current operations.

Notably, the 1909 hospital was designed as a hospital when most such facilities of that time were renovated homes. The original Lewis-Gale boasted such modern advances as central radiator heating, an electric elevator, and hot and cold running water in each room.

Lewis-Gale has remained at the forefront of technology by achieving an impressive list of firsts:

- First in Southwest Virginia to offer cryoablation and radiofrequency for treating atrial fibrillation—an irregular heartbeat that, left untreated, can cause heart attack and stroke.
- First in the region to have the new Signa HDx 3.0T MRI system, the most advanced high-definition imaging available.
- First in the region to offer digital mammography.

Lewis-Gale was also among the first hospitals within HCA, coming under that company's umbrella in 1968, the year HCA was founded.

Registered nurse Patsy Saville, who has worked for Lewis-Gale since the mid-1950s, says advances in technology have been the biggest changes that she has noticed. "We

used to have glass bottles for IVs and glass syringes that you would have to sterilize. All of that has changed. Now everything is disposable and we have all of the safety features on the needles and syringes," she says.

For Saville, the HCA ownership was a turning point for Lewis-Gale. "HCA has really just built us up to where we are today," says Saville, who completed her nurse's training at the Lewis-Gale School of Nursing in 1955. "We were just a small, little hospital."

Saville says she has stayed at Lewis-Gale so long because "it has been my family within my own family. . . I have just been satisfied." 



Nurses eating lunch in the new lunch room, part of the 1937 addition which also included a new cafeteria

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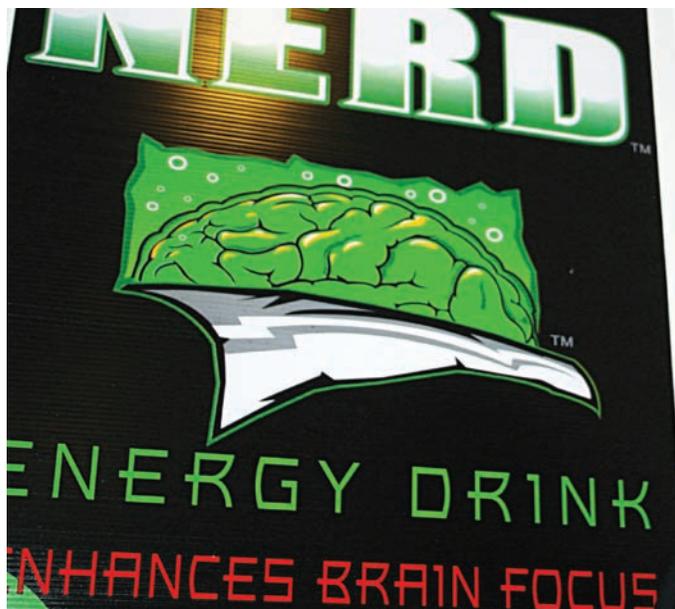
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Nayier Imam: "There is very little business sense in my family ... The art of business did not at all come naturally to me."

David Perry

Executive Summary:

Whether or not business came naturally to Nayier Imam, it certainly came to him, and came, and came and came and ...

By David Perry



When I was in first grade, I would say I was Indian and people would say 'What tribe?'

—Nayier Imam

Still learning the 'art of business' >

Dr. Nayier Imam is many things—too many to list, in fact—but he's no dummy.

Then six-year-old Imam and his parents arrived in New York City from India nearly four decades ago, at a time when they were very few Indians in the Big Apple.

"Back in 1972, when I was in first grade, I would say I was Indian and people would say 'What tribe?'" says Imam.

Imam's father, a doctor, came to America looking for a better opportunity. Imam comes from a long line of doctors, including his brother, sister, brother- and sister-in-law, and grandfather, in addition to Dad. It was expected that young Nayier would become a doctor as well.

"Because we came from India, there was a certain way of thinking that my parents had," says Imam. "You've got to be a doctor, and in high school, they said 'Why are you doing sports activities?' because the background in India was you've got to study, you've got to do really well, because that's how you succeed."

Imam attended the prestigious Stuyvesant High School in New York, and from there went on to Brown University, where he made quick work of the course catalog. "In seven years I got a bachelor's, MD, and master's of science," says Imam. Life at Brown exposed him to people from all over the world with

a variety of different interests. His roommate's father was CEO of a Texas real estate company. Imam started his first business, an import-export company, with a group of friends during his first year of med school.

"What I learned quickly is that with any group of people you're going to have some leaders, and others who are really not talented," says Imam. "When exam time came, the company would start dwindling" as the company's leaders—Imam and a fellow med student—focused their attentions elsewhere.

The experience proved invaluable for Imam, who had medicine, not commerce, in his genes. "There is very little business sense in my family. Most of them should not be doing any business whatsoever," he jokes. "The art of business did not at all come naturally to me."

Imam's career led him to Johns Hopkins, where he met one of his mentors, former National Institutes of Health director Dr. Elias Zerhouni. Zerhouni would have a lasting effect on him.

In a profession in which many shun the business side of the operation, "he made it acceptable to do both business and medicine without guilt," says Imam.

Imam balances his capitalist instincts with strong ethics. "If we're doing a business it's got to be something that feels good," he says. "I wouldn't start a business that involves tobacco, for example."

Smoking is not on his to-do list, but Imam does enjoy fishing and collecting fishing poles. He has a sizable collection with some that are a century old. He also studies

In Brief

Name: Dr. Nayier Imam
Age: 43
Company: Multiple
Location: Roanoke
Type of business: Multiple
Title: Multiple
History: Indian-born Nayier Imam came to New York City at age six and has lived the American dream ever since. His resume is too long to print, but some of the highlights are three academic degrees; businesses in India and Dubai; a radiology practice or two; an incubator company that helped launch Nerd, an energy drink; the online medical information portal HealthCite.com, founded with \$10 million from Amgen; and producing an international film, "Real Premonition". In his spare time, he's a father of six.

taekwondo, along with—did we mention?—the oldest four of his six children.

That's right—six children, the most recent arriving earlier this year. Five of them are enrolled at North Cross in Roanoke County ("North Cross loves us," says Imam). How does he manage this kind of lifestyle?

"The credit goes to my wife," Lubna, says Imam.

Yep—Dr. Nayier Imam is no dummy. 



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Venture Center's Lisa Ison: "We try to do everything we can to keep them on the right track to be a successful company."

Jay Conley

A jump-start for business >

Executive Summary:

If Lisa Ison detects "fire in the belly" she says she can help you start a solid business.

By Jay Conley

Challenging economic conditions are often a breeding ground for new entrepreneurs, says Lisa Ison. As president of the New Century Venture Center, a business incubator in Salem, Ison helps today's laid-off worker with a range of marketable skills become tomorrow's sole proprietor, consultant or business partner.

She isn't so much the mother of invention. But to new businesses, she often plays the role of surrogate mother to entrepreneurs who have good ideas but are sketchy on the fundamentals of running a business.

"When somebody comes to see me, initially I don't hear about their idea at first," says Ison. "I want to feel out the person, to see if they've got the fire in the belly. And if they understand what entrepreneurship means."

The Venture Center started in Roanoke in 1996 and recently moved to a nearly 7,000 square foot facility on Salem's Southside Drive.

"We were looking for something that had some manufacturing and warehouse space, because we had companies that needed that. And we didn't have that at our facility in Roanoke," Ison says.

The incubator also operates a satellite

location in the Westlake Towne Center at Smith Mountain Lake.

More than 100 businesses have received assistance from the Venture Center over the years.

A key to the Venture Center's success is its ability to offer affordable space and services to its tenants. For \$200 a month, a start-up can lease one of the center's 500-square foot office cubicles. That's less expensive than most other office space in the Roanoke Valley.

"We try to push people toward the space that they need," Ison says. "In typical commercial real estate, say in a strip mall, you may lease 1,000 square feet and need 100 [but] you're locked into a one-year lease." Incubator leases can start at six months.

Tenants have access to a copier, fax machine, postage meter and high speed Internet. Receptionist and secretarial services and meeting facilities are also available.

The incubator welcomes established home-based businesses, like House of Doors, Inc., a three-generation, family-owned custom door manufacturer that recently located at the center. "Probably half of our businesses were home-based over the years," Ison says.

Business owners consult with a team of mentors including accountants, bankers, attorneys and other established entrepreneurs, some of them Venture Center graduates.

Says Ison, "We try to do everything we can to keep them on the right track to be a successful company." 

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It excited me from the beginning because of the element of history in the houses I would be selling. I love old buildings—everything about them.

—Melissa Morgan



Meilssa Morgan: “I have found that I can genuinely help people.”

Dan Smith

A distinct preference for the old >

Executive Summary:

Melissa Morgan has left from the immediacy and urgency of radio to a much slower, more measured pace with built-in stability—of a sort.

By Dan Smith

Melissa Morgan took a long, hard look at just where this radio career was going and decided it was fun, but that now was the time to be grown up, to get a little stability and to follow that dream, the one she pursued in her history classes. So she took up real estate sales.

Her new Renaissance Real Estate has evolved from that decision several years ago and if there's a more content new business

owner in the Roanoke Valley, you'd have a difficult time finding her.

Morgan discovered that being one of many many on-air personalities for an outfit as big as Clear Channel radio was not an exercise in stability, especially as she got a little older. “I made a very deliberate choice,” she says. “In radio, at that level, you live with your bags packed or you stay in small towns for very low money. With those corporate owners, the bottom line was that the day would come when they replaced me for somebody who'd work for less money. I like Roanoke—it's like home—and I didn't want to leave for a career.”

Real estate was a natural. “It excited me from the beginning because of the element of history in the houses I would be selling,” she says. “I love old buildings—everything about them.” She has made herself something of an expert on the sale of the older homes in Roanoke and even located her business on Marshall Ave. in Old Southwest, near the Cotton Mill, which is under renovation and which she is marketing for owner Ed Walker. Her interest even spills over to the Roanoke Valley



“The Fralin and Waldron mission has long been to develop quality communities that meet consumer demand. With Daleville Town Center, we are breaking new ground,” says F&W President Andy Kelderhouse. “We’re taking the lead in introducing a new type of community and helping educate people on how compact, sustainable communities can set the stage

for more gratifying lifestyles that can stand the test of time.”

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD!

In its nearly 50-year history, Roanoke-based Fralin & Waldron Inc. has established a national reputation as a premier builder of homes, multi-family units, healthcare centers and retirement facilities. It’s an impressive lineup that extends well beyond the Roanoke Valley.

Its current marquee project, Daleville Town Center, a 117-acre tract just off U.S. 220, north of Lord Botetourt High School, meshes virtually all of the firm’s business ventures. The community, which will open its sales office in the summer of 2009, combines a variety of housing choices with village shops, offices and restaurants.

Daleville Town Center is the Roanoke region’s first traditional neighborhood development. TND principles are based on the success of such beloved American neighborhoods as Charleston, S.C., and Alexandria, Va. Common elements include timeless quality that reflects local heritage and respects the natural environment, a central marketplace in close proximity that satisfies daily needs, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and sidewalks.

To complement Botetourt County’s bucolic scenery and rich history, Daleville Town Center homes will offer five classic architectural styles: farmhouse, four square, colonial, European romantic and cottage. Single-family and town homes, as well as live-work lofts, are designed to be energy efficient and will be fully equipped with modern conveniences. So if a four-bedroom home is not within your budget, perhaps renting a studio loft will be.

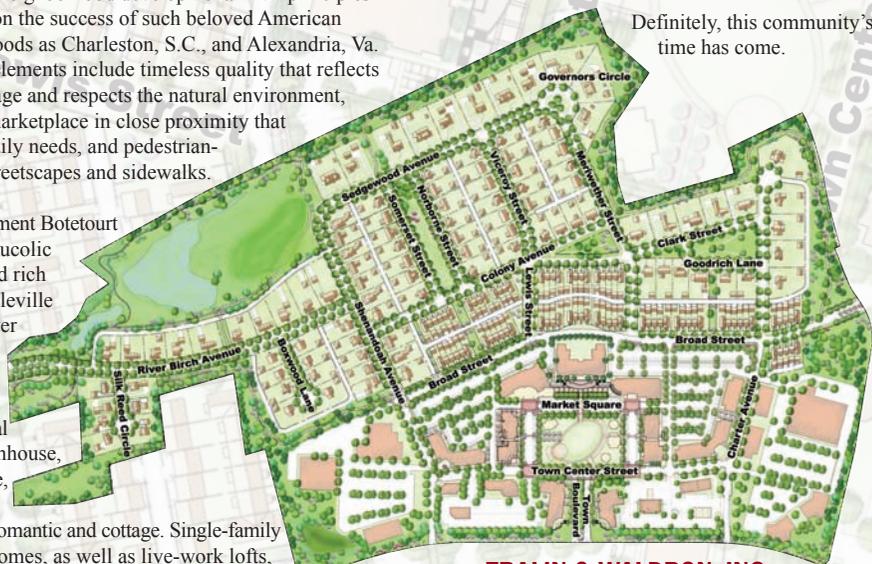
“It’s time for all of us to look at the way we live, work and play,” says Karen Waldron, owner and chief executive officer of Fralin & Waldron, and daughter of one of the firm’s founders. “Everything within one community simplifies life. The reduced reliance on automobiles also helps each of us do our part to protect our environment.”

Waldron and Kelderhouse have been refining the Daleville Town Center concept since they toured a similar development in another part of the country more than a decade ago. The company is so dedicated to the TND community-building approach that its corporate headquarters will move to Daleville Town Center on the second floor of a nearly 30,000-square-foot business and retail structure close to the center of town.

Eventually, the completed project will be home to 300 residential units (including multi-family) and several hundred thousand square feet of commercial space.

Daleville Town Center is an environmentally sensitive development. Homes are being constructed using green building products and techniques. Abundant green spaces and small parks for outdoor events will abound. For the golf lover, it’s important to note that you’ll be only two minutes (by car) from a 27-hole golf course.

Definitely, this community’s time has come.



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Preservation Foundation, an aggressive organization hell-bent on saving as much Roanoke history as possible.

Radio, she insists, was excellent preparation for sales. "It teaches tenacity and hard work and gives you the ability to listen, which is essential in real estate sales." Radio jocks listen? "Oh, yes," she says. "I was mostly on morning radio with a partner and you have to listen." Additionally, there is the increased "confidence in the ability to be part of the community" gained from radio.

The gratification of selling homes to people

keeps paying back, she insists. "I have found I can genuinely help people," she says. "In this market more than ever that is obvious and essential. It is so critical when you buy, sell or invest in property that you call someone you can trust and ask what they think. You build this relationship and maybe three years later they call you and ask you 'a quick question' about something important to them. I like that."

(Note: Editor Dan Smith is on the board of the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation.) 

In Brief

Name: Melissa Morgan
Age: Not in your wildest dreams, bub! (admits to 30s)
Business: Renaissance Real estate (also in charge of marketing the Cotton Mill)
Title: Broker/Owner
Location: Roanoke
Hometown: New Kent County, Virginia
History: Virginia Tech graduate with a degree in history (started out to be a vet; advisor said "forget it"). Worked for the college radio station and parlayed that into a full-time gig with Roanoke's K-92 upon graduation as a producer-director and mid-day air personality. She left K-92 and "went across the street" to WJJS where she remained for years. She met and married her photographer husband David Lee Michaels there. He, too, was an on-air personality. Joined Owens & Company to sell real estate in 2004 and started her own company last year.
Outside Participation: Board member of the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation, the Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors, the Raleigh Court Civic League and a member of the Grandin Village Business Association.



The Cotton Mill is a circa 1919 Ed Walker rehab

Dan Smith

Cotton Mill set to open

Roanoke's newest large Ed Walker development expects to get its certificate of occupation in June and should start leasing its 108 loft apartments (ranging from \$450-\$1,275 a month) on the edge of downtown Roanoke.

The 104,641-square-foot Cotton Mill development is the transformation of a 1919 factory that closed in 1992. Apartments (in which pets will be allowed) will range in size from 450 square feet to 1,200 square feet with rooftop decks. They will be equipped with granite kitchens and baths, refinished maple floors, exposed brick and timbers and new windows. A \$99 amenity fee covers on-site parking, water/sewer/trash, cable, Internet, 24-hour gym, coffee service, music in common areas and a building manager.

Walker, who renovated the spectacular Hancock last year, is the developer. Stanley-Shield Construction is the contractor and Renaissance Real Estate (540-400-8449) is the marketing and leasing agent.



Exterior of Access, originally Enfield Buick



Spacious entrance

Work Spaces

At Access, it's about creativity and teamwork >

Executive Summary:

The idea was to convert a former auto dealership and soft drink bottler into a 21st Century advertising agency and it took a lot of voices to call that square dance.

By Dan Smith

It's a project right out of "How To Operate a Small Business" and it is demonstrative of the kind of nimble, resourceful creativity required when money, deadlines, opportunity and

need come crashing into the same little corner.

Eighteen months ago, Access, one of the region's most prominent ad agencies (though only 16 people strong) determined it needed about three times as much space as it had. Tony Pearman, who co-owns the company with Todd Marcum, says the "space was, if not inhumane, then certainly unkind." After a search for something "unique, with a warehouse feel that hadn't been compromised" by a previous rehab, the owners settled on the 1930 Enfield Buick building (which had been Blue Ridge Motors and Bierley's Beverage later). They moved into 17,000 square feet of pure pleasure in December of 2008, just ahead of a deadline qualifying for government funds.

That deadline-beater came because Pearman, Markum, Pearman's dad, Access' employees and some of the contracted workers refused to recognize that it couldn't be done (when told that by the general contractor)—and did it anyway (without the general contractor). They needed to have a certificate of occupancy by Dec. 31, 2008 in order to



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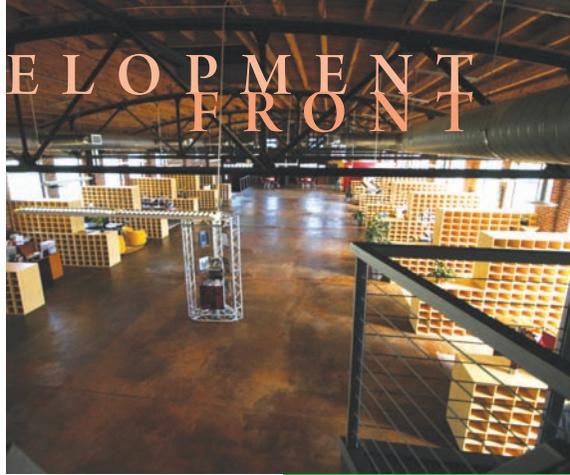
Lofts offer privacy

qualify for what could eventually be up to \$100,000 in enterprize zone and special tax district funding.

Here's what the team—led by Pearman, who has always had something of an architectural bent and worked closely with Spectrum Design (a client of Access') from a folder he'd put together—determined it needed: Open space, "no stratification or barriers", no doors on offices, no special places for execs, plenty of meeting space and creative room. "Studies show people are creative when they are in creative places," says Pearman.

The walls of the offices became available when retail clothier Steve & Barry's went out of business and Access bought the bins that housed jeans, T-shirts, tennis shoes and the like. Nevermind that you can see straight through them. There are no secrets at Access.

Pearman's dad did the building's metal work (including making conference tables) and salvaged the old Diet Rite sign that hangs



Overview from a loft

all photos: Dan Smith

over the main floor. He had been laid off by Roanoke City Schools, where he taught, just as Access needed his drive and creativity, says his son.

There's not much privacy, but says Pearman, this is work, not home and "there's no Big Brother aspect to it. We're not that kind of a firm. We have three senior associates with a combined 30 years with this firm and we trust each other. It's a design that doesn't work for everybody, but it works for us." He emphasizes that an "investment in space is money well spent." And there's plenty of space, tons of it, side to side and top to bottom.

The building was in sad shape and 4.2 tons of scrap steel were torn out, along with a lot of cinder block, covering windows that would be needed to feed natural light to the creative types.

Today you can play basketball or bowl a game in the middle of the building between the offices. But they don't do that. At least not during work hours. 



Wall bins are from Steve & Barry's, which closed



Kitchenette has 1950s look



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—Suzi Fortenberry

'An old neighborhood feel' >

Executive Summary:

The idea with this new subdivision is to be environmentally responsible and to turn back the clock to the time when "neighborhood" had a distinct feel, look and meaning.

By Cortney Phillips

When Suzi Fortenberry and her husband moved to Roanoke several years ago, they were struck by the beauty of the area, but disappointed in the style of building. Rather than settling for a typical brick colonial, they decided to combine their passions for architecture and the environment into a new and progressive style of neighborhood.

Now, the Fortenberrys occupy Camilla Cottage, one of the custom-built, energy-efficient homes of their developing neighborhood The Preserve at Two Ford.

Suzi Fortenberry, formerly a registered dietician, found her way to real estate at MKB eight years ago after developing an admiration for architecture. She simply loved houses.

Her company, Benchmark Builders, includes her husband, Brent, and project manager David Brammer. The team is responsible for the first planned environmental community in the region, Suzi Fortenberry claims. The



Suzi Fortenberry

Cortney Phillips

goal? To build intricately detailed, unique, beautiful homes with a low impact on the environment.

After three years of building at The Preserve, five homes are complete with a community plan for 26 total homes. "We wanted to capture the views of the Blue Ridge Mountains with porches, creating an old neighborhood feel with public spaces in the front and private in the rear," Suzi says of the original vision.

Emulating homes built in the early 1900s, Suzi and her team customize each home to fit the buyer with plenty of detail—such as the intricate woodworking done by her husband—and a quality of authenticity. "We're different. We're not building a brick box," she says. "There are plenty of them in Roanoke and they're the cheapest way to build. We want home with character." Each home lives up to this character with custom names; in addition to Camilla Cottage, there's Magnolia Cottage and Oak Alley.

But aesthetics of the homes aside, it is the



environmental consciousness and smart house features that set The Preserve apart. All of the homes built so far are in compliance with EarthCraft House standards. From ensuring minimal interference in the natural landscape—setting aside half of the total acreage to green space to save the trees—to installing automatic thermostat and lighting controls, the environment is a key factor in every planning stage for the Bench Mark Builder Team.

To Suzi Fortenberry, this seems like a natural and important step: “We’re trying to recreate what’s natural for this mountain community. We just feel that it’s a healthier way to build.” And the houses don’t scrimp on electronic features. The master bedroom in Camilla Cottage has a touch-screen interface for control of whole-home features, as well as an iPod dock that allows for music access throughout the entire house.

Above all, Suzi emphasizes the importance of staying earth friendly in homebuilding. “It’s going to become more and more of an

In Brief

Name: Suzi Fortenberry
Age: 55
Company: MKB
Location: Roanoke
Position: Realtor
Background: Registered dietician for 25 years, has spent eight years in real estate. BS in dietetics from Southeastern Louisiana University. Won Best Overall Realtor’s Choice Award in last two Parade of Homes. Involved in the Home Builders Association, volunteer at the Bradley Clinic and teaches a diabetic class there, co-chairwoman of the Parade of Homes Committee.

issue if we don’t respond to it. The way to build is energy efficient; it’s good for the environment and good for the homeowner.” 

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Rhonda Thomas with Tim Rowland at Geonetti's: "I thought, wow, it would be great to bring it in."

Gene Marrano

Carrying on family passion (and more) >

Executive Summary:

Rhonda Thomas has found that real estate has been a good living for her family, but restaurant ownership provides its own rewards.

By Gene Marrano

For Rhonda Thomas, work is a simple exercise in food and housing.

Thomas has been around the real estate and property management business all of her life and recently she took up the restaurant business in downtown Roanoke.

The real estate gig has been a family affair, a tradition the Roanoke native now carries on as a broker and the owner of Chase Morgan Associates, where she works with more than 30 real estate agents.



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Don't let the big-time moniker fool you: Chase Morgan Associates uses the middle names of Thomas's two daughters and is totally independent.

Thomas' parents, Shirley and Ron "Chief" Thomas, were once the proprietors of a downtown music venue—the Iriquois Club—that guitarist-songwriter Richard Thompson once described as having "a sleazy charm." The Candy Factory lofts are there now.

The Thomases have also purchased properties, fixed them up and resold or rented them out, a practice that continues to this day. Rhonda Thomas (45) says her 73-year-old mother can be still be found cleaning properties to keep busy, several years after her husband died.

Thomas' father was a Mohawk from Canada; her mother a Bristol native struck by Chief's tall, dark good looks when he came through the area with the U.S. Army. They were married six months after meeting.

Rhonda Thomas studied for her real estate license more than a decade ago, sold retirement units at Pheasant Ridge in South Roanoke and eventually became director of sales for RealStar. She hung out her own shingle with Chase Morgan Associates three years ago.

While she learned the business, Rhonda

Thomas (widowed for more than 10 years), home-schooled her two girls, allowing them to plan quarterly trips to points all over the world. She set a budget and told them to use that amount for travel, hotel, food and all other expenses. They learned on the go in Mexico, Italy, Hawaii, etc.

Thomas has moved Chase Morgan to the corner of Brambleton Avenue and Grandin Road in Roanoke, from where she will manage businesses in three adjacent buildings.

Thomas became part owner recently of Geonetti's Specialty Subs, a sandwich shop in Roanoke's City Market. It's the first franchise outside Ohio for the small, family chain, notable for trucking in sandwich bread from Western Pennsylvania. Tim Rowland, a long-time family friend, moved from Ohio to run the Roanoke store.

"I know the sub and I know what it's done [in Ohio]," says Rhonda Thomas. "I thought, wow, it would be great to bring it in."

A devoted Seventh Day Adventist who does not open her businesses on Saturdays, the sometimes-chaplain pondered starting her own church on an Ontario, Canada, reservation where her family owns property and where she has done mission work. Thomas also likes to help local homeless people whenever she can. 



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Rod Belcher with his daughter, Emily, looking over stuffed animals.

Dan Smith



I love my kids. One of the joys of being a freelancer and store owner is that I can work my schedule somewhat around my children. There are still long days (and nights) but to be able to meet them off the bus, take them with me to work and go on a field trip is more precious than gold to me.

—Rod Belcher

Something for all the kids, even the old ones >

Executive Summary:

Freelance writer Rod Belcher shows that paying attention to the kid inside can benefit everybody around you.

By Dan Smith

Rod Belcher has never shied from the admission: “I don’t play well with other children,” he says emphatically. That’s why he’s been a freelance writer—one of the

region’s most successful—for some years. And playing with children is part of the reason why, in the midst of one of the worst economies in many years, he’s a new business owner.

Here’s the explanation for his new Cosmic Castle at Towers Mall in a nutshell: “I love my kids. One of the joys of being a freelancer and store owner is that I can work my schedule somewhat around my children. There are still long days (and nights) but to be able to meet them off the bus, take them with me to work and go on a field trip is more precious than gold to me. My goal, in the business, was to try to create a place where kids could have fun and be safe.”

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further explanation, quoting Winston Churchill: "If you're going through hell, keep going."

Belcher is a 41-year-old single father of two young children (Jon, 12, and Emily, 7). He is one of the sturdiest mounts in Valley Business FRONT's stable of freelancers, and now owns a game and comic store, something for kids in general and the eight-year-old still lurking inside him, as well.

Cosmic Castle, he says, is predicated on the family. It combines the new (X-Box 360, Wii and Playstation 3 playable as arcade games through an interactive game console) with such old reliables as a pinball machine and Legos sold in plastic bags (you get to pick the ones you want). There are also, he emphasizes, "board games, comic books, graphic novels—like Watchmen—and card and role-playing games."

With all the entertainment possible, he says, "We use in-house game space to play our games and we host all kinds of tournaments—from pinball games to Rock Band—and plan to host parties as well ... If mom is going grocery shopping at Towers, she can let her kids play at our store and have a lot of fun for only a few dollars in a safe, supervised environment, hosted by fellow parents." See? Family.

It's part of Belcher's basic philosophy that "even in lean fiscal times, people need an outlet for imagination and relaxation—

perhaps even more so in stressful times. People still want to let their kids play."

Good as the store can be for his economic peace of mind (and the bank obviously thinks Belcher knows what he's doing, jumping right in on this one), he emphasizes, "I'm still a writer and that's still my day job—a few markets have dried up in the last few months and opening the store was definitely a way to see a steady paycheck. But I love writing—non-fiction and fiction, and plan to keep at it as long as I'm able."

The business was established as an S-corp and Belcher is in a partnership with his family. Several members of the Belcher posse, old friends and people who love this work, have joined him as employees.

Just for grins, he points out—as a good business writer would—that "I believe if anyone is going to pull the economy out of this nosedive, it will be the small business person. It's a risky time to start a business, but we believe it's a time of great opportunity, too."

Cosmic Castle fits with everything else, as well. It "came from about a month of everyone involved beating their heads against a wall—we had so many names, pages of them—finally we decided 'Cosmic Castle' sounded cool enough for older kids to want to hang out at, but innocent enough for younger kids and parents to want to visit." Belcher's one of the older kids. 



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The program gave me added value as an employee. It took me to places my business career may not have let me reach.

—Warren Bingham

Ed Lynch: “MALS tries to break out of the mold of a traditional [master’s of the arts] program.”

Non-traditional opportunities at Hollins >

Executive Summary:

Hollins’ Masters of Arts and Liberal Studies program opens a lot of avenues to students who hear their own drummer.

By Rod Belcher

Change can be good, but it can also be frightening. As layoffs, closings and swelling unemployment figures grow in number, many of the jobless are looking to the promise of continuing education as a shelter, a way to

a new career, a new start, a new life. For those still in the workforce and feeling nervous about job security, an advanced degree can also make them more marketable and more valuable to their employer.

Ed Lynch, director for the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) Program at Hollins University says it was designed with full-time employees in mind.

“The program is structured to address the needs of working people in the Roanoke Valley,” he says. “The classes are [held in the] evening, with a few on Saturday. We have a few of the classes on-line [and] hope to expand the number.”

The program holds sessions at the Roanoke Higher Education Center, as well as on the Hollins Campus.

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MALS, nationwide, is one of the most popular higher degree programs, Lynch says because the program provides students with a method to explore more aspects of the humanities and the fine arts than a traditional program.

"MALS tries to break out of the mold of a traditional [master's of the arts] program," Lynch says. "It allows students to have a broader series of concentrations to study than a conventional MA program, in which your concentration of study is typically fairly narrow."

MALS has a diverse group of students at Hollins. Teachers, cops, paralegals, higher education administrators and journalists—over 140 people, on average, all of them receive something extra out of their night school experiences.

Salem Times-Register reporter Angie Tabor, a MALS student, says, "I'm planning to finish the program in December. I'm able to create my

own concentration through interdisciplinary studies, [creating] a media studies program that worked for my job and interests."

"These days the journalism industry wants multi-taskers" who write, photograph and design. "The more training and skills someone earns, the higher chance they will be hired. It's definitely worked in my favor."

Hollins alumni and MALS program graduate, Warren Bingham says, "I was working with Protective Life Insurance of Birmingham [and] the MALS program gave me a lot of confidence as a writer and a speaker," which he now does for a living. "The program gave me added value as an employee. It took me to places my business career may not have let me reach."

MALS is "a nice combination that allows students to pursue intellectual fulfillment and get ahead in the office environment," Lynch says. "A new academic credential always looks good in this economy." 

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Building a lab tech workforce >

Executive Summary:

New River Community College is answering a growing need for lab technicians in a variety of industries.

By Anne Giles Clelland

"Using the restriction enzymes ECoRI, BamHI, Sall, and PstI, please cut the gene and place it in the plasmid pUC 18."

That's a quiz question in "Biotechnology Applications," a course one might expect at a highly-touted national research institute.

You can learn to cut that gene at New River Community College (NRCC).

Just launched in the fall of 2008, "Biotechnology Applications" is the first course in a series leading to certification in the Laboratory Technician Program offered at NRCC's New River Valley Mall site in Christiansburg.

According to Angela E. Covey, associate VP for Workforce Development at NRCC, "We started to receive requests from industry for laboratory technicians. Then, through conversations with Joe Meredith at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, the idea for a program began."

Meredith, president of the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, says, "The availability of a highly trained lab tech workforce will greatly enhance the CRC's ability to recruit technology companies to the research park. Our need for lab techs will continue to grow in the future as our regional economy transitions from traditional manufacturing to more high-tech endeavors."

Pam Linkous-Polan, 46, of Blacksburg, a student in "Biotechnology Applications," is ready for the transition. She was a medical technician, then home-schooled her children. "I want a new challenge. Bio-industries are growing. This program is something we've never had in this area."

Jacob Phillips, 17, of Christiansburg, sees the lab tech program as a way of "starting early on a career." He's interested in genetic engineering and, once he graduates from Christiansburg High School, hopes to spend two years at New River Community College, then transfer to Virginia Tech.

Star Shoemaker, 30, of Radford, majored in biology at Radford University. "I see this as a way to practically apply my degree."

Instructor Richard J. Obiso Jr. thinks his students' goals are possible to achieve through the lab tech program.

"The laboratory technologist certification is not a new concept and has been successfully demonstrated in a number of biotech 'hot beds' around the country, including the Maryland/D.C. area," Obiso says.

A Virginia Tech graduate, when he returned to the area in 2006, Obiso discovered that biotech companies were becoming "an established economic driver."

"One of my challenges was finding a qualified workforce that did not have to be relocated to the area. So, we did what has been proven in the past, train from within the area."

A member of the adjunct faculty at NRCC, Obiso is president of The Microbe Company, a biotech consulting firm, president of Eclipse Winery, a start-up winery in Christiansburg and a principal scientist for an international research institute.

Given the number of ventures in which Obiso is involved, what led him to the lab tech program at NRCC?

"This program calls my mentoring and teaching side as well as provides a feeling of giving back to the community."

Like teacher, like student.

Spenser Armand, 21, from Radford, one of Obiso's students, has a similar vision. A musician, he's also interested in biomedical lab techniques.

"I might be able to change something," Armand says. 



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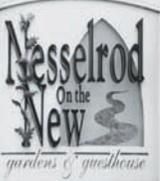
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Finding the rewards of the stage >

Executive Summary:

At Botetourt Children's Theatre the volunteer theater group carries an important message and has a ball doing it.

By Rod Belcher

Freda Wood is normally a busy real estate sales associate for ReMax in Daleville, but this afternoon she is a pig-tailed little girl named Becky Watkins, surrounded by a cast of odd and magical characters—including a talking cat named Professor.

"I don't dress like this to sell real estate," Wood laughs, gesturing to her costume and hair.

Wood is part of a troupe from the Botetourt Children's Theatre performing "I Think I Can." The Children's Theatre, part of the county's community theatre company, Attic Productions, is touring elementary schools, performing the 45-minute play. The play's theme is about having self-confidence and believing you can accomplish anything you put your mind to.

All-volunteer Attic Productions began in 1995 and produces five plays a year. "Produce" means to commission an original play, design and create costumes and build sets, do professional-level sound and lighting and direct, block and star in the production. The organization was the labor of love for Geraldine Lawson, who died in 2006.

"Most people in Attic have a day job," says Marsha Campbell, board president and a former high school play competition teacher. She became active with Attic in 1995 making costumes. "People do it for the love of theatre."

The cast of "I Think I Can" is an example of the diverse backgrounds of the people who take part in Attic Productions. John Barton, one of the musicians for the production, is a professional photographer. His musical partner for the play, Terry Vaughn is in the health industry. Professor, the wise, talking cat is being played by Carl Bridgman, is a retired minister of music.

The role of Bugsy is being played by Dan Naff of the Botetourt Chamber of Commerce. Naff retired from a career in banking. Designing and building sets attracted him initially.

The production's home, the D. Geraldine Lawson Performing Arts Center, rests on seven acres in Fincastle. The facility has a huge prop room downstairs, large enough for Naff's sets to remain until they are needed, as well as wardrobes of donated and scavenged clothing. The 280-seat auditorium with modern light and sound technology is often used by community groups for meetings and events.

The arts center is the culmination of the group's efforts to promote and grow community theatre in the area. Youth ensemble director Peggy Rowland says that attic is always looking for volunteers for all disciplines.

As the rehearsal comes to a close, the talking cat and the little girl return to their day jobs, but tomorrow is another day, and another performance waits. 



Children's Theatre lineup: (from left) John Barton, Dan Naff, Terry Vaughn, Marsha Campbell, Freda Wood and Carl Bridgman-pink coat, black hat

Rod Belcher

Just looking for a chance >

My View

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

Executive Summary: *Being bright, creative, energetic, dedicated and unemployed can be extremely frustrating. So, how does a potentially excellent employee go about finding the right fit?*

Chris Berry, the guy who used to own Foodies in Roanoke, called me recently and wanted to come by and talk about this idea he had for getting a job. Chris is a long-time sales executive and former small business owner with a master's degree from Rochester Institute of Technology. He sold Foodies to his partner at the end of 2007 and has "been trying to figure out what I'll do since then."

He has been consistently looking for work since the Foodies gig (Foodies, basically, is a cooking school) and has run into the same frustrations many accomplished 37-year-old professionals with a good general resume face: good overall skills, not so much specific to the job at hand.

Chris' idea is that he will offer himself for a period of time as an employee for free to see how he likes the employer and how the employer likes him. Chris thought it was novel. I told him that's generally the way many of us got our jobs (I went to work as a newspaper copyboy for \$5 a night on a trial basis 40 years ago, for example, and my boss at the time had done the same thing 30 years earlier). It's a nice notion, but as Chris and I talked, a lot more came out about trying to find work in a climate where nearly everybody's scared.

The problem, insists Chris, "is moving from one industry to another. I don't have the specific credentials" for some jobs, but those hiring "are overlooking potentials because they can't see the forest for the trees."

Hear, hear!

Often the problem is human resources professionals who have a set of guidelines from which they do not feel free to deviate. The hoops must be jumped and my feeling has always been that these HR people are often so bureaucratic that they forget to use good sense. For example, I have more than 40 years of experience as a journalist and a room full of awards, but most publications' HR people wouldn't even talk to me because I don't have a degree.

Says Chris, "I have talents and skills that could be applied to anything" and he has learned those skills both formally and informally, but permanently and in a way that should be valued. "At several points," says Chris, "I have been responsible for hiring other people and I was always interested in a basic set of talents for

continued to Page 60



Creatures of habit.
And surprise >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

[ontapfrompub.blogspot.com]

“Oh my god, just shoot me and get it over with.”

And what caused this great cry of desperation? This heart-rending outburst and pitiful plea for help?

My right turn signal.

Sunday after church. The great vehicle with its mighty rows of seats packed with more estrogen than a graduation ceremony at the school for wayward girls—it dared to move over in the right lane.

Before I could say, “what?”... rhetorically of course, but at least giving the appearance of concern (because it’s a father’s job to do fatherly things, like fixing his kid’s kite; or, as in my case, stopping suicidal tendencies), Female #1, the queen of ‘em, sitting beside me, stated the obvious:

“She doesn’t want to go there for lunch.”

Well, *STOP THE GREAT VEHICLE!*, I thought to myself. Let’s just pull over, get out, draft a constitutional ammendment and have an election. Among the five of us. An exercise in democracy and a memorable lesson for the whole family. Right here on the damn side of the road. (I didn’t like cursing right after church, but it was only in my head.)

You want a lesson? Have kids. Three girls. Actually, any one kid will do. I just had three females to enhance the dramatic impact.

Kids will show you things. Not just broken kites and scraped knees and colorful drawings that are either a horse or uncle Lenny. But occasionally (when they’re awake), they’ll show you something to think about.

Today’s lesson? Predictability versus Spontaneity.

The protestor this time (hey, we just left a protestant church... I never thought about it, but that makes perfect sense...the girl was *groomed* for complaining), couldn’t fathom us going to the same restaurant, Sunday after Sunday. Too predictable!

And had I driven *through* the intersection? Or had I dared to... oh my... turn *left*? Too spontaneous!

The outcry for breaking a tradition—or even the slightest disruption to the routine (she’s in *MY* seat... I can’t *BELIEVE* her!), would have been equally suicidal, or end-of-worldish.

continued to Page 60



Smith / My View

from Page 58

the person rather than checking off boxes.

"I want smart, energetic people who are willing to learn. They make better candidates than somebody who already knows everything. I'm looking to learn something new. I get bored and need challenges. The task for me is to find work that presents both opportunity and challenge."

HR departments, he insists, are often "more interested in covering their ass than in unearthing the right candidates. You have to get the right key words in the right order." I couldn't have said that better myself.

What I'm seeing in interviewing candidates, attending job fairs and talking to the companies' representatives, and generally talking a lot about jobs, is that there is an enormous amount of talent out there looking for work right now. The economy is presenting unusually attractive opportunities for businesses willing to step outside the confines of traditional HR restrictions and hire people with curiosity, attitude, energy and moxie. People who will give you their best every day and who understand how business operates. People who don't feel entitled, but, instead who want to earn their positions. People who like and who appreciate work.

My guess—after spending a while with Chris and feeling his energy—is that he's that kind of guy. He's active in the community ("I'm the only unemployed guy on the Board of Economic Development for the city [of Roanoke]," he says, grinning), settled ("I grew up moving and I don't want that for my son") and fully willing to give anything that's interesting a try. Even for free.

"I'm looking more for a project than a job,"



Chris Berry

Dan Smith

he says. "Companies don't always have jobs, but they always have projects that need to be done. I can do that full-time, part-time, however they want it done."

He, like so many valuable professionals among us, just wants a shot. You can reach him at chris@chrisberryonthenet.com. Tell him I sent you. 

Field / On Tap

from Page 59

It's a great art, a great skill, to maintain a balance between comfortable, safe, secure, calming, reassuring, predictable—and exciting, lively, mysterious, exotic, energetic, spontaneous. I wouldn't think it possible if I didn't see it with my own two eyes—on just about every episode of *The Brady Bunch*.

Part of the lesson isn't just for me though, gentle reader. Thank God, I have someone to shove it off to. Someone on the outside of the great vehicle where I can roll down my window and scream.

You, the businesses you run, the businesses where you work, and the businesses you choose to patronize—all have to deal with this issue of predictability and spontaneity.

The Sunday after Sunday after Sunday restaurant? It had no idea it was dealing with the Field Family Predictability, the automatic tracking of the Great Vehicle and its homing pigeon-like movement, and the ever possible whims of the female persuasion, just lurking in the background, waiting for a moment to offer up sacrifice to the god of the purely spontaneous.

Last Sunday, the great vehicle was not to be seen in the restaurant's parking lot. Our \$50 lunch (put in the restaurant's offering plate *EVERY* Sunday) was nowhere to be found. Because of a protest emanating from a back seat? Hardly.

They started charging for ranch dressing.

After three years of Sundays. Over three-hundred baskets of beer-battered fries (two every week).

Now that's an act that's just too spontaneous. I'll have to drive in another direction. Shoot me and get it over with. 

Letters

Editor,

Tom Field is right ("The Fair Thing to Do"): life is fair. Unless of course you are an 8-year-old with the temerity of being born into a drug-filled, violent family, whose only chance for success is the socialism of programs like West End Center and TAP. Or unless you are the same 8-year-old who cannot get simple treatment for chronic asthma because he does not have the right plastic insurance card in his pocket. Or unless you are one of the millions of previously content "low-wage earners" whose recent loss of a job is a mere statistic in the disproportionate effects of this recession.

Tom, you seem like a highly intelligent person with valid, informed opinions, and your satire is entertaining. I'm sure you recognize the middle ground in the "fairness" debate. Unfortunately, too many of your readers will take your message as ideological gospel and run with it.

Chad Braby
Roanoke

Editor,

After being in Roanoke doing service work for 28-plus years and knowing most of the 15 men and 15 women listed as the best dressed (Most don't know me by name), I agree with the list except for the best of the best in men. Surely you and your staff know Steve Musselwhite (Musselwhite Insurance). Now, Ed's (Hall) not going to be happy, but I bet he would agree.

Danny Washburn
Meador & Co. Locksmith
Roanoke

Editor,

As a member of the Mill Mountain Theatre board and a guy who cares deeply about our Valley, thanks for your kind and supportive words in the March issue of Valley Business FRONT (Dan Smith's "My View: A Mill Mountain comeback"). It's a struggle, but hopefully we'll get there.

Mike Warner
Roanoke

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

Editor,

I suppose your selections for "Passion for Fashion" (April cover) were well-intended. You failed to list the uniforms of our soldiers, aprons for the cooks where those on the list eat, the uniforms for those who repair your fancy cars ... the coveralls and boots of dairy farmers. ... But my choice for fashion is the blue jeans and coveralls my employee Ronald Salmons wears each day. He puts my machinery together and repairs my equipment ... I guess "fashion" is in the eye of the beholder.

George Canode, owner
Farm Equipment Corp.
Christiansburg

Editor,

Since Valley Business FRONT published "It's Fairlawn, Thank You Very Much" (April), the owners of Radford Shopping Plaza were finally so embarrassed that they are looking at pricing a new sign [replacing one that had been up 40 years]. In addition we have gotten more and more interest in Fairlawn. The Assistant Superintendent of Schools contacted me about the Fairlawn project and partnering with them. The School is wanting to take the old Riverlawn school and make it the "Fairlawn Transitional Cooperative Program," directed to the arts, horticulture ect., with a service element to the program. That is where the Fairlawn project comes into place with our attempt to create a sense of community through beautification efforts. The idea of so many segments of the community coming together for a common cause is just plain exciting.

Peggy White
Executive Director
Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce

Corrections & Clarifications:

Bonomo's, a women's clothier in Blacksburg is open Monday through Friday, 10—6; Saturday 10—5; Sunday 1—5. A description in the April cover story on fashion was incomplete.

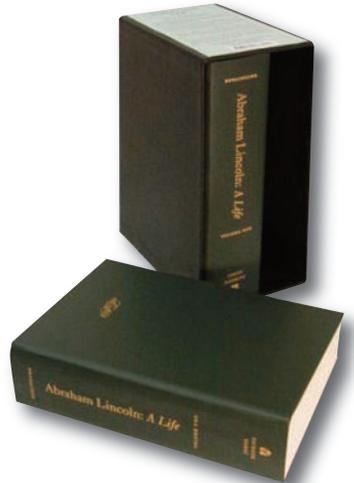
Jos. A. Bank, a national clothier has over 20 locations in Virginia. The Blacksburg store (First & Main) should have been listed in the description, along with the Roanoke store (The Forum).

A photo caption of Doug Kidd should have identified the company as Tom James, a custom clothier.

Dave Sarmadi's nationality is Iranian, "and I'm very proud of that," he says. His nationality was incorrectly identified in the "Work Spaces" feature in April.

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.



Big book for a big life

Michael Burlingame's *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (Johns Hopkins University Press, \$125 for the two-volume boxed set) is being looked upon by some heavyweights as the very best of the Lincoln biographies in a crowded field. Think "Pulitzer Prize" for this baby. During this bicentennial of his birth, about 60 new Lincoln titles are expected. A quick Amazon search of "Abraham Lincoln" brings more than 67,000 entries.

Burlingame is a noted Lincoln scholar who happens to be able to write like an angel. Carl Sandburg's biography is generally considered the best written, but my guess is that this landmark work will rank with Sandburg's—and anybody else's—work for literary value, for research, for new material, for looking at the Lincoln we know and the one we don't.

I found the young hack journalist Lincoln—turning out editorials—to be especially interesting (given his profession), but at every stage of his life in these books, he meets or exceeds the Lincoln we know, would like to know, think we know. If you're limited to one biography this year, my guess would be that you'll want to start here. Magnificent set, it is.

—Dan Smith, Editor

General's general

By some accounts General William E. DePuy was the greatest soldier of his generation and possibly the most influential officer since

World War II. Not all agree but there is certainly a consensus that he played a key role, if not *the* key role, in reforming and reorganizing the U.S. Army after Viet Nam.

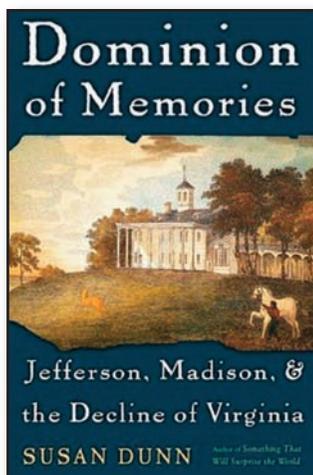
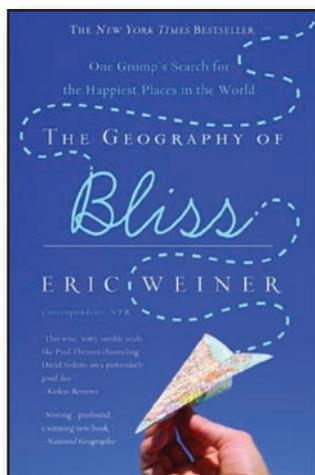
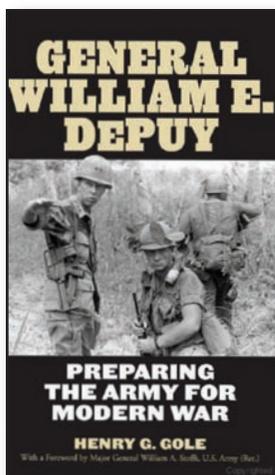
In *General William E. DePuy, Preparing the Army for Modern War* (The University Press of Kentucky, \$ 35), Henry Gole traces DePuy's military career ROTC through WWII, CIA involvement during the Korean War, combat in Viet Nam to his last command where he led officers charged with fixing a broken post-Viet Nam volunteer army. DePuy worked with such notables as Patton, Westmoreland, Abrams and briefed President Lyndon Johnson in the White House.

The author has done a tremendous job in bringing his subject to life. Throughout his career DePuy was driven to see his troops' chances for survival in combat maximized. Our military forces still benefit today from his leadership and vision.

—Jay Turner, J.M. Turner Construction

Happy places

The Geography of Bliss by Eric Weiner (Twelve Publishing, \$13.99) is the book proposal I wish I had made. Former NPR correspondent and self-proclaimed sourpuss Weiner went looking for the world's happiest places. He had spent too much time in some of the world's most unhappy places, covering war, famine and enough other unpleasant things that he felt he deserved a change. He'd been born in 1963 or as he liked to call it, The Year of the Smiley Face, but



this and the whole American sense of an entitlement to happiness was foreign to him. Whether out of puzzlement or envy, he had to study it.

Weiner starts in the Netherlands where the World Database of Happiness is, because even irrational and ephemeral subjects can generate data. He went to various countries to see if these factors could guarantee that the whole country would be happier. Along the way he found things and ideas that he expected and other things that totally surprised him and he writes about it in a smart, funny way that entertains as well as educates. Part research study, part travel guide, part philosophical treatise on the nature of happiness, Weiner's book is a great choice for those times when you want to be anywhere but where you are.

—Becky Hepler, librarian, writer

Slipping away

It's just past the turn of the century and Virginia stands at a crossroads. Virginia's leaders are facing enormous pressure to stop the flow of knowledge, investment, and innovation from rural communities to the more prosperous urban areas. Virginia families are forced to send their children out of state in order to advance their education. The state's transportation systems are a joke. A large portion of Virginians are locked in an economic system that provides them with no control of their own destinies. Elected leaders, and the press, lack the courage to address the state's substantive social and economic injustices.

This is the story of 1800-1860 Virginia in *Dominion of Memories: Jefferson, Madison & the Decline of Virginia* (Basic Books, \$14, paperback). Author Susan Dunn illustrates how Virginia, the Commonwealth that produced four of the first five presidents, was quickly usurped in less than 30 years by smaller states' economies, expansions of individual liberties, leadership, infrastructure, and educational systems.

Dominion is a tough read that pulls no punches when it comes to showing how some of Virginia's most historically revered leaders played politics in order to protect the planters and their reliance on slave labor. The author's extensive use of original material provides a stark reminder of how parochial and bloody Virginian politicians could be when called upon to protect entrenched social order of the day. Provocative in its tone, and sharp with its observations, *Dominion of Memories* offers a frank assessment of how the nation's strongest state tossed its potential aside in the name of economic provincialism and maintenance of that day's preferred "social order."

—Scott Martin, Franklin County



photos: Tom Field

Tax Protest Rally >

A sizeable crowd gathers at Roanoke's Wiley Drive, April 15, to protest the current tax system. Named the "Tea Party," events were staged all across the country on tax filing day, and included supporters of the Fair Tax. "I'm concerned about the way our country is headed. When your household is facing financial difficulties, you don't go out and triple your expenses to solve them," said **Patti Thomas** of Roanoke.

Valley Business FRONT is FRONT'n About at many events each month. Check the blog links at www.vbFRONT.com for more coverage.

FRONT 'N ABOUT



photos: Tom Field

Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce >

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce held its New Member Expo, March 31st at the Days Inn / Blacksburg. The all female a cappella ensemble Wilderness Road Chorus performed for the 40+ businesses on display.



photos: Dan Smith

Creativity >

Roanoke's **Creative Solutions Initiative**, which launched in late March, drew a full house on Kirk Avenue at its rollout. Among those attending were entrepreneur **Ed Walker** (left in photo), here talking with **Jay Foster** of Soft Solutions, one of the members of the creative group. Walker is the primary financial backer of the effort.



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Connect4 >

Roanoke Regional Chamber Connect 4 Lunch has all the business members talking in the area. **Jane Dalier**, account executive with Valley Business FRONT, **Katherin Elam**, president of Junior Achievement of SW Va, **Manisha Hall**, staffing consultant with Adecco, and **Sandy Murray**, marketing director with Building Specialists met at Martin's Downtown Bar & Grill.



2009 Business & Technology Expo >

Lewis Pitzer (right) and Pitzer Transfer and Storage CEO **Skip Holland** (center) chat it up with those in attendance at the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce's EXPO in mid-April. That's Pitzer's young daughter, Campbell, on the left, helping attend the booth.

photo: Dan Smith

Entrepreneurship Summit >

Observers of the Student Business Concept Competition attend the First Annual **VT KnowledgeWorks Entrepreneurship Summit**, April 2, at the Skelton Center, The Inn of Virginia Tech.

photo: Jane Dalier



FRONT 'N ABOUT



photos: Emily Field

Go Fly a Kite >

The 11th Annual **Blue Ridge Kite Festival** was held March 18th at Green Hill Park. **Lori Moyer** of Roanoke County with sons **Jackson** and **Rhett**, and young kite launcher **Andrew** were among the crowd, estimated to be as high as 10,000. The 2009 event included 43 vendor / stations and was called a "top pick" by American Kiteflyers Association's Richmond Air Force kite club, according to Roanoke County tourism and event coordinator **Wendi Schultz**.

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*Annual Percentage Rate



photo: Dan Smith

Lewis-Gale ball >

Lewis-Gale Medical Center President **Victor Giovanetti** addressed gathered media with a background of Salem Red Sox Players as he announced Lewis-Gale's new "presenting sponsor" affiliation with the Carolina League club. L-G will be part of the club's marketing and the field is now Lewis-Gale Field at Salem Memorial Ballpark (it was Lewis-Gale Medical Center Field last year and the common gag question was "who sponsors left and right field?")



photos: Dan Smith

Leaving (for) Las Vegas >

Marilyn Burroughs (from left) of Cox, **Joyce Waugh** of the Roaoke Regional Chamber of Commerce and **Tamea Franco Woodward** of East-West Dyecom chat at a Cox-sponsored business breakfast at the Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke. Burroughs, 2008's FRONT Female Executive of the Year has taken a promotion with Cox in Las Vegas.



Earth Day >

Wendy Schuyler of Upupperiscope prepares a seed cup for **Kurt Navratil** of Virtual IT at Grandin Gardens' celebration of Earth Day in Roanoke in mid-April. Wendy gave Kurt a sunflower to plant in his yard.

photo: Dan Smith

FRONT 'N ABOUT



photos: Jane Dalier

Salem Better Living Expo / Home Show >

Once again, the Salem Civic Center hosted the popular Better Living Expo / Home Show on the last weekend in March; featuring **Tracey Russell** and **Danny Taylor** of Boxley, **Johnnie Kelley** of Williams Lighting Galleries, and a huge slab of granite at Rockfab.



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Joe Crawford: "Everything that we make is recycled."

David Perry

The night the lights went out >

Executive Summary:

They're waiting for the turnaround at Roanoke's Steel Dynamics, where "environmentalism" is not a dirty word.

By David Perry

The steel business has Joe Crawford playing the blues.

"October hit, and the lights went out. It was just like somebody hit a switch," says Crawford, vice president and general manager of Steel Dynamics' Roanoke Bar Division.

Business at the steel recycler and manufacturer had been booming, with the company charting record earnings in recent years. But the global economic downturn slowed orders to a trickle, and Crawford, who plays guitar in a couple of local bands, found himself picking a sad tune.

Crawford hopes business will turn around soon, and sees some positives in the infrastructure funding in the federal government's stimulus plan. His customers have been reducing their inventories of late, and the demand for steel for bridges and roads should pick up.

"If ... I don't want to say if ... when the economy turns around, there will be some immediate demand," says Crawford.

Steel mills bring to mind images of Charles Dickens and polluted cities in the Rust Belt. But the Roanoke Bar Division plays a key role in protecting the environment.



David Perry

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

"One hundred percent of our melt that we make our steel products from comes from scrap metal, so everything that we make is recycled," says Crawford. "Otherwise, it would end up in landfills."

When he's not playing the steel mill blues, Crawford's bands like to play classic rock and bluegrass at local venues like the Roanoke Country Club, Hidden Valley Country Club, and the Brambleton Deli.

"A friend of mine and I starting playing in high school and have been playing ever since," says Crawford. "We're kind of the two core guys, and we have two or three bands that we'll play with depending on who shows up."

Crawford cites Credence Clearwater Revival and singer John Fogerty as musical influences, but he's hesitant to pick any one ax man as his Guitar Hero. "I'm amazed by all the good guitarists." 

In Brief

Name: T. Joe Crawford
Age: 54
Company: Steel Dynamics, Roanoke Bar Division
Location: Roanoke
Type of business: Recycler of scrap metal that is reformed into steel products
Title: Vice president and general manager
History: A Clifton Forge native who has called Roanoke home since age 3. Fresh out of Virginia Tech and armed with a finance degree, he joined Roanoke Electric Steel in 1977. Crawford advanced through the ranks and became president in 2004; after a merger with Steel Dynamics, was named vice president and general manager of the newly renamed Roanoke Bar Division.



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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT



Burton

Accounting

Randall P. Burton II has been named partner at McLeod & Company in Roanoke.



Scott



Vaught



Mabry



Hylton

Banking

Member One Federal Credit Union has hired new management in New River Valley locations, including the following: **James Scott** is a new VP for Christiansburg and Radford offices; **Ashley Vaught** is assistant VP in Christiansburg; **Mark Mabry** is assistant VP in Radford; and **Kim Hylton** is a new senior account rep in Christiansburg.

Investing

FRONT columnist **Peter Krull**, president of Krull & Company, has been selected by the Savannah (Ga.) Business Report & Journal as a 2009 member of its 40 under 40 list of top young business leaders. Krull & Company is a socially and environmentally responsible financial services firm.



Robertson

Hospice

Good Samaritan Hospice of the Roanoke and New River Valleys has named attorney **Anne Edenfield**, **Bud Robertson** of Virginia Tech and **Scott Berglund** of Elk Hill Advisors to its board of directors.

WELLNESS FRONT

Chiropractic

Tuck Chiropractic in Roanoke has accepted **Holly Welty-Miller** as a partner in the practice.



Edenfield

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Technology

Roanoke County's Synchrony has named **Troy Jamison** senior VP for business development.

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DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Architects, Engineers

Jennifer Smith and **Gregg Lewis** of Salem's SmithLewis Architecture have been certified as EarthCraft Builders by Southface energy Institute.



Stewart

Real Estate

Dave Stewart has joined the sales team at Prudential Waterfront Properties of Smith Mountain Lake.

RETAIL FRONT

Automotive

Roanoke-based Advance Auto has named **Tracy Cockerham** VP of customer analytics and

insight; **Scott Bauhofer** as senior VP and general manager of e-commerce.

RECREATION FRONT



Haught

Golf

Gary Haught, a PGA member with 12 years experience at high-end private golf facilities, is the new head golf pro at Blue Hills Golf Club in Roanoke.

John Barker, head tennis professional at Hunting Hills Country Club, has received the Mid-Atlantic United States

Tennis Professional's Association Tennis Professional of the Year Award.

EDUCATION FRONT



Richards

marketing and strategic communications at Virginia Tech. She will manage the university's marketing and branding plans, oversee licensing and trademarks, and aid in content development for the university's Web communications.

Thomas Wilkinson, associate vice president for distance learning and summer sessions at Virginia Tech, has been named the 2008-2009 Executive of the Year by the New River Valley Chapter of the International Association of Administrative Professionals.

Competition

Tony Pearman, Access Advertising & Public Relations CEO and Chief Creative Officer was recently invited to judge the 2009 CASE Circle of Excellence



Wilkinson

Colleges

Melissa Farmer Richards has been named director of

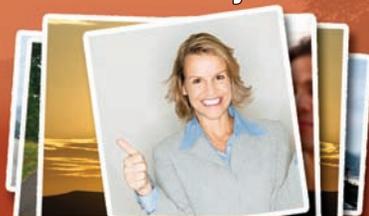
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Career FRONT

awards, a competition open to educational institutions throughout the United States and Canada.

CULTURE FRONT

Non-profits

United Way of Roanoke Valley has announced its leadership for 2009. Community Campaign Cabinet will be chaired by **Dan Carson** of Appalachian Power. **Jeff Marks**, of WDBJ-7, will serve as campaign vice chairman and other officers include: **Mike McEvoy**, Western Virginia Water Authority; **Bob**

Lawson, retired, SunTrust Bank; **Jay Cummins**, Kroger Mid-Atlantic; **Sean Thakur**, Allstate National Support Center; **Mike Carter**, Norfolk Southern Corporation; **Ed Walker**, Regeneration Partners; **Mark and Cynthia Lawrence**, Carilion Clinic and Design Marketing respectively; **Diane DeHaven**, First Citizens Bank; **Laura Bradford Godfrey**, Claire V; and **Gretchen Weinnig** Stellar One.

The Virginia Literacy Foundation has presented Literacy Volunteers of Roanoke Valley Executive

Director **Annette**



Loschert

Loschert the 2009 Nancy Jiraneck Award.

Total Action Against Poverty in Roanoke has named **Rick Sheets** director of energy conservation and housing rehab; **James Thompson** director of financial services; **Selna Childress** director of Head Start; and **Garry Volk** director of property management and maintenance.

A niche you can drink to

Talk about a niche: how about liquor spill management for bars? A company called **BEVINCO** will send out Mark Manson to check on your spillage and help reduce it from about 20 percent to less than 5 percent, says a press release.

Manson works about 20 restaurants in the Roanoke Valley/New River Valley/Lynchburg market and he takes a close look at "sloppy bartending, over-pouring, free drinks or theft that restaurant and bar owners contend with in this universal plague of the hospitality industry known as shrinkage."

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CONTRIBUTORS

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

Anne Giles Clelland is the founder of business news site Handshake 2.0 (handshake20.com) and the president and CEO of Handshake Media, Inc., a new media public relations firm and member company of VT KnowledgeWorks in Blacksburg. She has Master's degrees in education and in counseling and is part of a team organizing the inaugural New River Valley Triathlon. [anne@handshake20.com]

Jay Conley is a journalist and freelance writer who has written thousands of stories about the people, places and happenings in Southwest Virginia. He was most recently a reporter with The Roanoke Times. [jayconley@ymail.com]

Jane Dalier is an Account Executive for FRONT, with extensive experience in publication sales and small business ownership. [jdalierFRONT1@verizon.net]

Donna Dilley is FRONT Business Etiquette columnist, and owner of ProtoCorp in Salem. She has been an etiquette consultant for years. [donna.dilley@gmail.com]

Tom Field is a creative director, marketing executive and owner of Berryfield, Inc. in Salem, and the new Valley Business FRONT magazine. He has written and produced programs and materials for local and international organizations for more than thirty years. [tfield@berryfield.com]

Rob Johnson's journalism career began in 1972 and has included a two-decade stint at The Wall Street Journal, reporting on such industries as energy, manufacturing and tourism. He was later business editor of The Roanoke Times, where his reporters garnered national and state awards in 2007. These days he contributes articles to The Wall Street Journal's periodic special reports on small business and retirement. [bobbyj7676@gmail.com]

Gene Marrano is a former sales and marketing executive in various manufacturing fields, and one of the most prolific journalists in the Roanoke Valley. He not only writes for several publications, but he has a television show ("Interview With Gene Marrano" on Cox Channel 9) and a radio show ("Studio Virginia," WVTF Public Radio). [gmarrano@cox.net]

Deborah Nason writes for national, statewide and regional publications, focusing on emerging business issues. She has owned several small businesses, has an M.A. in Management and HR Development, and is an active member of the American Society of Business Publication Editors, the Society of Professional Journalists, and the Society of Business Editors and Writers. [dnason@c45b.com]

David Perry works for the Western Virginia Land Trust, and is an accomplished freelance writer. He is a native of Blacksburg and a James Madison University Graduate. His writing has appeared in Blue Ridge Country and the Roanoker, among other publications. [dave@davidperryonline.com]

Cortney Phillips is an Intern from Charlottesville, and is in her senior year at Hollins University. She is an English/creative writing major. She plans to attend graduate school. [clphillips@hollins.edu]

Dick Robers is an Account Executive for FRONT, whose background includes civic and corporate administration at the executive level and non-profit management. [drobbers@aol.com]

Leigh Ann Roman is a veteran freelance writer based in Vinton. A recent transplant from Tennessee, she has worked as a staff reporter for The Tennessean newspaper in Nashville and for the Memphis Business Journal. She is married and has two children. [leighroman44@hotmail.com]

Dan Smith is editor and co-owner of Valley Business FRONT. A native of Asheville, N.C., he has been a journalist for more than four decades and has won many journalism awards (writing, photography and design), and several awards for Public Radio essays. He is married, has two grown children and a grandchild. [dsmith@vbFRONT.com]

Kathy Surace is FRONT Business Dress columnist, an image consultant and owner of Peacock Image in Roanoke. She was a fashion consultant for a major clothing chain for a number of years. [kssurace@aol.com]

Nicholas Vaassen is a graphic designer with ten years experience, specializing in publications. Before joining Berryfield, Inc., and the Valley Business FRONT magazine assignment, his design projects included lifestyle, real estate, municipal, classified sales and cultural organization magazines in the Roanoke and southwestern Virginia markets. [nvaassen@berryfield.com]

Greg Vaughn is an award-winning Roanoke area photographer for more than 30 years whose work has appeared in local and international publications. [greg@gregvaughn-photography.com]



Kathy Surace'

APRIL 2009 >
Contributor of the Month

Valley Business FRONT congratulates **Kathy Surace**, 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.

Kathy Surace's first extended feature story, the cover of the April issue on the fashion industry in the region, was good enough to earn our top contributor award for the month. Kathy has been with us from the start and was even with us in another incarnation for several years, starting her Business Dress column with absolutely no writing experience. She was a natural from the beginning and has grown dramatically from a good start. Her column has a solid and loyal following and, as we all now know, she's also a fine feature writer. Join us in congratulating her.

If you missed it, you can see it online (March 09 issue) at vbFRONT.com

FRONT Notes

Field, Smith among Kendig winners

Valley Business FRONT founders **Publisher Tom Field** and **Editor Dan Smith** will be recognized by the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge June 24 with its new Outstanding Literary Artists Perry F. Kendig award. In the past the Arts Council has primarily recognized visual artists, but this year, it is in the process of including writing as part of its mission.

Other winners include: former **Mayor Nelson Harris**, outstanding individual; the **National League of American Pen Women-Roanoke Valley Branch**, outstanding arts and cultural organization; **Anstey Hodge Advertising Group**, outstanding business; **Coleman Gutshall**, outstanding young professional; **Pedro Szalay**, outstanding performing artist; **Paul Harrill**, outstanding visual artist; **Nick and Jenny Taubman**, lifetime achievement.

For Smith, this represents, in essence, a second award. In 2004, the Blue Ridge Business Journal, whose coverage he directed, was selected as a Kendig winner for its support of the arts. The Journal and The Roanoke Times are the only print media winners in the award's history.

The FRONT's Smith has also been nominated for the NCTC Leadership Award, to be presented May 21. FRONT columnist Anne Giles Clelland, who owns

Handshake 2.0, was nominated for the Entrepreneur Award.

Luna loses lawsuit

The \$36.3 million judgment against **Luna Innovations Inc.** of Roanoke could have wide-ranging effects in this region. The verdict favored California-based Hansen Medical Inc. and ordered Luna to pay \$26 million in lost profits, \$10.2 million for unjust enrichment, as well as \$95,815 in damages, according to published reports. Luna has said that a verdict of \$50 million could force it to close. Luna and Hansen had co-developed a medical device that would have applied Luna's fiber optic shape-sensing technology to a catheter. The jury finding was that Luna breached its contract with Hansen, but shared Hansen's trade secrets with a large medical device company.



Virginia Employment Commission

Employment

The metropolitan Roanoke area and the New River Valley unemployment numbers ran below national levels in February, but both exceed the state average of seven percent, according to the Virginia Employment Commission's most recent figures comparing February 2008 and 2009. Roanoke rests at 7.4 percent (up from 2008's 3.7 percent), while the NRV is at 8 percent (4.3 percent)

and Virginia's rate is 7 percent (3.6 percent). The U.S. rate is 8.9 percent (5.2 in 2008). Martinsville, at 20.2 percent, had the state's highest rate.

Layoffs

The Roanoke **FreightCar America** plant was to have laid off about 210 employees "temporarily," according to published reports. The company makes freight cars and concentrates its operations on coal cars for Norfolk Southern. The operation in Roanoke will shut down, at least for now. The Danville plant will not be affected.

Mexico-based **Metalsa** has laid off 36 employees at its Botetourt County facility, which makes truck rails for tractor trailers and buses, according to reports. The Botetourt plant supplies truck frames for Volvo, which has a Dublin facility, among other companies. There are now 194 workers at the Botetourt plant.

The problems in the auto industry in general and Volvo Trucks in Dublin in particular continue to have ripple effects: **Findlay Industries** in Pulaski County, which provides interior components to Volvo, was to close May 1, leaving more than 100 employees out of work. It is the second closing in the Pulaski County Corporate Center that is related to the auto industry. TMD Friction Group will close at the end of May, eliminating 140 jobs.

Virginia's Department of Transportation

seems to be taking a walk with some of Wall Street's best—at least in the bonus department: it recently gave \$200,000 in bonuses and \$300,000 in salary increases to some employees, even as it was cutting staff to satisfy the new budget reality. VDOT is trying to trim 1,000 people overall, 450 in the next 18 months. Officials say the increases and bonuses are necessary to retain experienced people who help make roads safer.

MeadWestvaco's

paper mill in Covington has laid off 80 workers for at least a month. The layoff leaves about 1,320 people employed at the plant.

Commercial Vehicle Group Inc.

in Dublin is has eliminated more than a third of its 90 jobs, according to published reports. CVG has manufactured interior trim parts for heavy duty trucks in Dublin since 1993. The plant is phasing out truck seat production. It plans to close five manufacturing, warehousing and assembly centers and reduce salaried employment companywide by 15 percent. The company is based in Ohio.

Corning plans to close its plant in Danville at the end of 2009, eliminating about 200 jobs. Corning is trying to eliminate 3,500 jobs worldwide.

Advance Auto Parts, which is headquartered in Roanoke, plans to outsource 18 of its jobs to IBM. The jobs will be

in corporate purchasing.

Nautilus of Grayson County, which opened enthusiastically with 60 employees a few months ago, plans to trim 40 jobs, reacting to the economy. In the same geographic area, **Consolidated Glass** of Galax and **Parkdale** of Hillsville have also laid off workers, according to reports.

Bankruptcies

The **Greenbrier Hotel Corporation (GHC)**, owner of The Greenbrier resort in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., has sought Chapter 11 protection asking for approval of financing from CSX Corporation to support the resort's ability to operate in the normal course in the near-term. The filing should have no effect on the day-to-day operations of the resort or its ability to accept and fulfill advance bookings. GHC has signed an Asset Purchase Agreement with Marriott Hotel Services Inc. for the sale of The Greenbrier, subject to substantial conditions.

California-based **Fleetwood Enterprises** which is has a factory in Rocky Mount, has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The plant in Franklin County will continue full operation, according to reports.

Bassett Furniture Industries near Martinsville will reduce its overall cost structure, resulting in lower expenditures for payroll, employee benefits, warehousing and distribution,

marketing, and other items. As a result, the Company expects to realize annual savings of \$7 to \$8 million. About 50 jobs in departments throughout the company will be affected, including corporate retail, administration, customer service, manufacturing, and marketing resulting in an approximate 6 percent reduction in payroll. Additionally, the Company's Mt. Airy, N.C., distribution facility closed in March and has been consolidated to other warehouses in the U.S. and Asia. Overall distribution costs will be reduced by 7 percent.

Pension takeover

Intermet Corp., which has a foundry in Radford, has seen its pension plan taken over by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. Intermet is in Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Intermet is reportedly \$64 million short of its obligation and the PBGC will pay \$62 million of that. Intermet, heavily dependent on the automotive industry, makes metal castings in Radford. Intermet recently failed to meet \$17 million in contributions.

Western Sizzlin losses

Roanoke-based **Western Sizzlin Corp.** suffered a net loss of \$6.4 million (\$2.29 a share) in 2008 on top of a 13 cents per share in 2007. Sales decreased to \$17.2 million.

Have an announcement about your business?

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

Carilion assets droop

Carilion Clinic has posted a \$144.6 million decline in unrestricted net assets for 2008, down to \$798.7 million. That's a 16 percent drop from the \$946 million for 2007. Investments accounted for the majority of the loss, but there was a small operating loss, as well. Carilion is seeking a state certificate of public need to move two operating rooms to Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital from a clinic on Brambleton Ave.

HCA makes list

Based on select quality of care measures, HCA Virginia has seven of the top 10 hospitals in the Commonwealth, including **Lewis-Gale Medical Center**, Alleghany Regional Hospital, Montgomery Regional Hospital, and Pulaski Community Hospital, according to the most recent results from Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield's Quality-In-Sights: Hospital Incentive Program (Q-HIPSM). Sixty-seven hospitals in all were part of the Anthem program.

Grant for program

New Horizons Healthcare Center at

Valley View Mall in Roanoke will be given a \$140,177 federal grant as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus funding). The facility provides health care services for the poor.

Scholarship program

Dale Carnegie Training of Central Virginia and Southwest Virginia is donating \$200,000 in scholarships to help displaced workers. The scholarship program provides 250 \$800 vouchers toward the Dale Carnegie Training programs in the region for workers who have suffered layoffs in the past six months. For information, call 540-772-1723.

Clinic donation

The **Free Clinic of the New River Valley** is the recipient of a \$96,000 contribution from Montgomery Regional Hospital—HCA Virginia Health System. The donation will be used to help fund a medical position and operations in the Medical Program.

Tops in business

J. Douglas Call, president of Virginia Prosthetics in Roanoke has been selected by



Douglas Call

the U.S. Small Business Administration as Virginia's 2009 Small Business Person of the Year. In making the announcement, SBA Richmond District Director Ron Bew said, "The SBA is proud to honor Doug Call, as he represents the finest traits of the American entrepreneurial spirit. His technical expertise, strong leadership and management skills have led to great success for Virginia Prosthetics."

Expansions

Verizon in Roanoke plans to add 30 workers to its Airport Road call center where 250 people already work.

New subsidiary

French-based **Robatel Industries**, a design engineering company working in commercial and defense industries, plans to create a subsidiary in Roanoke called Robatel Technologies, according to published reports. The company supplies Areva and Babcock & Wilcox in this region. The company plans to hire about 24 workers, though initially they

may be contract workers.

Service expansion

Schultz-Creehan in Blacksburg has added a 3,000 square foot lab facility for its electromechanical testing system and has expanded its current directory of high-tech services to include mechanical testing of materials. The mechanical testing of tensile, shear, bending, and compression can be conducted at sub-ambient, ambient and elevated temperatures in addition to the simulation of environmental aging.

New TMEIC contract

TMEIC GE in Roanoke has signed a contract with ZPMC to provide automation and drives systems for DP World's new container port in Peru. The company is providing a crane control system for a key shipping hub and gateway port for the west coast of South America.



Wordsmith Printing's new location

Printer moves

Wordsprint Christiansburg Printing has moved its offices to 225 Industrial Drive still in Christiansburg's Threshold Center, but at the opposite end of the building. Christiansburg Printing,

founded in 1957, merged in 2007 with Wordsprint, and the new company added digital printing, variable data marketing and direct mailing.

"We have chosen not to participate in this recession," says General Manager Clay Quesenberry. "Our new location reflects the continuous improvements we're making."

Move to Giles

NanoSonic, Inc., a Blacksburg-based technology research and development company concentrating on advanced materials, is moving to EcoPark in Giles County. Site work for the 30,000 square feet L.E.E.D. certified building has begun, with completion in the summer of 2010.

Optical Cable loses

Optical Cable Corporation of Roanoke lost 12 cents per share in the first quarter of 2009 (the quarter ending in January). OCC earned 14 cents per share for an equivalent period last year.

Granted LEED status

Community Housing Partners (CHP) of Christiansburg has been awarded a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification from the U.S. Green Building Council for designing and constructing the Tekoa Boys' Home, a 20-bed therapeutic residential facility for

at-risk youth in Christiansburg, Virginia, which is one of the first LEED certified new construction projects built in southwestern Virginia.

Cost of living low

The Council for Community and Economic Research's 2008 annual Cost of Living Index shows the **Roanoke Region** enjoys the second lowest cost of living compared in Virginia. The region has the lowest costs in Virginia for groceries, utilities and miscellaneous goods and services. Overall, the Roanoke Region's costs are 92.6 compared with the national index average of 100. The area's utility costs in particular (at 73.6), far below the national average of 100 are among the lowest in hundreds of metropolitan and non-metro areas surveyed. The overall cost of living average is derived from costs in six consumer categories: groceries, housing, utilities, transportation, health care and miscellaneous goods and services.



Ritz Camera in Roanoke

Ritz to close

The closing of the three **Ritz Camera** outlets in Roanoke and Blacksburg leaves the region without a pure camera shop, signaling the end of an era in

Calendar

Business Basics Seminar

May 12, 4:00–5:30pm
Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce, \$10
Information: 983-0717 ext. 239

Certified Trainer Program

May 18–20
Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, \$1,495
Information:
www.cookiecentral.com/faq

Technite 10.0

May 21, 5:45–9:00pm
Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center
Information: www.thetechnologycouncil.com/TechNite

Simple Financial Statements

May 25, 8:30–10:00am
Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce, \$20
Information: 983-0700 ext. 239

Business Basics

June 9, 4:00–5:30pm
Roanoke Regional Chamber, \$10
Information: 983-0717 ext. 239

Technology & Toast

June 18, 7:15–9:00am
Holiday Inn University, Blacksburg
Information:
www.thetechnologycouncil.com

Workshops for Attorneys, CPAs

May 19, 9:00am–12:00pm
Forest Library, Forest, VA
May 20, 9:00am–12:00pm
Roanoke Higher Ed Center, Room 408, Roanoke, VA
May 21, 1:00–4:00pm
Patrick Henry Community College, West Hall 127, Martinsville, VA
Western Virginia Land Trust
The cost is \$79 per person
For information or registration request:
call: (540) 985-0000,
e-mail: dperry@westernvirginia.landtrust.org
website: www.westernvirginia.landtrust.org/cle.htm

Rotary Club of Roanoke Valley

Tuesdays, 7:00–8:00am
Hidden Valley Country Club, Roanoke
Call Bob McAdam, 540-776-2583

Kiwanis Club of Roanoke

Wednesdays 12:30–1:30pm
Schaal's Metamorphosis, Roanoke
Call Judy Clark, 540-344-1766

Cosmopolitan Club of Roanoke

Wednesdays, 12:15–1:15pm
Call Mike Russell, 540-772-2778

Toastmasters International Clubs (Roanoke)

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retail. When Ritz closes its two shops in Roanoke (Valley View Mall and Colonial Ave.) it will also mark the end of the last vestiges of the old Ewald-Clark camera mini-chain, one that began and ended in Roanoke. Ritz bought out Ewald-Clark several years ago and closed all but the Colonial Ave. store.

Ritz has filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy and plans to close 300 stores nationally. You can still buy cameras and have photos

processed and printed in the Roanoke and New River Valleys, but their availability is at big box retailers or online. Camera repair in the region was pretty well confined to the Ritz shops.

Service ended

AirCable in Salem ended digital wireless TV service to its customers at the end of March. The company says it lost its share of the digital spectrum as part of TV's conversion.



Sportsman's Warehouse

Quick closing

Sportsman's Warehouse's move east has been less than successful as the Utah-based chain of outdoor stores announced its only Virginia store—the one in Roanoke—will close. The store has been open only since 2007 near William Fleming

High in north Roanoke. The store rests on five acres of valuable real estate, its value estimated at \$4.5 million.

Compiled by Dan Smith

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