

# Valley Business FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING  
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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[vbFRONT.com](http://vbFRONT.com)



**Pool** side

**Linked:  
In or Out?**

**ElderLaw**

**Eye  
Guy**

*the* **RESORT**  
*report*

Gary Walton,  
Hotel Roanoke



# Edie Saunders

NEWEST ADDITION TO THE VALLEY BANK MORTGAGE TEAM

Edie Saunders, Mortgage Banking Officer



Yvette Kahn Ewers,  
Mortgage Banking Officer

Steve Reeves, Senior Vice President,  
Mortgage Banking Manager

Martha Gish,  
Mortgage Operations Manager

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4457 Starkey Road, SW  
Roanoke, Virginia 24018  
540 769-8556  
540 777-4075 FAX

[myvalleybank.com](http://myvalleybank.com)



# WELCOME to the FRONT

As we roll into the hottest days of summer, the Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership tells us we're pretty hot as an economic entity. It relates that maybe because we long ago diversified the kinds of businesses and industries we rely upon, we're healthier than much of the rest of the nation's economy.

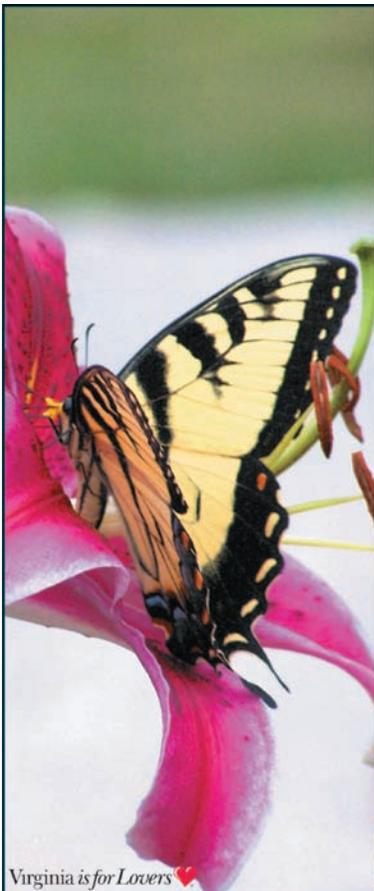
Roanoke recently scored in the top quarter in an index from Moody's measuring business diversity and from what we're told, that's a good thing. A very good thing. Here's what the Moody's report concludes: "Job losses appear to have ended [in the region], and like much of the state, the unemployment rate has been unchanged for nearly a year. Industrial production is growing and credit quality is turning."

So, does that mean we can all relax and look forward to salad days before the first snow? Not so much, but it does indicate that having an economy based broadly—one that can't be wiped out by bad weather or a one bad deal—makes a lot of sense. Time was, Roanoke was a railroad town. The railroad moved. It was a manufacturing town. The American Viscose plant closed and GE downsized. It was a banking town and ... well you know.

Now, we're all over the economic map, from construction, to health care, to education, to technology, and Moody's says we're not only healthy, but leading a new dynamic. Good for us.

**Tom Field**

**Dan Smith**



## The charm of yesterday... the convenience of today.

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History and heritage from yesterday  
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Mansions, gardens, butterflies

Outdoor recreation everywhere  
Artisans, antiques -shoppers beware!  
Music, festivals, even a barn dance  
Lore, legend, a little romance

Musical theatre to make you smile  
A slower pace, relax awhile  
A charming town, a friendly way  
You might even see a First Lady



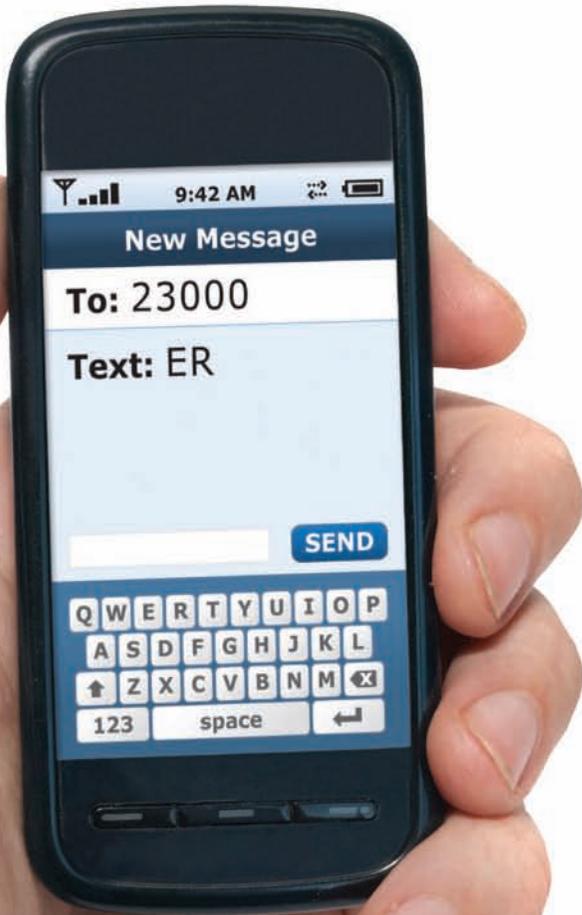
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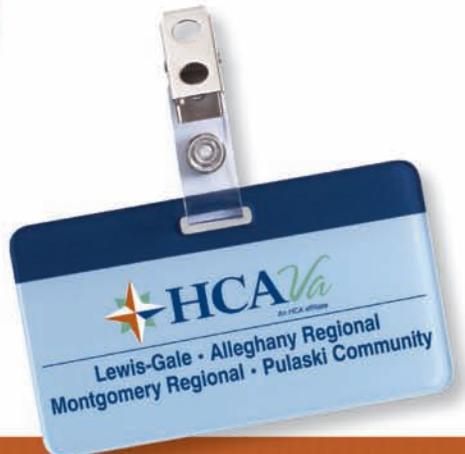
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Cover photography of Gary Walton  
by Greg Vaughn Photography.

# Valley Business FRONT

Roanoke office at  
Jefferson Center  
Suite 100

P.O. Box 1041  
Salem, VA 24153  
(540) 389-9945  
www.vbFRONT.com

## Staff

Publisher /  
Creative Director

Tom Field  
tfield@vbFRONT.com  
(540) 389-9945

Editor

Dan Smith  
dsmith@vbFRONT.com  
(540) 556-8510

Account Executives

Jane Dalier  
(540) 239-2610

Jo Lynn Seifert  
(540) 589-1439

Graphic Designer

Nicholas Vaassen  
nvaassen@berryfield.com

Production

Berryfield, Inc.  
PO Box 1041  
Salem, VA 24153  
(540) 389-9945

## Departmental Contacts

Advertising  
Subscriptions  
News / Releases  
Admin / Ops

ads@vbFRONT.com  
info@vbFRONT.com  
news@vbFRONT.com  
info@vbFRONT.com

**(540) 389-9945**  
**vbFRONT.com**  
**morefront.blogspot.com**

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# JULY



Susan M. Ayers



Anne Giles Clelland



Rob Johnson



Janeson Keeley



Dan Smith



Kathy Surace

## Editorial Advisory Board

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

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

# CONTRIBUTORS



Jane Dalier



Donna Dilley



Tom Field



Huong Fralin



Paulette Jayabalan



Gene Marrano



Michael Miller



David Perry



Jo Lynn Seifert



Michele Shimchock



Nicholas Vaassen



Greg Vaughn

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

## 2009 / 10 Members

- Laura Bradford** Claire V (Retail)
- Kim Bratic** Jefferson Center (Culture)
- Nicholas C. Conte** Woods Rogers (Legal)
- Warner Dalhouse** Retired (Seniors)
- Cory Donovan** NCTC (Tech/Industry)
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- Mary Miller** IDD (Tech/Industry)
- Ed Murphy** Carilion (Wellness)
- Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners (Development)
- John Williamson** RGC (Tech/Industry)

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.

“ Know the rules of the armrest

— Page 18



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Blog: [morefront.blogspot.com](http://morefront.blogspot.com)  
Editor's blog: [editrdan.blogspot.com](http://editrdan.blogspot.com)



Greg Vaughn Photography

**“How may I be of service?”** Yes, Gary Walton is the consummate general manager you’d expect from a top resort. But for the FRONT, he was even accommodating enough to step out of that natural role to play the part of the proverbial tacky tourist type, complete with nose block sunscreen, camera, fanny pack and crumpled map. We salute you, Mr. Walton. We’ll loan you our GPS next time.

## The business of resorts >

### Executive Summary:

*For leisure or business, resorts across the country are changing their service offerings to meet today’s market—and economy. In our region, each resort manages this shift in its own way. From subtle, to not-so-subtle.*

By Tom Field

# the RESORT report

The cream colored Cadillac sits stationary in front of the grand entrance, like a coach-and-four awaiting its master in front of a towering castle. The car’s trunk is open, nearly empty, as all bags have been removed and only a set of golf clubs remain. A man makes his way from the car toward the oversized doors, held open for him. He wears a hat—always a hat—and he slips inside. Unhurried. He’s in his 60s, and his every movement says that maybe for the first time in his life, he is *not* on a mission. Though he acts like the owner of the grand facade

he just stepped through, he’s not. He’s in a better position. He’s a guest.

The newly retired ex-company executive is a typical sight at the resorts in western and southwestern Virginia. There isn’t a single facility where you won’t see the familiar scene of old men and their buddies meandering around the grounds. Little pockets of dancing hats, covering bald and gray heads.

But today’s resort has evolved from the exclusive country club stigma. Among the dancing hats is a new



Hotel Roanoke

# COVER STORY

crowd. The Cadillac is still there, but the valet's station also includes the keys to Hondas, SUVs, and, oh my... is that a Ford pick-up truck?

That's not to say our resorts are no longer about service. In fact, the opposite is true. Any change you see is all about service. Service to a new guest. A guest who still demands the best—even if the best involves a little more than sipping tea out on the veranda.

Resorts are reaching out. Adding programs. Increasing services. Upgrading amenities. And in some cases, changing their very message. None has abandoned its traditions, but all have embraced the present. Even the stodgiest is actually having fun with the change. You can see a hint of a smile above that stiff collar.

\* \* \*

## Would you like that wrapped?

The **Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center** offers special packages. No surprise there. Every resort in our region promotes some kind of package. Such combinations of visits and stayovers, along with activities at special rates, are not just common—they're expected. But the infamous tudor style gem and downtown Roanoke landmark (a Virginia Tech property, managed by Doubletree Hotels) has become more creative with its special packages, especially within the last few years. According to marketing manager Michael Quonce, Hotel Roanoke is reaching out to other organizations to assemble experiences in all sorts of areas of interest.

"We have our Art of Travel, Train Lovers Package, Stay and Play, and Golf Adventures," Quonce says, as he begins to run off the list of packages that match reservations to outings

at the Taubman Museum of Art, O. Winston Link Museum and Virginia Museum of Transportation, and even the new Green Ridge Recreation Center in Roanoke County.

A centerpiece and favorite cityscape subject for artists and photographers, the hotel more than makes up for not having its own golf course due to its proximity and convenient walkway bridge to the downtown cultural scene. With museums, theaters, boutiques, farmers market, merchants, restaurants, and ever-increasing nightlife, and some downtown event nearly every weekend, there's always some activity within a short walk. Of course, if you want golf, "there's an app for that," as the hotel has special arrangements with nearby courses.

"Today, the product has to come to you," says Gary Walton, general manager of both The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center and its



Tom Field



Tom Field

Hotel Roanoke's Gary Walton and Michael Quonce

sister property, **The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center.**

"We have a more urban setting, a place where you can relax and conduct business, be productive during the week for business, with time for leisure on the weekend."

The long-version names of both facilities seem intentional, as if to stress their accommodations for business and association meetings. But Walton insists his customer breakdown is still about half business, half leisure.

"It's about 50–50," he says, referring to the "group" business versus leisure traveler. "We have a lot of state associations, corporate, medical, and of course, the university, but the transient side remains strong."

Walton admits there was a slight dip with the national economic slump, but his business is "getting better."

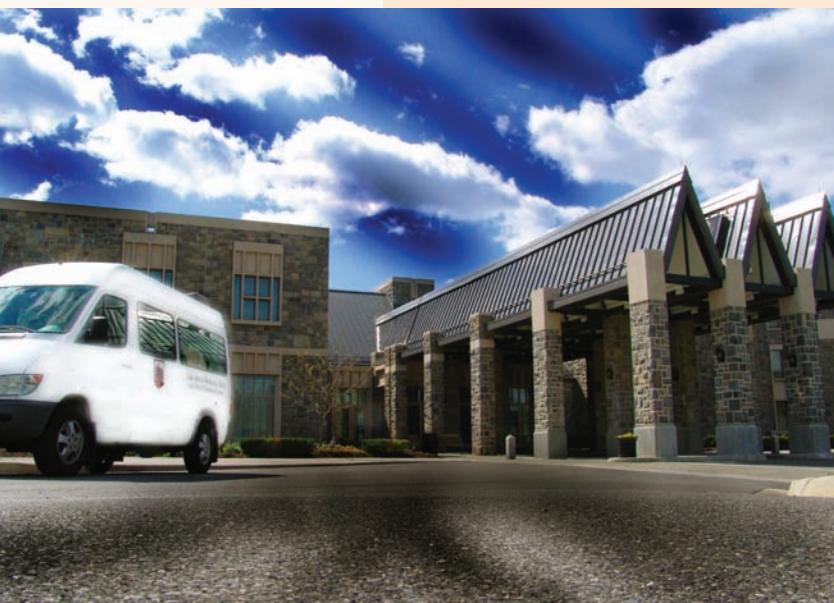
He says that although January through March tends to be "softer," his bookings are not as seasonal here [as is often the case with other resorts].

One of the factors keeping both the Hotel Roanoke and Inn at Virginia Tech less reliant on seasonal traffic is the significant contribution from the conference centers. Local residents may not be as inclined to spend nights in a resort in their own hometown, but if they're a professional, work for or serve an established business or organization in the Roanoke Valley, chances are virtually certain they have attended some conference or business event at The Hotel Roanoke within the year. Increasingly, the same is becoming true at The Inn at Virginia Tech, as the Skelton Conference Center's meeting rooms are consistently booked.

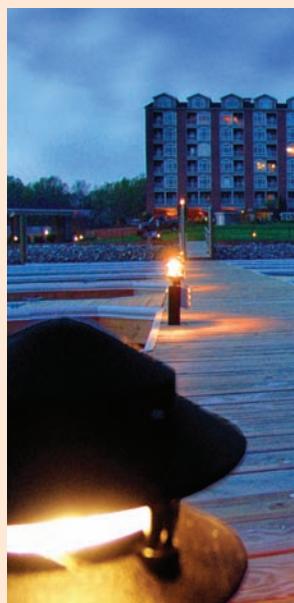
Walton says there is still the attraction to the historical, vintage, railroad character of the old hotel, which

officially opened its doors on Christmas Eve 1882. But against the backdrop of grandeur and weddings and ballrooms and dignitaries and travelers passing through—what one sees most on any given day, is the meetings. Groups from A to Z scroll down digital screens like airline arrivals and departures, from rooms of all sizes down one corridor to the next. Where the old Hotel Roanoke presents an intentional blend of traditional and contemporary, the new Inn at Virginia Tech was designed specifically for meetings from the start. Both facilities are fully competent in their accommodation for business, in region and out of region. The technology, equipment, networks, and flexibility in setting up rooms of all sizes and configurations is as advanced as any meeting planner could want.

The repeat bookings make a powerful endorsement: people want to meet here.



Tom Field



Mariners Landing

# COVER STORY

## A sunny forecast

At **Mariners Landing**, resort managers at the popular lakeside complex hardly shy away from the changes they've recognized in their industry. In fact, they measure it—and embrace it.

The growing resort, gingerly placed on prime waterfront with its mix of condos and hotel, golf course and spa, boat slips and meeting rooms, is quickly becoming the emblem of active lake living at Smith Mountain Lake. What the resort embraces though, is a customer who seeks activity, but still most definitely cherishes a relaxed environment.

Holly Sweet, director of housing, says in just the past three years, the guest type has reversed itself.

"In 2006 we had about 40 percent transient, and 60 percent group. In 2009 it was 60 percent transient and 40 percent group," Sweet reports. "We know

we're always going to have the summer transients; 76 percent of our guests are right here in Virginia."

Sweet goes on to say that both weddings and events doubled in the past year. She says the business strategy is to continue to serve the big groups, like family reunions and social events, but the resort will really focus on two areas: "pushing the transient" market and "increasing our amenities."

Matt White agrees. In like fashion, the president of Mariners Landing cites analytics.

"We're going out and creating events," White says. "Two-thirds of all our Web traffic goes to our events calendar."

White says his resort needs to self-generate. "We won't sit back and wait," he declares.

Proving they intend to follow that directive, Sweet

and White take turns describing activities, one after the other; which are all confirmed by the ongoing e-mail announcements and calendar postings. From antique boat shows to Fourth of July and New Year's holiday celebrations to summer concert series (featuring significant national acts), all the way to hosting a fall corn maze, there's little doubt the resort is committed to an active schedule. There's even a stated goal of one major event per month attracting 500-plus people.

With all the buzz of activities, you might wonder if attention to the individual guest is sacrificed. Not true.

The staff at Mariners Landing seems even more attentive to the needs of its guest. And two partnerships in particular make that commitment clear. First is Benjamin's, the on-site restaurant managed by Benjamin McGehee with a menu and fare suited for the most discriminating.



Tom Field



Tom Field

**Benjamin McGehee, Matt White and Holly Sweet of Mariners Landing**

And then, there's the spa. PureSpa owner Christin and director Brandi hand guest a four page menu of services, where "full service" hardly seems an adequate description.

If there is any reason to wonder whether all this effort is working, Sweet has yet another statistic ready to report: a figure regarding vacation travelers to Mariners Landing.

"We have 64 percent repeat guests," says Sweet.

## History repeats itself

The Homestead, in many ways, is not as enamored with change. Oh, it will admit it. The Hot Springs resort is the oldest, "most historic" in the United States, after all; so what's change to a place with a birthdate of 1766?

When Hotel Roanoke says "the product has to come to you" and Mariners Landing says it's "going

out and creating events," folks at The Homestead say something different about today's market. It sounds like the exact opposite perspective.

"Why would you bring toys to Disney World?"

So says Carol Stratford, the director of marketing communications. She responds to the notion that people are getting exactly what they want at The Homestead, whether it's just their love of the four-course dining, the ballroom dancing, the golf, etc. Her statistics seem unchanging. A 50/50 split between leisure and group. A 75 percent drive-in visitor within four hours. And though a great bulk of her visitors come from the DC area, southern Maryland, Richmond and Roanoke—the demographics really haven't changed.

But within minutes, both Stratford and Peter Faraone, the vice president and general manager,

begin listing what they call "enhancements to an already full schedule."

The Homestead promotes an "unlimited package," which gives guests flexibility in choosing a variety of activities instead of different rates for different combinations.

Stratford says the resort has "become more creative in its positioning" and Faraone says, "We keep thinking of new ways... not just golf or shooting..."

In spite of the clear inference that "we are who we are and we'll stay who we are," along with the direct statement that "we don't have to create events," even the stoic Homestead has recognized the need for *some* change.

The resort employs e-mail blasts, a hardcopy newsletters (guests insist on that, says Stratford), and social media like Facebook to connect with its newest target audience.





## Meeting, anyone?

Tom Field

Rosa Lee Jude knows how to do a meeting. On top of that, she has the whole Town of Wytheville behind her. The director for **Wytheville Meeting Center** (who also happens to be the coordinator for Wytheville Convention & Visitors Center) says if there's been a dip in the economy, "we haven't felt it as much as others."

"There has been desperation in organizations looking for a place to meet in this area," Jude says, speaking of the major intersection of Interstates 81 and 77.

"In just three years, we've held 1,100 events for over 100,000 people. We've had as many as seven events going on at the same time, and we're already getting repeat business, which is outstanding."

Though the 12,000 square foot meeting facility can't really be classified as a "resort" it does reside in the same structure that houses the recreation center, a 60,000 square foot

facility with pool, climbing wall, and indoor track.

Jude calls the Center a great example of "government business" where the town runs the operation just like a business. There's a big emphasis on technology, with experienced staff on hand, approved caterers, and flexibility in room configurations.

The name is not flashy, but that was intentional, according to Jude.

"We tell where it is—and what it is."

Jude also says the Center was designed as a practical, but comfortable and sophisticated venue from the beginning. With 40 bookings in the most recent month, she says they haven't even gotten to the point of managing their own events..."yet."

"We have the amenities [organizers] need, without the big city price," she exclaims.

And perhaps the most telling sign of the times is the addition of two activities: archery and off-road adventures. At The Homestead? You betcha.

But clearly, this is a resort that wants to hold on to its tradition, its history, its time-honored expectations.

"Twenty-three presidents stayed here," Faraone interjects. "There's a real history of guests... and we have a loyalty from generation to generation. It's one of a kind in the world."

Though new in his position, Faraone sounds like he has been on board his entire

career when he talks about the staff, or as he says, "our families." He cites 130 employees with 25 years or more of service; and "a lady in accounting who has 62 consecutive years" at The Homestead.

Even for today's guest, that's putting history to work for you.

### Googling up some romance?

If history alone isn't enough, there's always Hollywood. The irony is that Mountain Lake in Giles County (officially **Mountain Lake Conservancy and Hotel**) is about as far removed from Tinseltown as the moon itself. Here, however, unlike



Tom Field

in LA, the moon is bright and crystal clear, rising above the most natural lake and mountain top setting you can find anywhere in the state.

And yet the number one reason people find their way to the great stone lodge and rustic cabins is still a result of searching online for “that place featured in ‘Dirty Dancing.’”

Anita Hines, the director of sales and catering says the two greatest sources of guests to the Giles County resort (a non-profit organization owned by a foundation in Galveston, Texas) come from the movie—one of the top ten romantic movies of all time—and the Virginia Tech community.

“Our business comes from leisure first, and I include reunions in that, then meetings and conferences, and then weddings,” says Hines.

There is an ever-present connection to Mountain

Lake as a romantic getaway, and you hear it in the descriptions from Hines, who smiles as if she knows a secret. She clearly enjoys talking about “her resort” and especially has a fondness for the stories about how people get there.

Hines cites the contribution of loyalty and repeat business to the resort, and to illustrate, tells the story of three weddings in three years from the same party. No, the same couple didn’t remarry—though anything is possible at Mountain Lake—but the bride had her wedding, then another in her bridal party booked the next year, and then another. That “keep coming back” factor is typical of visitors to the resort, both for individuals and groups, according to Hines.

Mountain Lake is in a remote area (designated a conservancy) and it’s true that guests report the feeling that they have stepped into another time period from the past when

they stay in the lodge or cabins. But behind the old stone, the wooded pristine trails, the scattering of cabins in little groupings, the old ballroom, and even the barn (which houses the nightly entertainment from a single guitar player to a German oompah band)—there is still some 21st Century marketing going on.

Hines says a lot of interest, then bookings are developed from direct and indirect activities. The resort advertises in several regional publications and select national publications (such as Southern Living and Parade) in addition to an active and regular e-blast newsletter. A lot of traffic has resulted from indirect activities too, beginning with Google searches for “Dirty Dancing,” “mountain resort” and “Virginia resort.” Two of the most surprising drivers resulted from a feature on AOL’s homepage, and attraction from a reality television show in England based on Dirty Dancing.



Tom Field

Mountain Lake’s Anita Hines

The resort doesn't just sit there and wait for couples to seek out their romantic getaways; it has also jumped on the bandwagon with special events. The lineup includes beer and wine festivals, Sunday brunches, Appalachian Trail and outdoor recreational events, musical and holiday specials, its increasingly popular Oktoberfest weekends, and of course, dances—dirty or not.

Hines does not discount the impact of simple referrals, either, whether from Gilles County Tourism or good old word-of-mouth. It may take a few words to get people up on this mountain—but once they get there, something happens to keep them coming back.

### The call for specialization

In southwestern Virginia, between Floyd and Stuart, sits a resort simply called **Primland**. The property is sprawling, but you don't see it that way, because the

majority of it is accessible by its private road, which runs the ridgeline atop a heavily wooded mountain. There are clearings though, principally The Highland Course award-winning golf course. But there are also smaller clearings in fields you can spot from the ridge-line—cutaways for pheasant hunting, emphasizing the resort's niche.

If one of the current trends in today's market is for resorts to offer something for everyone, Primland takes that idea and whittles it down.

"It's another arrow in our quiver," says Sandy Gardiner, media relations agent for the resort. This time he's referring to a new spa that just opened he says offers "American Indian" based natural treatments and applications. But he could have been describing other arrows. "Something for everyone" is more often than not "something for a very specific person" at Primland.

There's the golf, of course, but it's designed for someone who appreciates a challenge. For the outdoor enthusiast, the activities are anything but routine, with access to hunting (deer, turkey, wing shooting), fishing, skeet shooting, horseback riding, mountain biking, all-terrain vehicles and 90 miles of hiking trails. The pristine environment is so perfect for stargazing, they even provide an observatory. That's specialization.

At first glance, the cabins speckled throughout the trees give a campy, rustic impression until you get close and notice they too, are pristine, spotless and clean. Then, coming down the road and turning into a clearing, you're suddenly greeted with the resort's grand symbol—a 72,000-square foot structure rising and perched on a hill. This lodge features a lot of wood, an intentional blending with its surroundings, but also large windows reflecting back the sky, and all



Tom Field



Primland

Tom Field

# 7 places to host your next meeting\*



- The Homestead**  
Hot Springs
- Hotel Roanoke**  
Roanoke
- The Inn at Virginia Tech**  
Blacksburg
- Mariners Landing**  
Smith Mountain Lake
- Mountain Lake**  
Pembroke
- Primland**  
Meadows of Dan
- Wytheville Meeting Center**  
Wytheville

\* Select facilities in FRONTregion. Our region has other excellent Resort, Bed & Breakfast and Country Club venues as well.

Tom Field

anchored by a perfectly-sited Virginian farmer's silo—though it serves a more contemporary function now.

The resort is clearly targeted to guests who enjoy secluded retreats. The private, gated property combines the best of nature and man-made elements to produce a peaceful, serene experience.

The anti-urban resort is particularly attractive to the person who takes simple pleasure in stunning panoramic views and natural vistas. Apparently, even those pleasures are specialized. Carlton, a security escort tells of the time when some guests suddenly disappeared from their cabin in the middle of the night.

"There wasn't anything wrong," he said, "but they said it was just so quiet!"

Perhaps they should have stayed in one of the rooms in the lodge.

Primland isn't off the map, but it is off the beaten path.

That characteristic is one way the resort fills a niche in today's market. From the busy maintenance crew (working their own roads, utilities, golf course, facilities) to the service staff and administrative offices, there is a sense of strong connection to the very land. You even hear it in the voice of Steve Helms, vice president and Meadows of Dan, Virginia native who's talking on the phone, saying something you don't typically hear from a resort official:

"Meet me down by the North Gate."

\* \* \*

In general, the resort business is fine, implore our featured properties with great solidarity. Some never mention an economic slump or critical dip in the business that would cause any lasting effect.

And that perspective is fine with Klaus Kohlmayr, a consultant who advises hoteliers to "not make any

rash decisions that might not be in the best long-term interest of your property or that will take a long time to reverse. Remember," he says in the spring 2010 issue of *Resort and Recreation* magazine, "you are not only planning for a market downturn, but also a recovery and rebound as well."

But to one degree or another, each of our resorts is doing *something* to seize new opportunities and keep names on their guest books.

That's good for organizations looking for a suitable place to meet. And individuals seeking a little R&R.

And when a resort reports 350 new jobs, \$16 million in tax revenues and over \$144 million to the local economy alone (from The Hotel Roanoke's 10-year report released in 2005) that's good for all of us.

The news is promising—giving all of us a good reason to climb in our Cadillac or pick up truck, and visit.

# COVER STORY



## The Homestead

Hot Springs, VA  
in a word:

*historic*

direct:

**540-839-1766**

800-838-1766

thehomestead.com

events: Jeff Ford



## Hotel Roanoke

Roanoke, VA

in a word:

*classic*

direct:

**540-985-5900**

800-222-8733

hotelroanoke.com

events: Sandra Holt



## The Inn at Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, VA

in a word:

*productive*

direct:

**540-231-8000**

877-200-3360

innatvirginiatech.com

events: Teresa Hughes



## Mariners Landing

Huddleston, VA

in a word:

*relaxing*

direct:

**540-297-4900**

800-851-4988

marinerslanding.com

events: Holly Sweet



## Mountain Lake

Pembroke, VA

in a word:

*romantic*

direct:

**540-626-7121**

800-346-3334

mtnlakehotel.com

events: Anita Hines



## Primland

Meadows of Dan, VA

in a word:

*pristine*

direct:

**276-222-3800**

866-960-7746

primland.com

events: Brooks Bradbury



## Wytheville Meeting Center

Wytheville, VA

in a word:

*convenient*

direct:

**276-223-3416**

866-694-8287

wythevillemeeing-

center.com

events: Rosa Lee Jude

## Do Not Disturb?

Maybe “disturb” is the wrong word—but sales directors at these conference facilities *do* want you to book your next event here. Here are the basics for each so you can review and make contact for your next meeting, wedding, family reunion, etc. All are within a two-hour drive of each other.

all photos: Tom Field



## A few rules for frequent fliers >

Whether you're traveling for business or pleasure, flying the friendly skies just isn't what it used to be. Since 9/11, changes have been implemented for security that serve to frustrate many travelers. Being kicked off an airplane or detained at an airport for unacceptable behavior is not uncommon. The tips listed below should assist in making the trip more enjoyable for all.

- Be ready for the security check. Remove the jewelry, belt buckles, watch, and anything else that will set off the alarm while standing in line. Waiting to remove these items until reaching the checkpoint only makes the line move slower for everyone else. Remember to wear shoes that slip off and on easily for the security check. For current listings on what is and isn't permitted in a carry-on, visit [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)
- Do not hog the overhead bin. Stuffing a winter parka, a lap-top and small suitcase leaves little room for others to stow their belongings.
- Know the rules of the armrest. The window seat and aisle seat passenger get one each and the unfortunate passenger stuck in the middle gets two.
- Keep smelly items packed or stowed while in flight. (Avoid such items as heavy perfumes, nail polish and smelly food. If stinky feet are a problem, keep the shoes on the feet. Avoid foods that leave a gaseous legacy at least 24 hours before air travel.)
- Avoid using the seat back in front of you as a pull-up bar or third leg when getting up.
- If it is necessary to recline your seat, the unwritten rule is to make a "looking behind you" motion and then recline slowly, giving the person behind you time to react.
- For the health of everyone on board, cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- To visit the lavatory, ask the neighboring passengers' pardon. Climbing over sleeping passengers is not recommended. Also, try to avoid resting when flight attendants are busy in the aisle with meal and/or beverage service. If you have bladder control issues, insist upon an aisle seat.
- When cell phone conversations are allowed, keep the call brief and speak quietly.
- Avoid rummaging through bags in the aisle when embarking or exiting the plane.

Using a little kindness and common courtesy will make the ride for all passengers and crew members more enjoyable in a tight space that must be shared. 

## Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

### Executive Summary:

*It comes down to common courtesy, but not everybody exercises that.*

## The problem with 'working for a woman' >

**Dear Getting a Grip:** *I've worked with women all my life, but I've never had a woman boss before now. I am having trouble with her style. Her credentials are good, her ideas are good, and she assigns our company's heavy workloads in this tough economy pretty fairly. That's one minute. The next minute, she's worried if she's qualified for the job, whether her ideas will work, and if everyone likes her. The temper tantrums and the crying jags are rare, but happen often enough to make me feel like a caretaker instead of a co-worker. I'm fine with having a woman lead our team. I just wish she'd do it. What do I do?*

**Dear Caretaker:** The ideal scenario for leaders, for both women and men, is to have peer groups of fellow leaders with whom to discuss doubts, frustrations, and fledgling ideas. Time with trusted colleagues, purposefully set to take a break from the demands of leadership to discuss those demands, can free leaders to lead. And that frees workers to work.

Yes, women and men may have different leadership styles. You seem to have not a "woman boss" problem, but a "boss in need of pals" problem. You could easily have described a male boss who varied in behavior from drill sergeant to best buddy, alternately leading wisely, managing poorly, and abusing power to get unmet needs met.

**Getting a Grip:** The stage of emotional and psychic development of your boss, regardless of gender, is beyond your control. What is in your control is how you respond to the behavior of your boss. If at all possible, avoid being drawn into a too-intimate relationship. When a crisis passes, shared moments of familiarity breed contempt, not reward. And when cutbacks come, you'll be fired by your best friend.

Whether a boss barks orders or weeps them, if you're staying in the position, listen for the "what" of the message, not the "how." Determine what the problems are, which of them are within your areas of strength, expertise and jurisdiction, and solve them. Implement, execute, and accumulate accomplishments and credentials. What your boss needs—a peer group of the like-minded—create for yourself. Wherever your boss may be stalled, you'll be driving on your own leadership road. 

*Need to start "Getting a Grip" on a personal problem at work? E-mail your question to [grip@handshake2o.com](mailto:grip@handshake2o.com).*



## Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

**Executive Summary:**  
It's not about your boss' gender; it's about your response.

Read the FRONT online **vbFRONT.com**  
Also get more stories and pictures at [morefront.blogspot.com](http://morefront.blogspot.com)



## Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

**Executive Summary:**  
*Dressing for long flights doesn't have to mean T-shirts and pajama bottoms. Slip on a jacket and look a bit more elegant.*

## Have sweats, will travel >

Once upon a time business travelers dressed for a business trip in their most professional suits. Times have changed drastically, as more travelers dress for comfort and save business suits for their destination.

Flight attendants have seen a lot of this change firsthand. Monica Collins, a flight attendant with 23 years' experience, most recently with USAir, has an up-close view of the way travelers dress for overseas flights.

Monica says many business travelers continue to dress for comfort, citing cramped quarters as a prime reason for packing their suits and, instead, wearing business casual or even casual clothing for their trip. Comfort trumps professional dress in today's climate.

Diane Speaks, flight attendant and owner of She's International Boutique, also works mainly international flights. She first started flying 30 years ago and says, "I could almost tell the IBMers by their white starched and tailored shirts and ties. But there is a need to be more comfortable today. People are wearing clothing that travels well. Flights are longer and travel is taxing. Also, security changes make it necessary to dress for the unexpected."

Does dressing down affect how travelers are treated on their flight? Monica says she gives each passenger the same cordial customer service, but admits that when passengers dress well, it conveys self-respect and respect for other travelers—and she likes that.

She says, "Europeans dress a little better, a little finer than most Americans. Americans are much more relaxed. You can tell a person's nationality from clothing and you can see fashion trends start overseas and show up a year later in the U.S." Monica says some younger American travelers even wear pajama pants while traveling.

Asked what advice she would give travelers about their travel wardrobe, Monica suggests they take pride in their appearance. She says, "The attitude is that it's okay to wear casual clothes because it's all about comfort and not in being visually pleasing to others. Dressing too relaxed looks sloppy."

Diane sympathizes about the need for comfort, but suggests, "A nice jacket is a good idea, even if you are dressed casually. It will add a little chic-ness and a little class to your outfit and your image."

So remember, we represent our culture when we board that international flight. Take the jacket along and do your part to improve our image. 



**John Francis: "Money that you don't lose is money you earned."**

Dan Smith

## Big bank, local bank >

### Executive Summary:

*John Francis of First Citizens Bank makes it a point to tell you exactly what his bank is and what it isn't at a time when the big boys are painted with a very large brush.*

### By Rob Johnson

This isn't an easy time for big banks. From the standpoint of image, it's better to be smallish and not on the list of several hundred financial institutions that accepted some of the Treasury Department's \$200 billion bailout in 2008.

Don't look for John Francis' institution, First Citizens Bank, on that list. "We, as a company, have not taken, have no interest in taking and have no need for any government assistance of any type," he says emphatically.

Still, local bankers are often lumped in with the big boys, says Bruce Whitehurst, president and chief executive officer of the Virginia Bankers Association in Richmond. "It is challenging to be a banker—period—right now. Because our national media and political leaders have really blurred the lines between Wall Street investment bankers and commercial banks. That affects all of us."

Francis, executive vice president of 54 First Citizens Bank's Mid-Atlantic branches, including Roanoke and far beyond, knows well that these days it's better to be seen by customers as a member of the local community. His office on the second floor of a Church Avenue office complex proclaims his down-home status with a series of framed certificates from *The Roanoker* magazine naming him "Best Local Banker" in five recent annual competitions.

Still, the bank is—and isn't—local. It's part of the chain based in Raleigh, N.C., that is its namesake. And while Francis is head of the Roanoke office, he's also a regional executive who supervises a territory stretching from Galax to Washington, D.C., where First Citizens recently opened a branch on Pennsylvania Avenue.

He boasts about the view of the nation's capital from First Citizens' outpost there, but only briefly. After all, not much in Washington is getting high marks from the public of late. One place lower than Washington in public trust is New York banking financial heavyweights like Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase and Morgan Stanley. Those names have come to stand for swashbuckling, and that contrasts sharply with the lending and investment style followed by Francis and the First Citizens chain as a whole.

## New River Pharmaceuticals >

Compiled by Paulette Jayabalan

### Overview:

*New River Pharmaceuticals Inc. has been owned by Shire plc. since 2007 and continues to operate through its subsidiaries as a specialty pharmaceutical company, focusing on development of amphetamines and opioid analgesics. The company's products include Vyvanse, a stimulant used to treat psychiatric disorders; NRP290, an opioid used to treat acute pain; and NRP409, used for hypothyroidism and other indications. New River Pharmaceuticals was founded in 1996 and is headquartered in Radford, employing 38 people. [Source: www.nrpharma.com]*

*Shire plc, founded in 1986 and based in Dublin, Ireland, together with subsidiaries, engages in the research, development, manufacture, sale, and distribution of pharmaceutical products. The company operates through two segments: Specialty Pharmaceuticals and Human Genetic Therapies.*

*The Specialty Pharmaceuticals segment offers products for the treatment of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, including VYVANSE, a pro-drug stimulant.*

Source: [ [www.nrpharma.com](http://www.nrpharma.com) ],  
[ [investing.businessweek.com](http://investing.businessweek.com) ]

### Market Commentary

"Shire Plc (LSE: SHP, Nasdaq: SHPGY), the global specialty biopharmaceutical company, today announced the results of a study evaluating the safety and efficacy of Vyvanse (lisdexamfetamine dimesylate) Capsules CII for the treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in adolescents aged 13 to 17 years. The data, presented in an oral session at a national scientific meeting of psychiatrists in New Orleans, LA, demonstrated that treatment with Vyvanse (30, 50, and 70 mg/d) significantly improved ADHD symptoms compared to placebo in adolescents with ADHD.

Vyvanse is currently indicated for the treatment of ADHD in children aged 6 to 12 years and in adults. Recently, Shire submitted a supplemental New Drug Application (sNDA) for use of Vyvanse in the treatment of adolescents aged 13 to 17 years with ADHD." 5/25/2010  
[ Source: PR Newswire-First Call at [www.investing.businessweek.com](http://www.investing.businessweek.com) ]

"Vyvanse [was] invented by New River Pharmaceuticals, [which is] a small, private company that had an office in Radford and laboratory space leased at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center in Blacksburg...By one objective measure, Vyvanse, a Schedule II stimulant, is one of the region's greatest business successes. The drug is on course to bring in gross revenue of \$300 million this year, making Vyvanse a bigger enterprise than many area companies."  
11/09/2008 [ Source: [www.roanoke.com](http://www.roanoke.com) ]

### Total Executive Compensation: Biglari Holdings Inc.

Name	Title	Amount
Randall J. Kirk	President, CEO	n/a
Krish S. Krishna	COO, CFO	n/a
Garen S. Manvelian, MD	Chief Medical Officer, VP Clinical Trials and Regulatory Affairs	n/a
John K. Thottathil, PhD	Chief Scientific Officer	n/a
Suma M. Krishna	VP Product Development	n/a
Samir D. Roy, PhD	VP Formulation and Manufacturing	n/a
Clifton R. Herndon II	VP Finance and Controller	n/a

Note: No compensation figures were listed for the above executives. Source: [ [www.nrpharma.com](http://www.nrpharma.com) ]

### Board of Directors

Name	Primary Company	Age
Randal J. Kirk	New River Pharma	--
Krish S. Krishna	New River Pharma	--
David S. Barlow	New River Pharma	--
Larry D. Horner	New River Pharma	--
Cesar L. Alvarez	New River Pharma	--
Burton E. Sobel, MD	New River Pharma	--

Shire Plc (NASDAQ: SHPGY) opened at \$61.87 on May 28, 2010. The stock hit its 52-Week high of \$68.35 in April and set its 52-Week low of \$38.59 in June.  
[ Source: [www.marketintelligencecenter.com](http://www.marketintelligencecenter.com) ]

### Sources

[ [www.nrpharma.com](http://www.nrpharma.com) ] / [ [investing.businessweek.com](http://investing.businessweek.com) ]  
[ [www.roanoke.com](http://www.roanoke.com) ] / [ [www.nrpharma.com](http://www.nrpharma.com) ]  
[ [www.marketintelligencecenter.com](http://www.marketintelligencecenter.com) ]

### Note

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

Indeed, First Citizen's policy is to generally stay away from real estate "developmental" loans—including those where the repayment of the loan is dependent upon the resale or leasing of real estate to a third party. Most of the recently constructed but vacant properties you see around Roanoke and the Smith Mountain Lake Area would not be within the bank's lending target.

Instead, more typically, he says, First Citizens finances such relatively conservative ventures as the expansions of existing businesses, purchasing equipment or buying out a partner. When First citizens finances real estate it is typically for the owner and user of that real estate.

An ideal client for the bank would be a professional group constructing and equipping its new office, but the bank's lending focus is wide. For instance, Francis cites First Citizens activity in agricultural lending. He says, "A typical example would be someone in the poultry business who is under contract to sell a fixed amount of product every year to a national company such as Tyson's. We would help them finance and construct the facilities to meet that contract."

Underscoring his prudent lending philosophy, he says, "Money that you don't lose is money you earned."

That works for both the chain and Francis' link in it. First Citizens' first quarter earnings topped \$107 million, a sizable increase from the same period a year ago. And twice in the last decade, Francis says, his Roanoke-based

region has topped all others in the chain as measured by a lengthy list of First Citizens' internal criteria.

The 57-year-old Francis has deep Roanoke area roots, growing up in the Virginia Heights area near Memorial Boulevard, graduating from Patrick Henry High School and later from Radford University.

Before starting his nearly two-decade stint with First Citizens, Francis worked at the locally-owned Dominion Bankshares before it was acquired by First Union—which was later consumed by Wachovia. Married, he lives in South Roanoke with his wife, 17-year-old son and "two dogs with bad attitudes."

And Francis is visible locally outside the bank, having served for a time on the boards of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce and Virginia Western Community College Foundation. He encourages volunteer efforts by employees. One, former VMI basketball star Damon Williams, won the bank chain's annual community service award last year for his work with a basketball camp for at-risk children.

Meanwhile, First Citizens' image as a local institution might seem at risk because the chain is gradually expanding nationally as never before, having recently acquired banks in California and Washington state. But Francis insists that the conservative small-town personality of his operation won't change. He says, "The vast majority of our franchise remains in North Carolina and Virginia." 



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Dan Smith

**Woods Rogers attorneys Josh Tracy (left), Tom Winn and Dudley Woody were among those helping explain the new health care bill.**

## Inside the health care bill >

### Executive Summary:

*Here's a down and dirty look at what you can expect over the next few years.*

### By Susan Ayers

Now comes the hard part: explaining the new health care reform bill where the price tag is \$940 billion and the start date is immediately or at various points along the way to 2014.

Who you are and what you do has some impact on how the bill enters your life. Some self-employed people and small employers will begin to feel the impact almost immediately. Others won't notice changes for a few years.

The Health Care Reform legislation amends the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), requiring some employers to provide health care benefits, creating whistleblower protections and allowing U. S. Department of Labor (DOL) increased authority over health care.

There's a lot to know and a team of attorneys at Woods Rogers law firm in Roanoke recently shared its insight and analysis at a seminar. Here are some of the important points the lawyers pressed:

- Employers with more than 50 workers must provide reasonable break time

for an employee to express breast milk up to one year after the child's birth each time the need arises. It needs to be a private place and the effective date is presumed to be March 23, 2010.

- Lifetime limits are established on the dollar value of benefits for "Essential Health Benefits," which include the basics like ambulatory and emergency services, hospitalization, maternity care, mental health services, prescription drugs, rehabilitative services and devices, lab services, preventive and wellness services and chronic disease management.
- There will be restricted annual coverage limits for "Essential Health Benefits" and beginning in 2014, group health plans will be barred from setting those limits.
- Employers with unions in the workplace will have to collectively bargain their plans.
- Effective this fall, group health plans must remove pre-existing condition exclusions for children under age 19. In 2014, pre-existing condition exclusions will be prohibited completely.
- There is to be no discrimination in favor of "highly compensated individuals." By 2018, an excise tax of 40 percent will be imposed on high-cost plans (\$10,200 for individual or \$27,500 for a family).
- Early next year small employers will be eligible to receive grants to establish "comprehensive wellness programs" for up to five years.
- A tax credit will be given to some small businesses to help buy insurance for their employees effective with tax years beginning in 2010.
- Simple cafeteria plans will be available next year for employers with 100 or fewer employees.

- All health plans offering dependent coverage must extend coverage to children up to age 26 regardless of whether the child is married. In 2014, coverage must be extended even if the child is eligible to enroll in an employer-sponsored plan. (This provision is being heavily argued even now. Insurance companies want the service to start immediately.)
- Preventive services are required without co-pays or deductibles when the plan rolls over after fall, 2010. Medical screenings and immunizations are included.
- Each state must set up a marketplace where employees would shop for health insurance at competitive rates. Large employers will not be permitted to enter the exchange until 2017.

- Employers must have to let new employees know about the exchanges beginning in 2013.
- Employers who offer minimum coverage and pay any part of the costs of the employer plan will provide “free choice vouchers” to allow employees to buy coverage through an exchange.

The regulations will emerge from various agencies, resulting in a piecemeal process and like every other law, there are pros and cons. It will take eight years for full implementation. Because many plan design changes are effective in 2011, or earlier, employers are encouraged to begin planning now. Significant amendments to plans beyond those required by the new law should not be undertaken without determining whether existing plans will be grandfathered, advise the Woods Rogers attorneys. 

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



**Jonna McGraw working the sale of the old Heironimus building in Roanoke recently.**

Dan Smith

## 'When are you going to live your life?' >

### **Executive Summary:**

*It was a question that stopped Woltz & Associates auctioneer and lawyer Jonna McGraw where she was and started her on the road to where she needed to be.*

### **By David Perry**

Jonna McGraw's career path has swung on a few key events in her life.

The Radford University grad had planned to be a clinical psychologist until she had to help with electroshock treatments and decided it wasn't for her. Following a law degree at William and Mary, she was working the long, demanding hours required of a young attorney when a tragedy made her again assess her future.

"A very close friend of mine stopped by my office and told me I looked really horrible,"

she says. "He said 'When are you going to live your life—when are you going to do the things you love?'"

She brushed off his question. "I said, 'I don't know. I was here till 7:30 this morning getting ready for something and I'm teaching a CLE class ... I don't have the answer to that.'"

"He died the next week," recalls McGraw. "All the way to the funeral in Charlottesville I kept hearing, 'When are you going to live your life, when are you going to live your life?'"

"I was 38. My dad died at 38. I just thought, 'If you were to die next week, is this the way you'd want to live your life?'"

"I said, 'Lord if this is what you want me to do, I'll keep doing it, if there's something else you want me to do, I'm open.'"

Turns out the man upstairs was listening. McGraw had started working with Roanoke auctioneers Woltz & Associates part-time when she was asked to join the company.

"I said, 'You're crazy, I'm not going to

give up my day job," she says. "Within two months that's what I did. I held my breath and jumped."

Thirteen years later, the Radford native is an associate broker and auctioneer specializing in foreclosures and bankruptcies.

She says she loves the variety associated with the work and the chance to get outdoors. "You learn a lot about a lot of different industries," she says, adding "I get to put on jeans and hiking boots" when visiting properties. "It's work to go out when it's 70 degrees in the spring."

She also enjoys the people she meets and hearing their stories. "People keep saying I should write a book about the people I meet." Sometimes those stories can be tough to hear.

"It's heart-wrenching," she says. "You meet with someone who's 75 years old and they've invested everything they have in a business."

While the circumstances surrounding a foreclosure auction or a bankruptcy sale are sometimes difficult, Jonna tries to help the property owners understand that she's there to help.

"I try to talk to the owners and explain it will be better for them if they let me market their property like any other property," she says. "It's going to happen, so why not do it in a way that will benefit you the most." 

## In Brief

**Name:** Jonna McGraw  
**Title:** Associate broker and auctioneer  
**Company:** Woltz & Associates, Inc.  
**Location:** Roanoke  
**Age:** 52  
**Background:** Jonna McGraw is not just an auctioneer or real estate broker, but a veteran Roanoke lawyer, too. "My legal background makes me uniquely qualified to do a lot of things," she says. A graduate of Radford University and the College of William and Mary, this Raleigh Court resident volunteers with the E.V.E. Network at the Rescue Mission and is involved with a Rwandan coffee ministry whose proceeds help victims of the genocide there. She's accustomed to staying busy: she gave birth to her son between her first and second years of law school. "I was the kind of person who was used to not making anything but," the highest grades, she says. With an infant in tow, her law school focus was "letting go of perfection."

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Children line up to wash their hands before lunch.

all photos: Houng Fralin

## Finally, a place to go >

### Executive Summary:

*Children with learning disabilities is at the center of Blue Ridge Autism and Achievement Center's mission.*

### By Houng Fralin

Before September 2002, it was a struggle for two families with autistic children to find resources and specialists on the disorder in this region of Virginia. Taking matters into their own hands, the small group of parents and professionals started a non-profit called The Blue Ridge Autism Center and gathered at the donated space of Rainbow Forest Baptist Church to provide education, support, and information for children with autism and their families.

What started as a classroom of two teachers, two students, and a budget of \$25,000 in 2002, quickly grew to become a school with 57 employees serving more than 100 students at two locations (one in Buena Vista). It has a budget of \$2.5 million a year after merging with The Achievement Center (TAC) to become The Blue Ridge Autism and Achievement Center (BRAAC) in June 2009.

The merger was prompted when TAC, which

focused on helping students with learning disabilities and had been around since 1975, moved into a location on Whitwell Drive in Roanoke. Financial problems followed.

After running a capital campaign to add more space to the building, TAC started losing students to the difficult economy that led school districts to pull their students back. BRAC was experiencing the opposite and grew out of its space at Rainbow Forest Baptist Church. When BRAC visited TAC during the process of shopping for new locations to move its growing program, its officials were greeted by the TAC board chairman, who proposed a merger.

BRAAC serves children ages 2-14 and is licensed by the Virginia Department of Education. Students don't have to have a disability to attend BRAAC, but there is a professionally trained staff that works with students who suffer from dyslexia, ADHD, or have been diagnosed with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome.

Education at BRAAC is tuition-based and varies at different levels according to whichever program the student is enrolled in. Programs start anywhere from \$250 a month for an inclusive student (one who doesn't have any disabilities) so his tuition is like any regular private school's. Students with learning disabilities pay \$11,500 a year. Those who have intensive needs and



**Students break into small groups for class assignments.**



**Angie Leonard: "We work really hard for individuals to get back into their regular school environment."**



**Students work with staff members for behavioral therapy.**

require one-on-one behavioral therapy where a staff member is with them at all times, pay as much as \$48,000 a year.

"We work really hard for individuals to get back into their regular school environment, since we only serve kids until they're 14 years old," says says BRAAC Executive Director Angie Leonard, one of the founding parents. "We have partnerships with eight local school districts in and around the Roanoke Valley so

our goal is to transition the kids back into their normal environment whether it be private, public, or home school."

In addition to providing on-going training for their employees, BRAAC also provides in-home training for parents once a week so that students can get the repetition and reinforcement needed to maintain their learning skills that are practiced in the classroom. 



**The new BRAAC facility.**



**Ron Blum:** "I tend to have a lot of fun where I'm pushing the envelope."

## Seeing clearly into the future >

### **Executive Summary:**

*Tinkering has always interested Ron Blum of PixelOptics. He probably didn't imagine it would lead to a career in innovation when he started.*

### **By David Perry**

All of the greats have a moment they can point to when they realized their destiny.

Michael Jordan's first dunk on his five-foot high backyard hoop. A young Neil Armstrong shooting a backyard rocket.

For Ron Blum, it was his first pair of contact lenses.

"I was one of the first people to ever get contacts," at age 13, says Blum. "They made a tremendous difference in my life."

fifty years later, Blum provides the vision for PixelOptics, a company that recently unveiled its emPower! line of electronic auto-focusing eyeglasses, which it says is the first of its kind in the world.

Blum's original eye care ambitions were much less grand. He earned degrees from the University of Tennessee and Southern College of Optometry, then accepted a position with Jack Rappaport's local eye care practice.

After five years with Rappaport, Blum set out on his own and was soon joined by two other men to form one of the Roanoke Valley's most famous practices: Drs. Blum, Newman, Blackstock and Associates.

"Miles Newman showed up on my doorstep and was smart enough to recognize a good thing," says Blum of his one-time partner. Joe Blackstock arrived shortly thereafter.

Blum enjoyed seeing patients, but he caught the inventing bug once again and formed Blum Labs (later Innotech) in the late 1980s. Blum's latest invention was a new method of making lenses involving use of a liquid polymer and an inexpensive plastic lens.

"I became very passionate about the invention," says Blum. "We could convert that inexpensive lens into a customized, high quality progressive lens and we could do it very quickly," reducing the production time from 16 hours for traditional ground lenses to just 20 minutes.

Johnson & Johnson bought Innotech shortly thereafter and kept Blum on hand to develop its Definity brand of progressive lenses. Today, the Definity lens (now owned by French conglomerate Essilor) is one of the top-selling lenses in the world. "I look back on that with a lot of pride and personal satisfaction," says Blum. "It was a fun time."

Most recently, Blum set out to develop a new kind of computer screen. "We were working on making the screen adaptive so you wouldn't have to wear your bifocals," Blum says. "The computer screen would know where your body was and focus."

But the shift to slim, flat-panel LCD monitors from cathode-ray tube hulks changed the game. "So I said, 'Why don't we take what we were doing on the screen and put it in the glasses?'" says Blum.

Thus were born the electronic eyeglasses, which Blum hopes will revolutionize eyewear. "I think the electronic frames are a platform," he says. "There'll probably be a day when the doctor will examine your eyes and program your glasses, so when you leave the exam chair you'll have them."

What's next for Blum? A visit to [theeggfactory.com](http://theeggfactory.com), an Internet clearinghouse for all of Blum's many projects, shows that the inventor isn't through yet. "I tend to have a lot of fun where I'm pushing the envelope—taking something from nothing," he says. "That's where I get my pleasure and my enjoyment." 

## In Brief

<b>Name:</b>	Ronald Blum
<b>Age:</b>	63
<b>Company:</b>	PixelOptics, Inc.
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke County
<b>Type of business:</b>	Optical lens company
<b>Title:</b>	Chairman and CEO
<b>History:</b>	Ron Blum landed in Roanoke out of optometry school when he and his wife were looking for a small city in the Virginia/North Carolina/Tennessee region to make their start. The Kingsport native showed a knack for invention early in his career when he created "Tie-Tites," fasteners that help keep shoelaces tied, in the 1970s. Today, this grandfather of two (with another on the way) stays busy bringing science fiction to reality with his innovative—and potentially world-changing—eye care technologies.

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**Paul Gaines: "Helping to enable the global economy by providing the standards by which companies can do business across borders."**

Michael Miller

## The international value of uniformity >

### Executive Summary:

*Without Christiansburg-based Inorganic Ventures, there's no "case closed." And here's why.*

### By Michael Miller

If you've ever watched an episode of "NCIS" or "Bones," you have seen a depiction of how a forensic scientist uses various laboratory tests to detect a trace chemical signature that leads to the identification of a murder suspect. Case closed, show over.

But in real life that little piece of evidence might be scrutinized and challenged by a whole team of defense attorneys demanding proof that the tests were performed correctly.

That's where Paul Gaines and his team at Inorganic Ventures come in. They make the

standards used to calibrate the equipment that identifies the culprit. Without Inorganic Ventures' products, that atomic absorption spectrometer is just a \$100,000 doorstop.

In a more practical sense, Inorganic Ventures is helping to enable the global economy by providing the standards by which companies can do business across borders. In the United States, we have a system of uniform requirements that allow a candy company in Ohio, for example, to purchase sugar from a manufacturer in Louisiana with a certainty that the purity of the product will be as advertised.

But imagine if the candy company was in Belgium. How could the company be sure it was getting the quality product it needed to make those tasty Belgian chocolates? It would ask for a certificate showing the sugar was tested to meet a standard that both the Belgian and Louisiana companies understood. And the machines used to perform the test had been calibrated using an acceptable standard as well ... no doubt

one from Inorganic Ventures.

This rural region of Virginia might seem like an unlikely place to find a company so important to the success of the global marketplace and, indeed, Inorganic Ventures started life in 1985 in New Jersey, as a distributor for analytical standards that were manufactured elsewhere. In 1989 Paul Gaines, a Ph. D. chemist, was brought on board to bring that manufacturing activity in-house. Eventually, the original founder wanted to retire, and he sold the business to Paul and his wife Linda. The company leadership now includes Paul, Linda and their two sons.

Moving the company to Virginia was a long and involved process, which might not have been successful, according to the Gaines, without the tremendous

help they received from economic development officials and local governments in the region.

Realizing that the operation had seriously outgrown its NJ facilities and would need to move, Paul initially began to look around for a spot somewhere near the existing site. But one of the sons remarked that it cost the same to move down the street as to move anywhere else, so why not consider another location altogether?

Linda insisted, "I want to go to Virginia" based on vacation trips here.

Inorganic Ventures employs about 40 people in its new facility in the Falling Branch Corporate Park in Christiansburg, but double-digit growth during its first year in Virginia has forced the company to begin planning its next expansion. 



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## netFRONT

## Get 'linked in' &gt;

**Executive Summary:**

*The question is being asked: Which is the best business networking site? Without question, it's LinkedIn.*

**By Janeson Keeley**

As a business professional, you've probably been invited to connect with someone on one of the many business networking sites on the Web.

Should you connect? Yes. Having an active profile on a business networking site gives you both credibility and resources with which to communicate with other professionals. Lynda McNutt Foster, director of Client Marketing Strategies for Wheeler Broadcasting notes, "The people on LinkedIn are there to exchange ideas and do business, period. I enjoy that clear and defined purpose."

On which site? According eBizMBA, as of May, 2010, LinkedIn was the fourth most popular social media site behind Facebook, MySpace and Twitter. If you're going to use only one business networking site, make it LinkedIn.

The networking is effective. LinkedIn has a number of features that make it more than



Janeson Keeley

Dan Smith

just an online Rolodex. The keys to getting results from LinkedIn are effective and regular use of these tools.

- Your profile. Patsy Stewart, director of social media marketing at Entwine Inc., stresses the importance of developing a complete profile that includes keywords for which others may search, as well as a photo. "Keywords are an important way to help people find you, and a well-done photo conveys confidence and professionalism," advises Stewart.
- Your company profile. Make sure that your business has a profile apart from your personal listing.
- Search. "LinkedIn search is powerful," observes Ira Kaufman, president of Entwine Inc. "I have used this technique for talent acquisition and building strategic partnerships."

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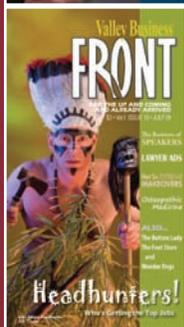
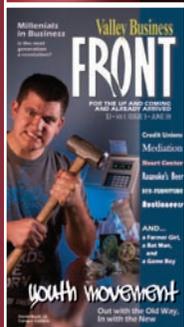
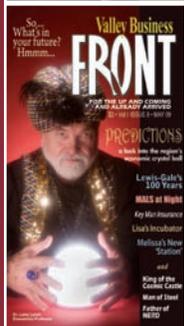
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# Coming Up...

## August 2010 Real Estate!

Fallen, Flat, Fluctuating, or Fabulous—Which is it? Knowing what's really happening with real estate in our region, seems to depend on who you ask. Well, we asked. A lot of people. One thing's for sure—it takes a lot more from real estate agents these days to move properties and be successful. You'll want to catch this very special issue. Whether you're buying, selling, or just have to know what's going on.

## September 2010 Immigrants in Business

Just how global is our region? The September issue of FRONT will show this topic in all its colors. Not only is the FRONT cover story about the impact of immigrants—but the entire magazine brings examples to you—on every FRONT. Don't miss the very first International FRONT.

## FRONTguide2010

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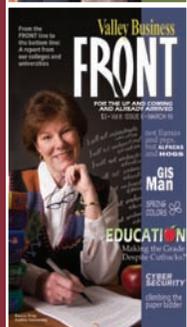
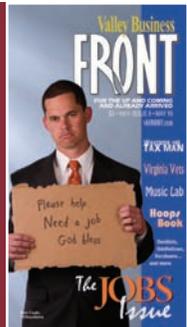
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- Questions and answers. "Spend some time answering questions in your niche topic. This gives you credibility and expert status by showcasing your knowledge and expertise," recommends Brian Duvall of Duvall Consulting.
- Events. Post events that your company is sponsoring. You can invite up to 50 of your connections at a time.
- Slideshare. Get double duty from your Powerpoint presentations by making them available to others.
- Reading list. "We've struggled to create a section like that on some blogs we've

started," reports Foster, "and have found that this LinkedIn section is much easier to use and update."

- Invitations. John Lusher, director of marketing for Consolidated Construction Services, suggests asking people with whom you exchange business cards if they'd like to connect with you on LinkedIn. "If they do not use LinkedIn, ask them if you can send them a request anyway. You may open their eyes to what LinkedIn offers to today's professional!"

By investing as little as one hour a week to LinkedIn, you can increase your visibility, develop mutually beneficial relationships, and be a helpful resource to others—all of which can help you increase your business and your profits. 



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The lodge at base camp

# Work Spaces



Inside the lodge

all photos: Michele Shimchock

## Living the adventure >

### Executive Summary:

*At Wilderness Adventure at Eagle Landing, the instructors live the experience all day, every day.*

### By Michele Shimchock

It's early morning and thin wisps of fog line the ridge tops like ethereal valances. Craig Creek babbles from bend to bend. The gravel under a hiking boot's sole tells a different story each day as the Leader walks to work.

The typical workday here may be 8:30 am to 5 pm, but this is not the typical, muted cubicle. With the Blue Ridge Mountains as

its backdrop, Wilderness Adventure at Eagle Landing in New Castle, is an extraordinary kind of workplace. So special, in fact, that it made Outdoor Magazine's No. 25 of the top "50 Best Places to Work" in the United States, outranking more well-known companies such as Patagonia, Timberland, and LiveStrong.

Gene Nervo, or "the Colonel" as he is affectionately called by his employees, had a dream, an idea, in early 1990 when he purchased 500 acres of rolling farmland and a small clapboard farmhouse outside the town limits of New Castle. This retired Marine Colonel was going to develop a wilderness adventure program for youth that would instill in them the importance of strong moral character, a stronger work ethic, and positive attitude. These days, the activities taking place at WAEL are not



The kitchen



Boy Scouts at the bluff overlooking base camp

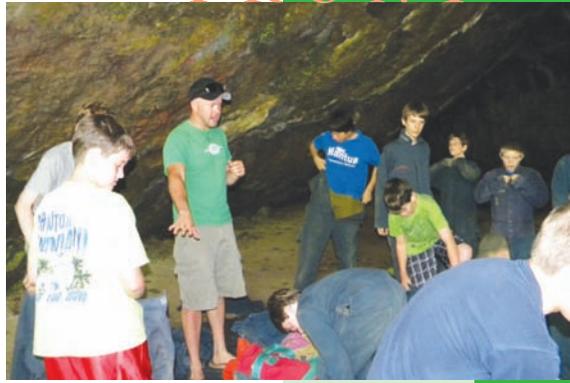
limited to youth, and what he hopes will become of all his visitors, however, is expected of his employees, each of whom goes through a rigorous application and screening process before getting an offer of employment.

“Our two biggest expenses here are payroll and insurance,” Nervo says, and with activities such as a 900-foot zipline, canoeing, kayaking, whitewater rafting, mountain biking, rock climbing, and high/low ropes courses, there is concern about safety. At minimum, Wilderness First Aid medical training is required for Leaders and Instructors. However, designation as a Wilderness First Responder is preferred, and senior leaders and instructors must be 21 or older. Experience, though, is a key requirement.

“Base Camp” operates under three schedules: Group (activities), Monthly (responsibilities that include meal duties), and Duty (a rotating, 24-hour obligation). Corinne Burr, a year-long and year-round Leader, says, “Duty means that you’re responsible for answering phones if nobody else is in the office. If a group is here, then you have a radio with you at all times so that a staff member is always available. When our Summer Youth Program is in session, we answer the phones 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You actually stay overnight in the administration building. This is particularly for safety, for the parents and the people on the trails if they need to access anyone during the night.”

When there are no groups to lead, says Burr, “We prepare for [the summer youth program], which includes meal packing and food purchasing. We tend the garden, do grounds keeping. Typically, we don’t hire in companies. We build our own buildings; we do our own plumbing. We do everything. It gives you a great sense of pride in the place, and you feel that what you are doing has a direct impact on the camp’s ability to keep functioning as the facility that it is.”

Like a pride of lions, everyone who works here is family. Burr says, “What got me to stay was the company, the people, the job itself. It’s a really great atmosphere. We all live together. We work together. We spend all of our time together. So it really becomes, like the Colonel says, a family. And you develop a community. It’s beautiful.” 



**Dan Lucas, director of base camp, instructing Boy Scouts as they suit up in caving gear**



**Perch of the 900' zipline**



**The climbing wall**



**Equipment barn**



**Boyd Johnson: “The last thing a commercial loan officer wants is to hear from a tenant of a building that he’s foreclosed on that the roof is leaking.”**

David Perry

## Detail man for troubled properties >

### Executive Summary:

*Boyd Johnson has spent many years solving just the kinds of problems Hall Associates wants him to solve for its clients.*

### By David Perry

When the real estate market gives you lemons, Boyd Johnson insists he can make you lemonade.

Johnson, the newly hired director of the asset management group at Hall Associates in Roanoke, takes distressed commercial properties—those facing foreclosure or whose owners are in bankruptcy—and seeking the best possible solution for the bank and the borrower.

Johnson is a veteran Roanoke entrepreneur who does the dirty work to keep distressed properties attractive and functional so the tenants will stay or potential buyers will take a second look.

When a property is in trouble, “You have to maintain the building—make the sure the grass is cut, it’s clean, deal with the tenants,” says Johnson. “Commercial loan officers aren’t trained to deal with tenants.

“The last thing a commercial loan officer wants is to hear from a tenant of a building that he’s foreclosed on that the roof is leaking or that the snow hasn’t been removed from the parking lot. He doesn’t have the resources to draw upon.”

Johnson provides those services and more. If a lender involved in negotiations with a delinquent property owner wants proof that the borrower can right the ship, Johnson can help. “I’ll put together a written plan that will satisfy the bank and the regulatory authorities,” he says.

Johnson’s unique background in accounting, government, debt collection and small business ownership provide him with a strong base from which to tackle the problem spots in the region’s commercial real estate market. Earlier in his career, his job was to recover receivables from garment district vendors in New York, Los Angeles, Cairo,

Milan and Rome—a notoriously difficult bunch.

“We’re talking people who get up in the morning and don’t say nice things,” says Johnson. He says he collected 85 cents on the dollar.

In another instance, as owner of former Roanoke printer Jamont, Johnson established a remarkable track record on his receivables. “In my 20 years of doing business, I had a loss rate on my accounts receivable of less than one-tenth of one-tenth of one percent,” he says.

It came down to simple math for Johnson during his years as a printer: “How many jobs does it take to pay for one where somebody didn’t pay me?”

Johnson sees his role as a distressed property salesman and workout man as vital to the economic recovery. “A lot of the community banks can’t take the large hits to their balance sheets that the larger banks can,” he says. “They can’t afford to write off million dollar losses at a clip because they don’t have the access to the capital markets like the larger banks do.”

Keeping renters happy and in their leases is important. “The last thing you want to do as a banker is to liquidate a commercial building with no tenants, because the only person that’s going to buy it is someone on speculation,” he says.

## In Brief

<b>Name:</b>	Boyd Johnson
<b>Age:</b>	58
<b>Company:</b>	Hall Associates, Inc.
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke
<b>Type of business:</b>	Commercial real estate
<b>Title:</b>	Director of asset management group
<b>History:</b>	A native of eastern North Carolina, Johnson received degrees from Hampden-Sydney and VCU, prompting his father, a long-time farmer, to comment, “It takes more education for some people to make a living than it does others.” Johnson is married to Barbara, a Roanoke native. Johnson enjoys his Craig County cabin modeled after Frank Lloyd Wright’s Seth Peterson cottage.

While the Roanoke region is faring better than most in the post-recession recovery—“The 81 corridor has been pretty good,” says Johnson—challenges remain. “The FDIC says 1,000 more banks will fail before we’re over this,” he says. “That means when a local bank fails, a local resource has failed. We need our local banks to be successful.” 

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Derrick Johnson

Gene Marrano

## Pool sales take a dive in tough economy >

### Executive Summary:

*Swimming pool sales and maintenance struggle in a tough economy, but some people just won't give up this luxury.*

### By Gene Marrano

Often considered a luxury item, the construction of in-ground swimming pools and hot tubs \ has taken a hit the past few years, with more cautious consumers holding on to their money and credit harder to come by. That's what several local contractors say.

On the flip side: more families are staying closer to home for vacations and the sale of pool maintenance supplies have held their own.

Virginia Pool Sales (Roanoke County) manager David Key says 2009 "was tougher" in regards to new pool/spa sales. "We do a fair amount of repair and service, which helps," he says. The end of the time when construction of pools was financed through questionable home loans helped put the brakes on, according to Key.

Virginia Pool Sales was busy before summer when pool owners loaded up on supplies. "The question is," says Key, is "what happens in the second half of the year?"

The recession and slow rebound have led many to ponder their potential pool and hot tub purchases. "It's considered a luxury item," says Key. It's an investment that can easily run \$20,000. A pool can add value to a house, although a bathroom or remodeled kitchen is better.

Jim Huffman (Jim's Cool Pools) doesn't build new in-ground swimming pools any more – he repairs and renovates them. That's often less costly than starting over, says Huffman, whose handiwork was featured in a national monthly (Aqua Magazine) recently. "I found there was a tremendous market out there for what I do now." Upgraded pumps and filters can also make a pool work like new.



Little River Pool & Spa in Christiansburg

Jane Dalier



Gene Marrano



Gene Marrano

(Left and right picture) Jim Huffman pool: before and after

"I really enjoy doing this," says Huffman, who is based in Roanoke. He often finds work when people move into a house where there is an existing pool that perhaps fell out of favor with the previous owner. "That's where I come in."

Huffman says some local pool/spa contractors he knows are struggling with the current economy; several that would be booked solid through summer had plenty of holes to fill in their schedules by early spring.

Spas & Pools near Tanglewood Mall has generally been helped by strong supply sales for existing pools and spas. Even that activity has slowed over the past two years, according to manager Derrick Johnson. Even regulars, "I just haven't seen," he says.

Between October and early April, Spas & Pools sold four new units. "We're not setting the world on fire," Johnson chuckles. "You

don't have to have a hot tub or a pool."

Some of Johnson's above-ground pool customers who draw well water may not fill their pools this year, since they don't want to tax their water supply. For others on public water, it could cost upwards of \$500 to fill a pool that may hold 12,000 gallons of water. "For a few out there, it is a concern," says Johnson.

Hot tubs may be less expensive to operate than you think: a study conducted within the past decade pegged electric bill hikes of \$10 to \$30 per month when maintaining a spa/hot tub, although those figures may be outdated.

Cathy Long, an owner with Little River & Spa in Christiansburg, says business has been slower in recent times. Long says sales have been "down some ... mostly in the spa industry." 



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Patricia L. Diffenderfer (left), Attorney Kenneth C. King, Betty M. Dagenhart and David Farnum during a work session.

Dan Smith

## Team approach to elder care >

### Executive Summary:

*The King Law Firm specializes in helping the elderly and their families get through the maze of issues confronting them.*

### By Susan Ayers

Are you, your family members or clients struggling to meet the needs of an elderly loved one during a chronic illness or disability? If one or more sounds of distress described below sounds familiar, you are probably overwhelmed and are a victim of Elder Care Confusion: dealing with missing pieces of the long-term puzzle of what to do.

- The caregiver knows there are additional questions that should be asked, but doesn't know what they are.
- The daily demands are so exhausting the caregiver has no time to perform the research needed to make informed decisions and, in some cases, wouldn't know where to go for answers anyway.
- The caregiver is terrified that hired help coming inside the home or relocating the patient will take everything he has worked a lifetime to earn.

- As many decisions as possible are put off until a crisis occurs.
- The elder has experienced a catastrophic event such as a fall or medication mistake.
- The elder suffered a stroke, heart attack or other serious setback.
- The caregiver has reached the point of dreading the future and is overwhelmed.

A Life Care Plan created by an Elder Law Practice in Roanoke can help piece together the long-term care puzzle, helping attain peace of mind for the all involved, says lawyer Kenneth King.

The goals of long-term care planning for the elderly are: retaining quality of life; helping with health care and long-term care decisions; and preserving family wealth.

Roanoke's Elder Law Practice of King Law Group, founded by Kenneth King Jr., is among the rare breed of 100 law firms in the United States devoting its practice to developing Life Care Plans. There are two additional law firms in Virginia that share this specialty of law, one in northern Virginia, the other in Tidewater.

A professional multi-disciplinary team is led by a lawyer and supported by an coordinators in elder care and benefits, and a paralegal. They help find, acquire and pay

for care, using their resources and those available to them from outside.

Having 24 years of experience as a registered nurse and holding a degree in health care administration, Betty M. Dagenhart has served as dean of Health Sciences and director of nursing for the Medical Careers Institute of ECPI Technical College's Roanoke Campus, a program that she helped develop.

For the law firm, she performs assessments, helps clients with care problems, arranges in-home help, reviews medical issues, offers referrals to geriatric specialists, coordinates with medical and health providers, works to guide and advocate during a crisis, educates and offers counseling and support.

It takes about six weeks for the team to come up with a Life Care Plan, which is reviewed after six months and if approved, it is reviewed annually.

Life care planning shows the consumer how to get the most out of the available finances. The attorneys develop a plan to handle the client's legal, financial, health care, housing and long-term care needs in the future. "A Life Care Plan describes how our team will meet the elder's medical, long-term care, legal and emotional needs during long-term illness or incapacity – until the end of life," says King.

When nursing home care is needed, a plan is in place to qualify for public benefits, as well as a plan to pay for long-term care. If there are problems with public benefits agencies, care providers or estranged family members, families have a lawyer on their side.

The family can finally relax because it knows provisions have been made for the financial future and caregivers get relief from care coordination. 

## So much more.

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and much more (of course; hence, the name)



**ITT Tech's Ron Charpia won't discuss tuition specifics or numbers of students. He says courses likely won't transfer and grads don't get help landing a job. But, he says, students are ready to work when they get out.**

## ITT Tech: Practical, hands-on >

### Executive Summary:

*Yet another alternative to the college feeder system is the ITT Technical Institute for those seeking "a degree and ... hands on experience."*

### By Gene Marrano

The idea of going to college these days without a clear course of action and a major that can produce instantly marketable skills may seem quaint. Graduating students with bachelor's and associate's degrees who are real-world ready is the mission of ITT Technical Institute, which has campuses across the country, including a recently opened outlet on Apperson Drive in Salem.

ITT Tech was founded in 1969 and is a spin-off of the old International Telephone & Telegraph conglomerate. The Salem campus is still adding majors and it offers bachelor's and associate's degrees in electronics and communications engineering technology, information systems security, construction management and criminal justice.

The Salem facility is a commuter school located on a busy commercial thoroughfare, although there are spots where students can gather to play video games as they get to know each other.

All of the classes offered are in the evening or on Saturday, with the first weekday course offerings for a paralegal degree scheduled in the fall. Classes are conducted on a quarterly basis. Nationally, ITT Technical Institute offers degrees in IT, electronics, drafting and design, business, criminal justice and health sciences. Its competition here is stiff: ECPI, National College, Jefferson College, as well as more traditional venues and the community college system.

Salem campus director Ron Charpia, a retired Air Force aircraft mechanic, hesitated to discuss tuition, saying, "The cost to attend is different for every student, based upon the program of study, [the] degree and available resources. The perspective student would need to meet with our financial aid office" to get the specifics. Need-based scholarships are available, he says. Stateuniversity.com lists the annual cost for an on-campus student in Chattanooga as \$15,600.

While a note on the corporate Web site cautions that ITT Technical Institute credits will probably not transfer to other colleges,

Charpia says that's not really the point, anyway. "[ITT Tech] enables an entirely different demographic that is currently out there working for minimum wage ... or are not happy in their current employment. It gives them a solid foundation and a skill set that we feel is marketable."

There are more than 80,000 students on 129 campuses around the country, according to Charpia, who declined to give exact numbers for Salem, saying that in seven months, "We've been very successful. We have overshot expectations." He figures about 20 percent of the student body in Salem is female.

Charpia, who also taught while in the Air Force, pegs the average student locally between 21 and 35 years old, looking for specific skills. Students "see the future—that they need a degree and the hands on

experience," he says. ITT doesn't assist with job placement after graduation; Charpia says the school's role is to "get that student ready," for the jobs available. "We're here to deliver a [general] skill set that we feel is needed in this area," notes Charpia.

The heads of each department have gone out into the community, seeking feedback from local businesses on what skill sets they are looking for, Charpia insists. That information is used to help shape future courses and majors. "There's no sense of us teaching something if they're not using it [in the workplace]," says Charpia.

ITT-Salem classrooms are stocked with computers and electronic gear and small full-time faculty staff is supplemented by instructors still working in their fields, says Charpia. 

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Second Helpings outside.

all photos: David Perry

## Commerce to the rescue >

### Executive Summary:

*Roanoke's Rescue Mission has expanded its commercial offerings to include a restaurant, cleaning supplies, metal furniture, flooring and even groceries. It's an economic hedge of sorts.*

By David Perry

For non-profits, there's no bailout when the economy goes south. Roanoke's Rescue Mission, one of the region's largest non-profits in the region, knew no one was coming to its rescue in 2008.

"Every non-profit, like every for-profit, is really struggling to fulfill their missions with fewer and fewer resources," says Joy Sylvester-Johnson, Rescue Mission CEO. "The mission has a budget that approaches \$4 million, and that is all raised locally and privately. We don't take any city, state or federal funds, so we have to go out and raise every dollar we spend here."





But “raising every dollar” doesn’t mean standing on the corner with a tin cup. “We’ve always had some earned income practices,” Joy says. In light of the tough charitable giving climate, the mission board decided, “We probably needed to enhance our earned income practices and develop some new streams of income.”

One of those streams is a 15,000 square foot retail space in the Civic Mall on Williamson Road, near the Orange Avenue intersection. The new store, Second Helpings, opened in July of 2009 with an art gallery and upscale thrift shop and a new kind of endeavor for the mission: a cafe.

“We decided that we’d go into the restaurant business,” Joy says. “The idea is that you help yourself to the great deals, the wonderful art and this tasty, delicious, over-the-top

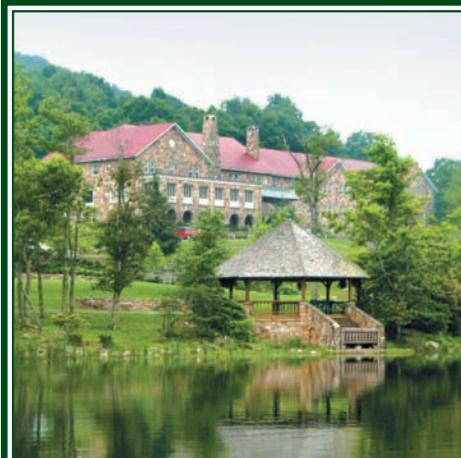
cafe food, and then your purchases help again the second time.”

Proceeds from the new operation go toward funding the mission’s latest expansion: a new medical clinic—three times the size of its old one—that opened earlier this spring.

“We were located in a basement before,” says Joy. “We had four exam rooms, now we have six; we had no psych rooms, now we have three; we had no permanent dental facilities, now have four. It put us in a whole different league.”

Second Helpings features made-to-order metal patio furniture manufactured by a local metal company.

The new clinic wasn’t all that expanded.



  
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# CONTRIBUTORS

**Susan M. Ayers** is a Roanoke-based freelance writer who has written articles on a wide array of topics that have been published in various media. As a former mortgage banking executive, she has experience in technical writing and business correspondence including white papers, management briefings, systematic analyses, awards programs, performance standards and responses to correspondence of a sensitive and confidential nature. [susanmayers@cox.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 PR firm and member company of VT Knowledge-Works 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]

**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 30 years. [tfield@berryfield.com]

**Huog Fralin** is an award-winning photographer and writer who loves to travel, shoot film and lives by the motto of "happy endings aren't for cowards." Her photographs and writing have appeared in magazines, newspapers and even soda bottles. She is based in Roanoke. [write.to.huog@gmail.com]

**Paulette Jayabalan** is pursuing a graduate degree in library and information science at the University of North Texas. She was an HR training specialist for Roanoke City and a copy editor for Dow Jones Newswires (publisher of the Wall Street Journal, Asian Wall Street Journal, Barron's and Smart Money magazine) in Singapore for seven years and edited financial, breaking news headlines and features. [paulettejayabalan@gmail.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]

**Janeson Keeley** is the owner of JTKWeb in Roanoke, where she specializes in Web site development and search engine optimization. She is also founder of TweetVA (www.tweetva.com, @TweetVA), "Virginia's Twitter Directory". [janesonkeeley@verizon.net]

**Gene Marrano**, a former sales and marketing executive in various manufacturing fields, is 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]

**Michael Miller** is senior licensing manager for Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties in Blacksburg. His consulting company is Kire Technology. With more than 25 years as an inventor and technology consultant, working with Fortune 500 companies and startups, he screens businesses for the World's Best Technology Showcase and mentors tech startups through Development Capital Networks and the National Science Foundation. [mbmiller2@gmail.com]

**David Perry**, who works for the Western Virginia Land Trust, 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]

**Jo Lynn Seifert** is an Account Executive for FRONT. Her experience in regional market media sales is diverse and strategically applicable. [JoLynnFRONT@verizon.net]

**Michele Marie Summerlin Shimchock** is a Salem-based writer who has worked as a bankruptcy paralegal, a dual-enrollment instructor of English, and a custom frame designer. She holds a Master of Arts degree from Hollins University's program in English and Creative Writing. [mshimchock@gmail.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). He was recently named to the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame and was a 2009 recipient of the Perry F. Kendig Literary Award. He was Virginia's Business Journalist of the year in 2005. He is the founder of the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference. [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 12 years experience, specializing in publications. His design projects include FRONT, 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@gregvaughnphotography.com]



Gene Marrano

JUNE 2010 >  
Contributor of the Month

Valley Business FRONT congratulates **Gene Marrano**, who has been a regular contributor to FRONT since its inception nearly two years ago, is the June Contributor of the Month more for his overall consistency than for any one piece. It was an especially trying spring for Gene on a personal level, but he never allowed those issues to affect the quality, timeliness or professionalism of his work. Gene remains one of our go-to writers when time is tight and a solid level of institutional knowledge is required. He is a veteran journalist with a veteran's instincts. You can read Marrano's current and back issue columns at vbFRONT.com

“wisps of fog line the ridge tops”

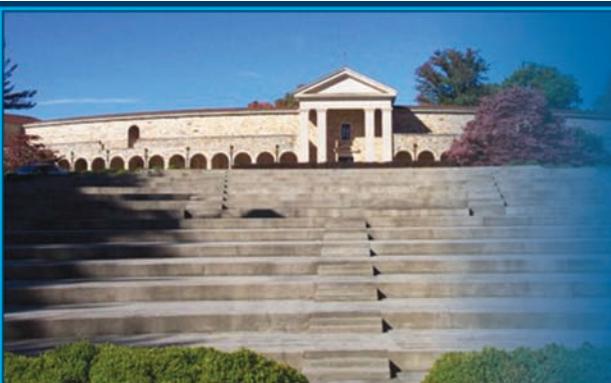


"We've just added our 113th toilet in the Rescue Mission," says Joy with a mix of pride and disbelief. "We never close. We're like the hospital or the jail." The mission has nearly 400 beds, a pottery studio, a hair salon, a dining facility and much more.

"All of this has to be cleaned every day," Joy says. The mission was approached by Shaklee, a California manufacturer of cleaning products and other supplies, with an offer to use Shaklee's environmentally-friendly, concentrated products free for three months. "It works," Joy says. "We like it. It keeps a lot of stuff out of the trash and out of the landfill."

Now Shaklee donates the cleaning supplies for the mission in exchange for the mission promoting its products and offering them for sale on a Web site, [rescuemission.myshaklee.com](http://rescuemission.myshaklee.com). The mission has similar agreements with Sierra Stone, a flooring company whose stone and epoxy product is going into the mission as well. In addition, the Kroger gift card, used by many local non-profits, nets the mission around \$1,000 a month.

It takes all of these revenue generators, and many more, to keep a diverse operation like the Rescue Mission in business. Says Joy, "It's the combined effect of many things." 



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# A lack of regulation >

## My View

By **Dan Smith**  
Editor

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

I pulled into the parking lot of an auto repair shop the other day, quite by accident, and the owner rushed out of the building like he wanted to shoot me, a deep scowl on his face. I was ready to drive off again when he rushed up to the passenger-side door stuck his face up to the window and asked my wife, "You work for the City of Roanoke?" He'd seen the logo on her shirt and saw this as his chance to register a complaint.

"Code enforcement," he said, as if that were not only a complete sentence, but an essay on government from his standpoint. "We need to get less of them and more cops on the beat." I did not mean to be ungallant, but I had to go attend my truck, which was being towed into the repair shop next door, so I left Christina and this guy to battle it out. She later reported that he just wanted to vent, something she hears a lot. She works in public information and promised this guy she'd report the conversation.

My guess is that government workers get this type of complaint a lot—whether or not they can do anything at all about it. Too much regulation of business; too little of the kind of service businesses want and need and pay for. And my guess is that some of their complaints have merit. I've seen overzealous government workers whose complete lack of imagination, understanding of purpose and lack of good sense infuriate me.

So, why is it that I am so strongly in favor of regulation? Simple: if everybody played the game the same way—honestly—we wouldn't need regulation. If we were all upright citizens, there would need to be no rules because we'd be doing the right things for the right reasons. If money were not the driving force, regulation would be a distant memory.

None of that, though, is the case. Let me simply mention a few names: BP, Enron, AIG, Exxon, CitiCorp, Goldman-Sachs, Union-Carbide, Dow, big tobacco, big pharma, Massey Energy, Monsanto, ADM, and on and on it goes. Problem here is not finding crooks, it's editing them into a readable and relatively brief list.

Last month, we had a Senate candidate—Rand Paul—telling the government to leave poor BP alone, that it would fix the problem it created. BP doesn't need any regulation, he insisted. We saw the Bush administration throw massive amounts of regulation off a cliff and from that notion of "we trust big bid-ness to regulate itself," we got the Katrina aftermath, the BP explosion and God only knows how many other travesties of bad business behavior, some of which is simply devastating other businesses.

continued to Page 55



## Prehistoric print &gt;

By Tom Field  
Publisher

## On Tap from the Pub

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

As a magazine publisher you'd expect me to extol the virtues of print. I've read a plethora of "publisher's notes" in top shelf magazines of recent issues doing it exactly that. It's as if they're all pleading, "hold on!" because "print is not dead," and "there are good reasons why people still want hardcopy magazines." Yes, you'd expect me to join my brethren and repeat the mantra that print remains a viable medium.

*Au contraire, mon frère.*

Just as I would prefer a spray paint gun instead of a four-inch brush (or better yet, get someone else to paint the fence, as Tom Sawyer did), I'm just too far advanced to read something *on paper*. How crass.

I work on a computer all day. Most of my reading (even for work, not just pleasure) has to be done after hours. Naturally, I'm so proficient with my keyboards, scroll bars, and illuminated screens, that when I'm finally away from the office—I just can't wait to grab another digital device again. That's just good efficiency.

I'm also just chomping at the bit for the new releases of iPad, Kindle, Nook, and the mobile apps for my smart-phone. Why read on a substrate as old as papyrus, that has to be illuminated, when your eyes can swallow up the rays directly from a self-illuminated screen?

When I'm at the airport, sure I could use my hands and hold an actual magazine. If I want to be the laughing-stock of all the zippy sleek business travelers and professionals sitting around me with wires plugged to their ears and the soft clicking of willing and accommodating keys beneath their hungry fingertips.

Nope, I'd rather dig in my attache, pull out and untangle the power supply that just barely passed the security check, get down on all fours as I root out an electrical outlet under a row of seats (two of them occupied by a woman who has no chance of fitting in an airplane seat anyway), pull out my laptop (which serves as a pants presser as it heats up), open up and log in, and work through the obligatory e-mails, latch on to my closest, strongest signal, upload the site and/or content and/or e-book and/or anything else that flashes before me...

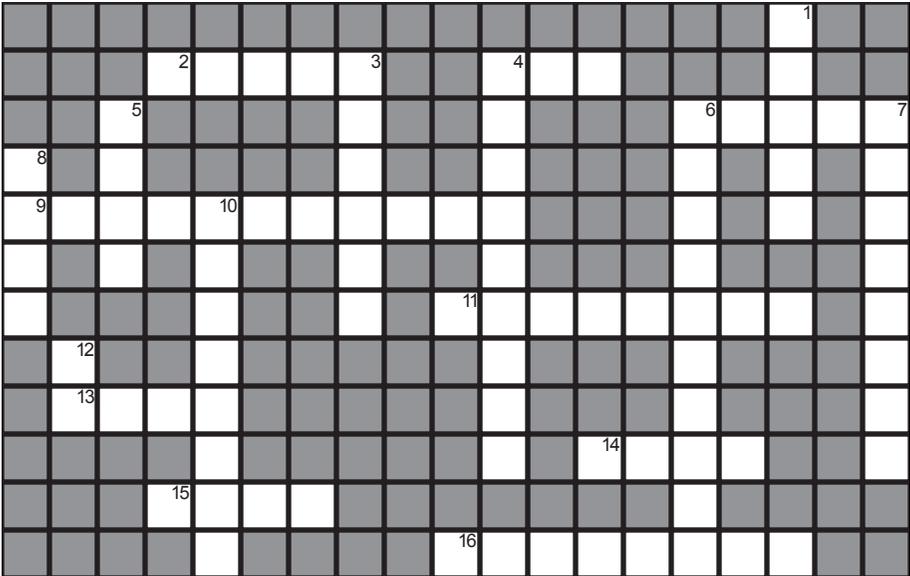
How metro. So saavy. Very executive.

Not like some silly sap... reading a printed magazine. 



# FRONTpuzzle >

How well do you know our region?  
If you read this issue of FRONT, you  
know all the answers.



## ACROSS

2. adventurous bird perches off  
Craig Creek Wilderness
4. three letter institute for techies
6. lawyer Hammerstein's partner's partner
9. Christiansburg pool biz tales 1970s  
mellow rock band name
11. in Seattle, WA or Huddleston, VA,  
they might land here
13. Ridge color in our region
14. corridor of commercial real estate associates
15. "give me legal counsel," says queen  
to husband's firm
16. the first group of people bank here

## DOWN

1. cold or warm; also leading  
magazine name
3. neither Spitzer nor Yamin,  
but electrifying just the same
4. non carbon-based Christiansburg venture
5. VT's new Center, come 2013
6. "meet me at I-77 and I-81"
7. Merry Men might be buried here
8. Roanoke's eye guy egg shop owner
10. netFRONT business network site
12. two letters preceding FRONT.com

## ANSWERS (TIPS)

ACROSS: 2. p38; 4. p46; 6. 25; 9. p42; 11. p11; 13. blue; 14. p40; 15. p27; 16. p34; DOWN: 1. FRONT; 3. p7; 4. p32; 5. p59; 6. p3; 7. p51; 8. p30; 10. p36; 12. vb

By Tom Field

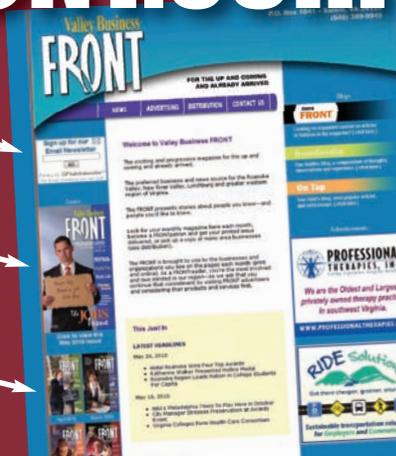
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## Smith / My View

from Page 52

In the Gulf right now, people who have played by the rules all their lives are being put out of business by a company that thought a few shortcuts would lead to quicker profits—and a government that had agreed to look the other way while that was accomplished.

I'm not certain that government or big business will learn one damn thing from the gulf mess, but if ever there were a teachable moment, we seem to be in it. If we don't re-regulate now, the potential for it may be gone forever. And the flood of oil into the ocean will be just the tip of a much bigger, much more destructive well. 

## Letters

### Banker's Delight

Editor,

Thank you for exhibiting passion for your profession and thanks for promoting the positive passions of others across our Valley. You and your publication continue to exhibit a love for our Community and help move it in the right direction. I really appreciate your style and perspective.

**John Garland**  
Spectrum Design  
Roanoke

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

# fromtheeditr.blogspot.com

More

## Dan Smith

than most can stand...



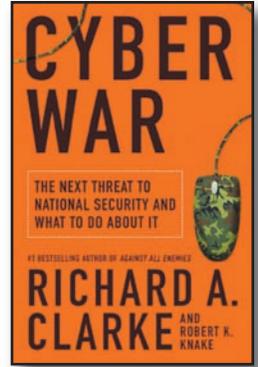
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## Books @ the FRONT >

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



### *The new war*

With his co-author Robert K. Knake, Richard A. Clarke serves up the latest tale of security gone wild in *Cyber War: The Next Threat to National Security and What To Do About it* (Ecco, \$25.99). Threat of nuclear war produced strategies of armament and deterrence. They don't work for cyber war.

Government believes that financial institutions, power companies and you are responsible for protecting the nation against attack. It can come from a rogue nation, individual or organized crime and be a worm on your thumb drive or in an email. Your computer can "join" a botnet of zombies that run attackers programs.

Clarke presents a plan for government assuming its responsibility. There's even a speech written for President Obama. It requires turning the ship around. For now, paper please.

—Susan Stengel

### *Base ball's best*

If you're stuck with the notion that the Major League baseball record least likely to be broken is Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak or the drug-induced home run record by that Bonds guy, you might want to re-think when you learn about Old Hoss Radbourn, who pitched 59 wins for his Providence team in 1884. Sure, that's ancient history, but in *Fifty-nine in '84* Edward Achorn (Harper, \$25.99) gives the record a story and a perspective that will make you a believer.

This is old-time base ball (two words), before such niceties as gloves. Games were often played with one ball and by the end of the game—near dusk—the ball had been beaten almost flat and was deep brown with dirt and tobacco juice. Some pitchers, like Radbourn, pitched every day and they threw hard every pitch (which the catcher accepted without glove, mask, shin guards, chest protector or good sense). Radbourn often took turns in the outfield on his days off.

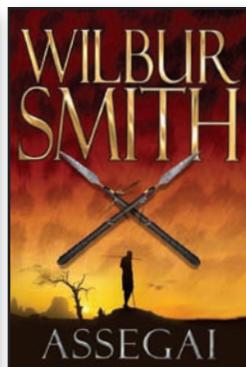
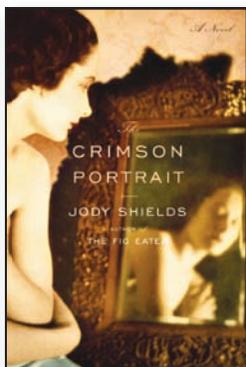
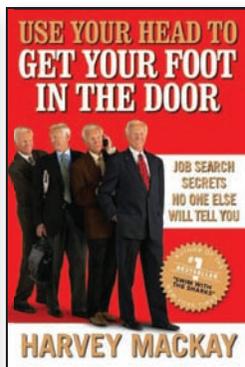
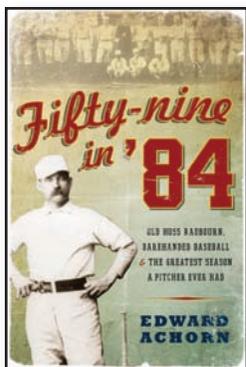
But this is not just a book about a baseball player and a record. It is an inside look ("inside baseball," so to speak) at an era when rough-hewn young men with little education and no skills, save for baseball, could make a superior living, if only for a few years. It's a heck of a read about some characters you'll have difficulty forgetting. And none is named DiMaggio.

—Dan Smith

### *Job search resource*

Networking and sales guru Harvey McKay has written this practical book—*Use Your Head to Get Your Foot in the Door* (\$25.95, Portfolio)—to help current job seekers and as well as anyone who is managing his career. McKay's style is to break down ideas in short 2-3-page chapters, making for an easy read. The book offers sound—if sometimes repetitive—job search strategy advice such as: using your alumni association for leads, being creative in landing a job (with excellent examples) and techniques in researching companies.

McKay shares his passion for sports as he



tells of how Chicago Bulls head coach Vinny Del Negro came to him for advice in landing his dream job. The story and advice were entertaining and an imaginative hook.

The book is sprinkled with interviews McKay conducted, including one with a 20-something and lessons learned in landing a job after college, a must read for college students entering business. Overall, the book will be a helpful resource during your next job transition.

—Stuart Mease

## A tale well told

If Jody Shields did not establish herself at the front ranks of American writers with *The Fig Eater*, then she certainly does with the absorbing and artfully-written *The Crimson Portrait* (Little Brown, \$23.99). This is both a fascinating story of medical challenges and breakthroughs during wartime and a series of character examinations that—like so much of the book—both attract and repel simultaneously.

The story is set during World War I in a 16th Century English mansion owned by Catherine, whose husband has been lost to the war. Into her home, a field hospital for those with horrible facial injuries is established and into this hospital emerges a collection of intriguing characters intent on contributing and surviving both love and war.

This is as finely, artfully and honestly told a story (based on actual incidents) as I have

encountered in some time by a woman with a bright future. I strongly and unhesitatingly recommend it.

—Dan Smith

## Adventure king

*Assegai* (Thomas Dunne, \$27.95) is the latest in prolific novelist (35 books) Wilbur Smith's history of the Courtney family in South Africa. Set just before WWI, Leon Courtney combines his skills as a hunter with the stealth of a spy set to watch and report the developing plot of the Germans to destroy the British forces in Africa.

The German villain Meerbach employs fantastic lighter-than-air ships in his business for the Kaiser. A final airship battle highlights the adventure. The typical Smith romance and thrilling adventure is replete with brave hunters, dangerous adventure and the realistic backdrop of the African dark continent.

Using the primitive but deadly *Assegai* there is a wonderfully suspenseful hunt for the deadly king of beasts and the loyal support of African tribesmen. A great book for the beach or the fireside.

—Bayard Harris

**(The reviewers:** Susan Stengel is a project manager for AECOM in Lynchburg. Stuart Mease is with Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business. Bayard Harris is a Roanoke College law professor and a lawyer at Woods Rogers in Roanoke. Dan Smith is FRONT editor.)



photo: Dan Smith

## Photo shopping >

FRONT Publisher **Tom Field** (framed against the screen) teaches a class of writers about improving their photographs by using editing programs in mid-May during the **Arts Council of the Blue Ridge Writers Workshop Series**.

## Economic summit >

**Cory Donovan** (at podium) of NCTC on stage with **Robert Sandel** of VWCC (sitting left) and **Greg Feldmann** of StellarOne were among the presenters at the June 7 **Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce Economic Summit VII** at the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center.



photo: Dan Smith

## Kendig writers >

**2010 Perry F. Kendig** Literary Award winner **Roland Lazenby** (right) poses with 2009 co-winner (with Tom Field) **Dan Smith**, editor of FRONT, at the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge's annual meeting at Roanoke College June 9. Among Lazenby's many books is the recent biography Jerry West, which is a best-seller in several markets.



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

## Breast cancer store opens >

**Second Nature**, a new shop in Lamplighter Mall near Hollins celebrated its opening on June 15. Owned by **Rebecca Whitehill**, the store caters to woman who have breast cancer, offering wigs, swim suits, sleepwear and breast prosthetics. Taking part in the ribbon cutting were (from left)

**Cynthia Walker, Ramona Hertzog, Whitehill, Richard Flora** of the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors, **Jamela Hodgson, Heather Biller** and **Tira Dunlap**.



photo: Dan Smith



photo: Dan Smith

## Roanoke downtown renovations >

Two major renovations **Spectrum Design's John Garland** and his partners are pushing forward in downtown Roanoke include properties at **108 Campbell Avenue** (pictured here, a former part of the Leggett Department Store) and **16 West Church Avenue** (a former S&W Cafeteria and more recently a gym).



photos: Tom Field

## VT arts center breaks ground >

The midday hot summer sun did not keep the arts appreciation crowd from attending the Groundbreaking Ceremony for **Virginia Tech's Center for the Arts** on June 21 on the campus Shultz Lawn. Among the presenters were congressman **Rick Boucher**, Blacksburg mayor **Ron Rordam**, and VT president **Charles Steger**. The Center will include a 1,260 seat performance hall, a Creative Technologies working lab, arts galleries, and is scheduled to open in 2013.



**Sharon Rapoport: “We feel a little bit like pioneers on The Farm.”**

Michele Shimchuck

After a successful advertising career with different firms in Atlanta and New York City, Sharon (and her business-partner husband, John Anderson) founded The Farm in 1992. It’s a company that focuses on creative services, production, and business development. Recently, The Farm was awarded a multi-faceted project for USA Today’s “What America Wants” campaign.

“We did all the creative, and we also oversaw a lot of the production and did a lot of the production work,” she says. “It was a multi-platform campaign: print, digital, television, even street performances in Manhattan, so we were

having to be involved in all sorts of production jobs and had different people working on it.

“We ran it out of Roanoke, but we had satellites of people including USA Today’s in-house department. They actually produced the digital. We sent them the creative, and then they turned it into Flash. The process was pretty chaotic because we had a very small amount of time to do it. I think that was one of the reasons why they were pleased with us, because any kind of large organization needs flexibility.”

The Farm’s virtual model for business and low overhead allows it just that—flexibility. “The people we work with are all over the country, both our clients and the people on our team. And we’re working virtually all the time,” she says. Contracting out certain aspects of the business allows her and John to pick the best of the best to add to their team on a project-by-project basis.

Working virtually “is not uncommon in our business now, but it was very uncommon when we started,” she says. “So we feel a little bit like pioneers on The Farm.” She chuckles as she throws her head back slightly. “And that’s good because we always kind of felt like that’s what it might take, and it did. Now, the good thing for us is that we’re sort of experts at it when everybody is starting

## When small is good >

### Executive Summary:

*Sharon Rapoport of The Farm is no stranger to chaos and in the case of a hot new account with USA Today, that worked in her favor.*

### By Michele Shimchuck

If you happen upon Sharon Rapoport in a local coffee shop, you’ll likely be fooled by her light brown hair and the freckles that brighten up her cherubic face. You could easily assume she’s a recent college graduate waiting for some girlfriends to arrive.

What you will not assume, however, is that one highly in-demand marketing and public relations powerhouse sits before you with a steaming cup of coffee in her right hand. And her perfectly purple sweater and personal effervescence would never hint in a million years that she is a breast cancer survivor.

Sharon Rapoport has the professional experience some people will only dream of and the personal experience most people fear. To Sharon Rapoport, flexibility is a lifestyle.

# EXECUTIVE PROFILE

to try it. We're old hands at it, if you will."

The Farm's successful work on the USA Today campaign has led to a much larger rebranding project. "USAToday is owned by Gannett, a huge, publicly traded company that owns 600 papers across the country, many marketing solution companies, and companies like CareerBuilder.com. We got the opportunity to pitch the Gannett rebranding project as a result of the work we did for USA Today."

Her quick wit and sense of humor belies the seriousness of her accomplishments. She says, "[This model] has worked really well for us. It has some limitations, but we find, for us, it works perfectly. And for the kinds of clients that we love to work with, the ones who get who we are and what we're about, it works really well for them, too."

When Rapoport was working on a campaign to spread the word to women about the importance of getting regular mammograms, the thought occurred to her that she had not had one done herself. Further, she thought it was no big deal because no one in her family had ever battled the disease. "We always made jokes that we were too mean to get cancer," she quipped.

However, she decided to go for the scans and soon discovered she had an aggressive form of breast cancer. She couldn't even feel any lumps. "My work saved my life literally and figuratively," she says. Rapoport continued her creative work while receiving chemotherapy. At one point during her therapy, she and a fellow writer were working on a comic script while she was receiving treatment,

## In Brief

<b>Name:</b>	Sharon Rapoport
<b>Age:</b>	She's coy with this one, but admits 50 is a pretty good guess
<b>Company:</b>	The Farm, a creative services, production and business development company
<b>Location:</b>	New York City and Roanoke
<b>Position:</b>	Co-founder and creative director
<b>Background:</b>	A Roanoke Valley native, Rapoport earned her undergraduate degree in advertising at the University of Georgia. Worked with agencies in Atlanta and New York before launching The Farm in 1992 with her husband and business partner, John Anderson. Her clients have included Lifetime Television, Coca-Cola, Colgate-Palmolive, General Foods, and CBS, among others. As a breast cancer survivor, the Susan G. Koman Foundation is a charity she takes very seriously and one to which she devotes much of her time.

and they found themselves rapt with laughter.

In today's economy, one that is so rife with loss, and letdown, and strife, it is a pleasure to know that someone out there is on the laughing hard, moving ahead and has the flexibility enough to keep it going. 

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# Career FRONT

## FINANCIAL FRONT



Ross



Buckner



Close



Toler



Register

### Banks

ValleyBank in Roanoke has made the following promotions: **W. Todd**

**Ross**, senior VP and senior real estate officer; **Sherry Buckner**, senior VP and director of human resources; **Dana Close**, assistant VP and compliance analyst; **Sandy Toler**, loan operations specialist; **John Register**, senior VP/Valley Wealth Management Services.

## LEGAL FRONT



Habeeb



Leeson



Marston



Russell

### Law firms

Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review, the respected lawyer rating service, has named Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore partners **Gregory D. Habeeb**, **Todd A. Leeson**, **K. Brett Marston**, and **Anthony M. Russell** as having the highest ethical standards and professional abilities. **Sherita D. Simpson** has joined the firm as an associate attorney in the Labor and Employment practice group.



Gissy

LeClairRyan's **Leah S. Gissy** has been named the Roanoke Bar Association's Young Lawyer of the Year.

## WELLNESS FRONT

### Hearing

**Christopher A. Childs** of Belltone Audiology in Roanoke has passed the National Board for Certification in Hearing Instrument Sciences National Competency Examination.

## TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

### Optics

PixelOptics of Roanoke, a composite lens company and designer of ophthalmic lenses, has named **Larry Rodriguez** senior VP of global sales and marketing.

## DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Metzger



Ingram

### Architects, Engineers

Wiley Wilson in Lynchburg has named **Mark Metzger** a resident project representative in civil engineering. **Jason Ingram** has earned his LEED Green Associate accreditation.

## Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to [news@vbFRONT.com](mailto:news@vbFRONT.com). Photos should be color, 300dpi. A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.



James

**Matthew B. James** has joined Draper Aden Associates as staff engineer on the site planning and engineering team in the Blacksburg office.



Norfleet

**Charles Norfleet** has been appointed as general manager of building services at Brandon Oaks Retirement Community in Roanoke.



Burns

for his "fundamental contributions in computational methods for, and applications in, the control, design, and optimization of infinite dimensional dynamical systems."

## CULTURE FRONT



Chadwick

### Arts

**Heather Riley Chadwick** has been named marketing and communications director of the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech.

### Sports

The Willard Companies has announced the following golf course changes: **Scott Cooper** has been named club manager for the Westlake Golf and Country Club and

## SENIOR FRONT



Torrence

### Eldercare

**Brian Torrence** has been appointed general manager for dining services at Brandon Oaks Retirement Community in Roanoke.

## EDUCATION FRONT

### Colleges

Virginia Tech Professor **John A. Burns** will receive the W. T. and Idelia Reid Prize in Mathematics at the 2010 Society of Industrial and Applied Mathematics Annual Meeting in July. It is



Blair

**Kim Blair** has been named VP of Institutional Advancement at Ferrum College.

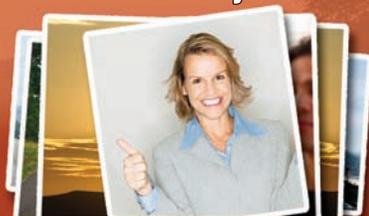
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# Career FRONT



Cooper

Waterfront Country Club in Moneta.

## OTHER FRONTS



Agee

Media

WDBJ Television in Roanoke has announced the promotion of **Carol Agee** to local sales manager. The station

has also made the following changes: **Todd Chaney** is a new account executive; **Stephanie Sterrett** is a new account executive for TV and internet products; **Kim Sokolik** has been named research director; **Sarah Williams** has been promoted to national sales assistant.



Drescher

Moving

Premier Transfer and Storage, an agent for Mayflower Transit, has named **Becky Beard** account executive in its Salem/Roanoke office and **Andrew Drescher** vice president of corporate relations.



Martin

**Mickey Martin** has been named club manager at The



Beard

[gregvaughnphotography.com](http://gregvaughnphotography.com)

## Organizations

The Roanoke Claims Association, an organization of insurance claims professionals, has named the following officers: president, **Derek Cooper** of EarthNet in Roanoke; vice president, **Rick Wheeler** of CRDN of the Shenandoah in Waynesboro; treasurer and state director, executive secretary, **Randy Layman** of Charles Lunsford Sons in Roanoke; secretary, **Caroline Gearhart** of ServPro in Roanoke. Board members include **Ken Frederick** of Blue Ridge Investigative

Services in Lynchburg; **Mike Goodman** of Kidd's Restoration Services in Roanoke; **Pete Lassen** of Crittenden Adjustment Company in Fincastle; and **Bob Ostrom** of Air-Lee Cleaners/Peacock-Salem in Roanoke.



**Knight**

Good Samaritan Hospice in Roanoke has appointed **Carol**



**Stockburger**

**Dalhouse, Aubrey Knight** and **Kathy Stockburger** to its board of directors. Dalhouse is a community volunteer; Knight is a physician with Carilion and Stockburger is owner of Kathy Stockburger Consulting.

**Melanie Moore** of Roanoke, program coordinator for Big



**Moore**

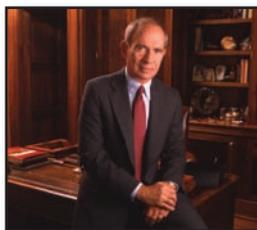
Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Virginia, has been select as a Peace Scholar by Rotary International and will study in Japan to earn a master's degree in public policy and peace studies.



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ROANOKE TIMES



ROWE

# FRONT Notes

*Health consortium organized*

The **Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia** (CICV) has formed a benefits health care consortium, designed to keep health care affordable. CICV, an association of Virginia non-profit private colleges, formed the program after studying similar efforts in a handful of states where private colleges have formed similar consortia.

The members are: Bluefield College, Bridgewater College, Emory & Henry College, Ferrum College, Hampden-Sydney College, Hollins University, Lynchburg College, Mary Baldwin College, Randolph-Macon College, Roanoke College, Sweet Briar College and Virginia Intermont College. CICV is the only organization in Virginia authorized by the Virginia General Assembly to operate a self-insured plan of this type.

*Walker wins Hollins award*

Hollins University has presented **Katherine Fralin Walker** of Roanoke the Hollins Medal, one of the highest honors bestowed by the school. She was recognized during Hollins' 168th

Commencement exercises in May.

The Hollins Medal is awarded "for distinction, service to Hollins University and to women's life and education in general." In 2001, Walker was one of the catalysts in establishing the Batten Leadership Institute, a unique leadership program designed to give undergraduate students the self-awareness and executive leadership training to work with a variety of people and organizations. As the institute's founding director, she provided the essential vision and expertise to guide the program, which enables Hollins students to complement their majors with a Certificate of Leadership Studies, a combination of classes, skill-building groups, seminars, and student-designed, team-based leadership projects.

*Roanoke leads nation*

Within an hour's drive of the Roanoke region are nearly 90,000 undergraduate students at **19 institutions of higher learning**, from liberal arts colleges to the state's largest research university. That gives the region the most undergraduate

students per capita of any locality in the U.S.

Two additional schools are graduate-only institutions. With a total population an hour in any direction from downtown Roanoke of more than 833,000, that means a per-capita undergraduate college student ratio of 0.108. By comparison, the San Francisco Bay comes in at 0.060, with the Research Triangle at 0.057 and Boston-Cambridge and Austin tied at 0.049. Richmond comes in at .047.

*Pro basketball here*

The Philadelphia 76ers and the New Jersey Nets will play the first preseason professional basketball game at the **Roanoke Civic Center** in 13 years when the two teams tip-off on Tuesday, October 5 at 7 p.m.

*Hotel Roanoke awards*

The **Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center** has earned top awards from the Doubletree Corporation with its Pride Award, Hospitality Award of Excellence, House Keeping Award of Excellence and Food and Beverage Award of Excellence.

*Draper Aden selected*

**Draper Aden Associates** of Blacksburg has been named among the Top 500 Design Firms in the Nation by the Engineering News Record. This is the seventh time the local engineering firm has been included in the Top 500 Design Firms listing by ENR magazine. The list is an annual slate that ranks the top engineering, architectural and environmental design

firms by the previous year's revenue.

*Blacksburg Marriott honored*

Blacksburg's **Courtyard by Marriott** has finished ahead of 743 other Courtyard properties in North America by reaching the No. 3 ranking in overall guest satisfaction feedback. Courtyard won of Marriott's prestigious Platinum Circle Award, achieved by 20 properties in North America. In addition, Blacksburg ranked second in three separate categories: staff service, intent to recommend and maintenance and upkeep.

*New 'platform'*

**Click & Pledge** of Blacksburg has announced a new mobile giving platform for nonprofits, political campaigns and similar organizations, according to Dr. Kami Razvan, chief executive officer of the Company. The company describes it as a "friendlier, less expensive and more efficient means to enabling mobile giving." Its features include: no limits on the amount of the donation or payment; information is complete, captured and stored in a database; payments are received through standard credit cards, debit cards and e-checks; funds are directly deposited within 48 hours of payment; the system is free to set up; fees are 4.5 percent, plus 35 cents per transaction; recurring payments are available.

*Hollins glass recycling*

**Hollins University** has established a permanent location to collect consumer-grade glass



**Katherine Fralin Walker gets award from board president Clark Baruch**

from Roanoke Valley residents for recycling. Area residents can take glass products to the West Parking Lot at the back of the campus, at any time. Collection containers for glass have been placed adjacent to Roanoke County's drop-off site for newspaper, plastic, and aluminum. Clear, green, brown, and blue glass bottles and jars will be accepted. Unacceptable items include auto glass, any plate or window pane glass, light bulbs, and ceramic pots. All glass collected will be processed into landscaping sand by Portsmouth-based Recycling & Disposal Solutions.

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#### *Access' new client*

#### **Access Advertising & Public Relations** in

Roanoke has been named the agency of record for Roanoke-based **Magnets USA**. Access will provide marketing and public relations services for the company, which has been offering made-in-the-USA

magnetic marketing products as well as mail fulfillment services to a variety of customers since 1989.

---

#### *Friendship adds clinic*

#### **Friendship Retirement Community** in Roanoke

has opened a medical clinic at its Eastwood Assisted Living facility, providing dedicated space for Eastwood residents requiring routine medical care. The new clinic has two private exam rooms, a comfortable reception area with a flat-screen television and an office for attending physicians. The clinic is located on the lower level of Eastwood, giving residents easy access to the clinic.

---

#### *Ad/PR clients*

Access Advertising & Public Relations in Roanoke has been named the agency of record for **Nicus Software** of Salem. Neathawk Dubuque & Packett (ND&P) in

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

Roanoke has added **Lifestyle Spirits** of Christiansburg to its client list.

---

#### *VWCC signs agreement*

**Virginia Western Community College** and Virginia Intermont College in Bristol have signed an articulation agreement that will expand the educational opportunities for Virginia Western students who wish to continue their education at Virginia Intermont. This new agreement joins over 30 existing articulation and guaranteed admissions agreements with college and universities across the state and beyond that

ensure a seamless transfer experience for Virginia Western students.

Under the agreement, Virginia Western students who earn certain associate degrees are eligible to transfer credits earned to corresponding bachelor's degree programs at Virginia Intermont. Students granted admission into an eligible degree program would be classified as juniors at Virginia Intermont.

---

*Compiled by Dan Smith*

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 from the country club stigma

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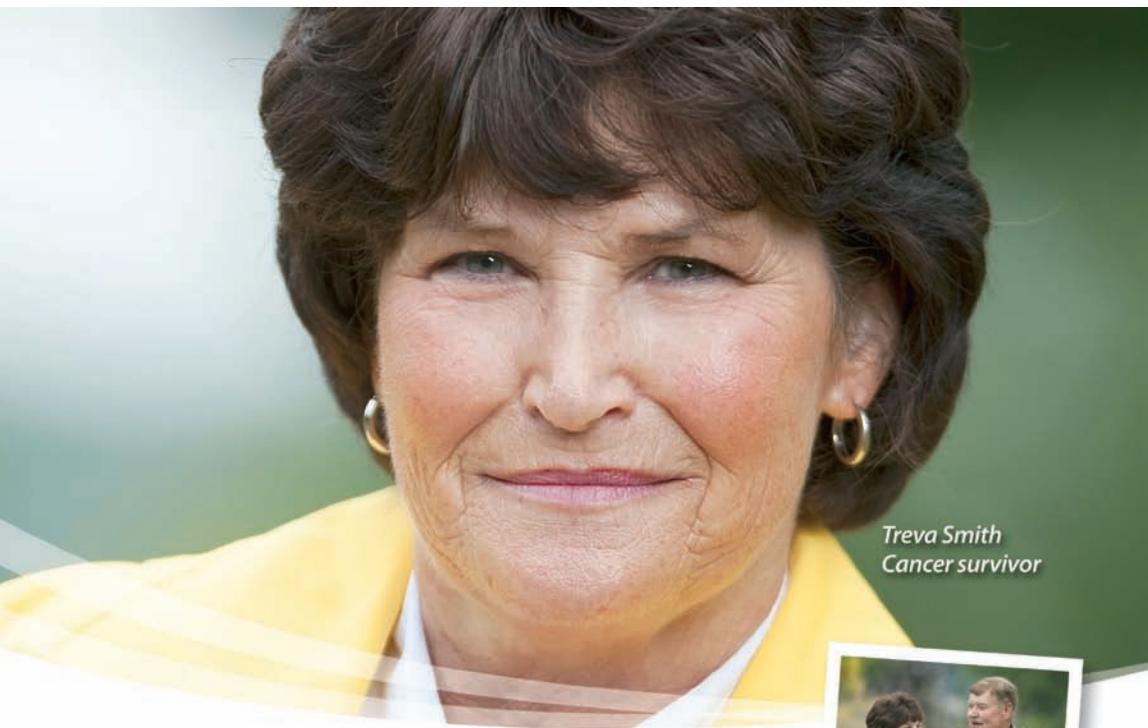
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## *I Didn't Choose to Get Cancer, But I Chose Where to Fight it.*

After seven years of living cancer free, my lung cancer returned. My doctors weren't confident that surgery was the best option this time around. That's when I learned about CyberKnife robotic radiosurgery, one of the leading cancer treatments available at Carilion Clinic's Cancer Center.

CyberKnife delivers high doses of radiation with pinpoint accuracy, which destroys the tumor while sparing healthy tissue. It was the perfect



weapon for my new fight with cancer. After three short non-invasive CyberKnife treatments and a few follow-up appointments, my cancer had vanished.

Cancer can leave you feeling helpless. I certainly didn't choose to get it. But I did choose to fight it with CyberKnife at Carilion and I beat my cancer — again. The teamwork and technology there is definitely empowering. My husband, Al, and I are so thankful this level of care is available close by.

**For more information about CyberKnife and the other ways Carilion Clinic's Cancer Center can help arm you against cancer, call 540-981-7377.**

