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Valley Business

FRONT

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Immigration:

- Law
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- and more ...

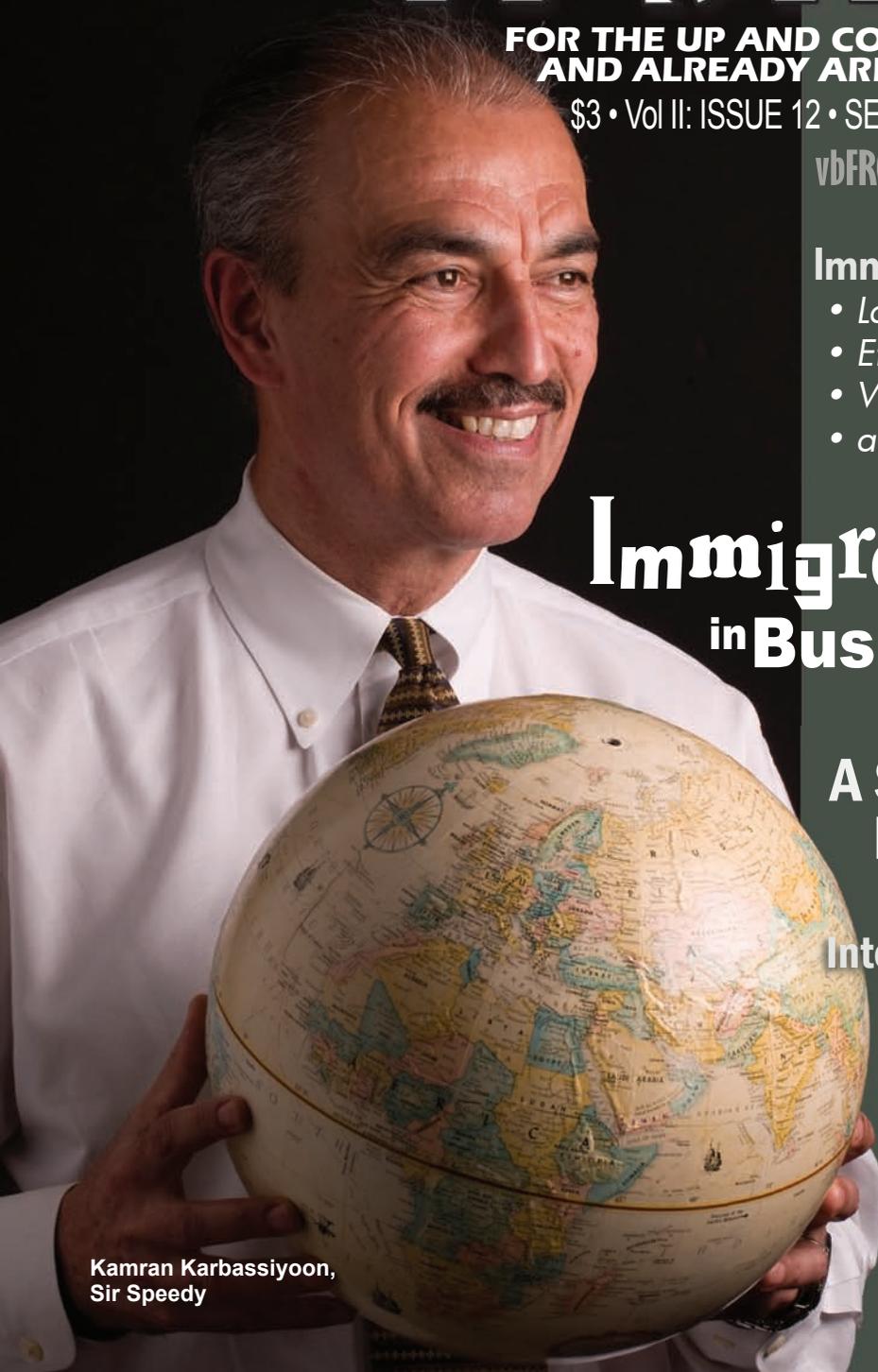
Immigrants in Business

A Special Report

from the
International
FRONT

(right here
in Western
Virginia)

Kamran Karbassiyoon,
Sir Speedy



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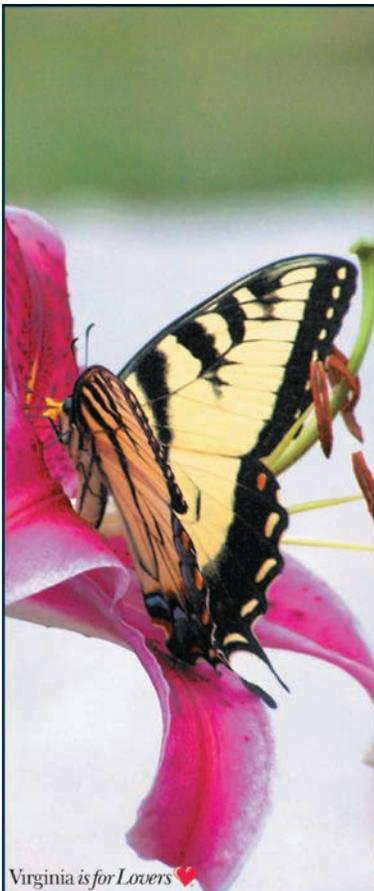
This issue, our 24th, represents yet another first for FRONT: our first issue entirely devoted to one topic. Because immigration has become not only a cultural issue, but also a monumental business consideration, we thought it would be a good idea to take a look at who the immigrants in our area's business community are and what they mean to us.

This is an issue our contributors—an involved and curious group—tackles with their usual enthusiasm and their reports from the field were sprinkled with great stories of success in the face of long odds. What we found, however, is what anybody with a knowledge of the world would expect to find: immigrants are no different from what some Americans would call "natives," a misnomer in this country if there ever was one.

Ultimately it came down to the realization that we've heard all our lives: we're all immigrants, every last one of us.

Tom Field

Dan Smith



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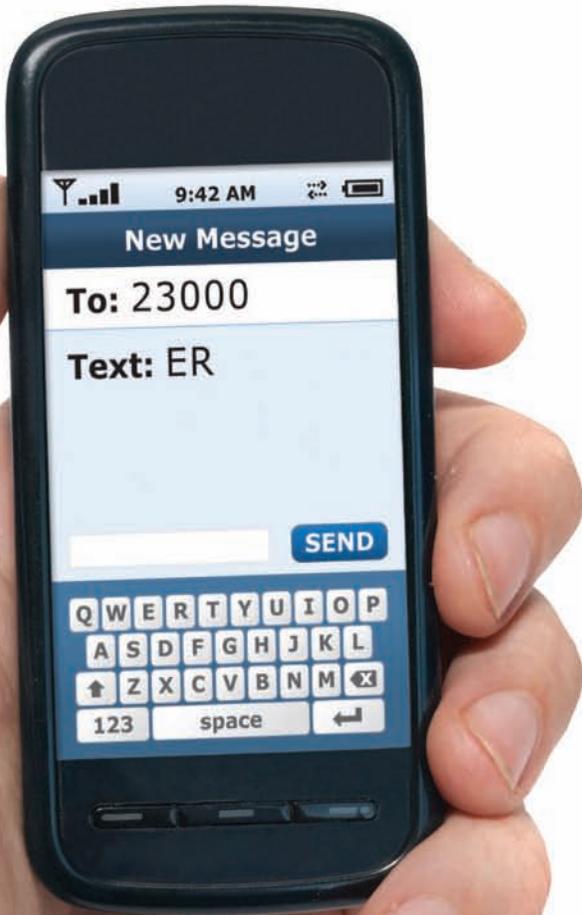
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DEPARTMENTS

8

Immigrants in Business

TRENDS

business etiquette 20

workplace advice 21

business dress 22

FINANCIAL FRONT 23

LEGAL FRONT 24

WELLNESS FRONT 26

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT 30

DEVELOPMENT FRONT 34

RETAIL FRONT 36

SENIOR FRONT 40

EDUCATION FRONT 44

CULTURE FRONT 47

REVIEWS & OPINIONS

dan smith 50

tom field 51

letters 53

book reviews 54

FRONT'N ABOUT 57

EXECUTIVE PROFILE 58

FRONTLINES

career front 60

front notes 66

patrons 68

More Moon Pie, Please

Page 42



Africa. On the Market.

Page 36

Page 34

Cobbler Craftsman



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Cover photography of Kamran Karbassiyoon
by Greg Vaughn Photography.

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AUGUST



Susan M. Ayers



Anne Giles Clelland



Andrew Hudick



Tim W. Jackson



Dan Smith



Kathy Surace

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

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



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Jill Elswick



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Rachael Garrity



Janeson Keeley



Michael Miller



David Perry



Jo Lynn Seifert



Michele Shimchock



Nicholas Vaassen



Greg Vaughn



Alison Weaver

“
I’m a
traveler,
not a
tourist

— Page 41

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)
John Garland Spectrum (Development)
Nancy Gray Hollins University (Education)
Ellis Gutshall Valley Bank (Finance)
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George Kegley Retired (Seniors)
Nancy May HCA Southwest (Wellness)
Stuart Mease Rackspace (Tech/Industry)
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.

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Anna and Kamran Karbassiyoon

Greg Vaughn Photography

Immigrants in Business

Who are the immigrants? >

Executive Summary:
Understanding the immigrant population in our region is not only a desirable goal, but a responsibility. Here is some help toward that end.

By Alison Weaver
and Dan Smith

The images of immigrants many of us get on a daily basis are given us by television: poor, often desperate Latinos crossing southern borders, risking their lives and the lives of their children to take jobs from Americans; putting burdens on the social welfare and health care systems; dramatically increasing crime rates in our cities.

But is that the reality for this portion of Southwestern Virginia? Who are the foreign-born workers in the Roanoke and New River Valleys? The snapshots on these pages help illustrate the small but diverse immigrant population that now calls this area home.

- Anna and Kamran Karbassiyoon, an American raised abroad and her Iranian husband, both scientists, own a Sir Speedy printing franchise and are deeply involved in their community.
- Whirlwind Mexican native Edgar Ornelas owns two businesses, works for two others, organizes salsa dances and is a vital member of not only his ethnic community, but also of the greater community.
- Frenchman Bernard Marie landed in the U.S. following 9/11, stayed on to help, founded a publication and has worked as an international consultant to American firms.

- Kirnan and Nayna Patel came from India to provide a better future for their daughter. Arriving with scarcely any assets, they managed to purchase both a home and a business in less than seven years.
- A jill of many trades, Paulette Jayabalan left her native Singapore to get a college education in the U.S. and now works as a freelance journalist and is a trainer at the Roanoke Police Academy.
- Akemi Takayama is a Japanese violinist so talented that the U.S. government deemed her “extraordinary” and gladly paved her way to first a green card and then full citizenship.
- Zena Azar, a Lebanese woman who moved from Ivory Coast to Roanoke to learn English, now owns a salon, day spa and school of cosmetology and esthetics.
- Ricardo Valdivieso, a Chilean, started a new life here as a political refugee after being imprisoned and tortured under August Pinochet’s regime.

These immigrants are hardly part of the huddled masses that are our daily does on television. They are, indeed, part of the foundation of the business community in our neck of the world: solid citizens who work hard, pay taxes, obey the law, educate their children, contribute to their communities.

By the numbers

Immigrants made up 8 percent of Virginia’s population in 2000—a stunning 83 percent increase from 1990.

However, most immigrants are clustered in the urban centers of Northern Virginia, Norfolk/Virginia Beach and Richmond, and in the predominately college towns of Williamsburg, Harrisonburg, Charlottesville and Blacksburg/Montgomery County. They represent 3.1 percent of the population in the Roanoke Valley.

According to a 2007 report by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, most of the foreign-born in Virginia are from Asia (41.3 percent) and Latin America (33.3 percent). Immigrants from Europe make up about 15 percent of the population and African immigrants total less than 8 percent.

Illegal or not?

The JLARC estimates that more than 80 percent of immigrants in Virginia are here legally, although there is hot debate about how many Latino workers have arrived since the last Census and whether the 2000 Census accurately captured their numbers.

They said it ... >

My hope is that Americans continue to be willing to learn, to continue to embrace and be tolerant of the gifts, talents, and diversity that each immigrant brings to this great nation.

—**Paulette Jayabalan, Singapore**

I think some aspects of the Mexican culture are overblown by commercials trying to sell a product or the media trying to sell a story, especially the movie industry. But I think most Americans know the difference.

—**Edgar Ornelas, Mexico**

A person is valued for what he knows or what he can do, not where he came from.

—**Vinod Chachra, India**

A part of my heart is still in Lithuania, but this is home.

—**Violeta Page, Lithuania**

Today there is much more interest in international affairs but still ignorance sometimes makes explaining my political view difficult. I have often been regarded as a liberal and/or socialist because I am from Europe.

—**Bernard Marie, France**

[After 911] We had friends come to our house to make sure we were all right.

—**Kamran Karbassiyoon, Iran**

People thought I came from poverty because ... my family taught me to live simply, basically, always be humble and low key.

—**Pearl Fu, China**

continued to Page 10

They said it ... >

continued from Page 9

When I return to India, I encourage others looking for educational or professional opportunities in the sciences to take a close look at what we have to offer. It's an argument much easier to make, too, given how much both Virginia Tech and [Via College of Osteopathic Medicine] have grown in international recognition and stature.

—Dr. Hara Misra, India

My English is very poor, but Roanoke taught me to speak.

—Kiran Patel, India

When I had the children, I decided this is where I'm supposed to be. It's not too far from D.C. It's a great place to raise children.

—Zena Azar, Lebanon and Ivory Coast

We don't go out to eat every single night. We think twice before we spend a dollar. Every dollar counted, and that's why we're here.

—Zarna Patel, India

My experiences have been good ones, because my area is music and there are no boundaries. I was always able to communicate through music.

—Akemi Takayama, Japan

Latinos are by nature very community-oriented. We like to dance in groups, do sports in groups. But we're keeping it to ourselves and not sharing it.

—Ricardo Valdivieso

Census estimates released in 2007 say that the number of Latinos in the Roanoke metropolitan area increased 65 percent from 2000 to 2006. The estimate puts the number of Latinos in Roanoke, Roanoke County, Salem and Botetourt at 4,382. However, organizations that work within the Latino community have estimated the number to be anywhere from 12,000 to 16,000.

The JLARC report found that 90 percent of migrant workers are foreign-born, making them a highly visible segment of the population in rural areas where they are primarily employed in the tobacco, fruit and vegetable industries.

Public assistance

The 2007 report by the JLARC found that only a small percentage of the foreign-born in Virginia use public benefits: 2.1 percent of Medicaid recipients are immigrants and 2.8 percent of those using food stamps are foreign-born.

However, one-third of foreign-born residents lacked health insurance in 2002, compared with 13 percent of the native-born population.

Education

When it comes to education levels among foreign-born workers in this area, there is a sharp divide between the haves and the have-nots. The typical immigrant in the Roanoke Valley is about as likely as a native-born worker to have a bachelor's degree or higher, the JLARC reports. However, more than one-fourth of foreign-born workers over the age of 25 have not completed high school, nearly five times the rate of native-born workers.

Foreign students aren't exactly flocking to Virginia for their college educations. Gerald Berkley-Coats, assistant director for international support services at Virginia Tech, says that Tech doesn't recruit international students and that since 9/11 students have found it increasingly difficult to come to the United States. He sees the largest uptick in students from China.

For the 2010-11 academic year, Tech reports just 464 non-resident aliens among its 23,512 undergraduates. Foreign graduate students make up a far larger percentage; 1,644 out of 4,555.

Kim Beisecker, director of Tech's Cranwell International Center, says that about half of the foreign undergraduates come for just a semester or a year. She also notes that Tech provides almost no scholarship funding to foreign undergraduates.

Numbers are similarly low at other institutions in the area, according to the 2009 Open Doors Report. At Radford University, 0.7 percent of students are foreign-born; Roanoke College reported 1.5 percent and Hollins University listed 2.8 percent.

Too many, or not enough?

While an anti-immigrant wave seems to be sweeping across much of the country, pro-business organizations are still clamoring for more immigrants to be allowed in. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has advocated for years for an expansion in H-1B, L-1 and EB visas—special visas granted to professional and highly valued workers, educators and researchers. Their stance is that American universities simply aren't turning out enough highly skilled workers and that it's hurting the country's ability to be globally competitive.

Changing tide

In 2008, a year after the U.S. financial system collapsed, the number of people leaving the United States exceeded those coming in. The U.S. had seen a positive inflow every year since the 1880s, except during the Great Depression.

The following pages will give you both broad and specific views of the region's immigrants: who they are, what they do, how they contribute, how they are regulated and what motivates them. 



IMMIGRANT PROFILE:

Struggling student to entrepreneur >

Zena Azar wanted to be flight attendant. The problem was that airlines required a proficiency in English, and she spoke French and Arabic.

Azar was born in Lebanon. The economy was poor, so her parents moved to Ivory Coast in northwest Africa when Azar's father secured a good job there. Azar and her five siblings remained behind with their grandparents.

"My sister and I, we were troublesome," Azar claims. She and her sister were sent to Africa to live with their parents when Azar was 10.

At 21, Azar left for Paris, primarily because she spoke the language. When she got there, she realized she had to learn English to land an



Zena Azar

airline job. She called a friend in New York and her uncle in Roanoke, looking for a place to stay temporarily to learn English.

It was Labor Day weekend. Her friend was out of town for the holiday but her uncle immediately welcomed her to come.

She booked a flight to New York City. "In my mind, I thought Roanoke was close to New York. I figured it was the hub, and that we'd take a train or taxi to Roanoke."

Her uncle flew up to greet her and they flew to Roanoke. "It was so small 31 years ago," Azar recalls.

She enrolled in adult night classes the second week to begin learning English. The next three months were frustrating and isolating. "It was easier to read [English] than to understand. I felt like I was on Mars," she says.

People were friendly, but she felt her personality had all but disappeared because she couldn't

communicate well enough to show her sense of humor and intelligence.

Apparently enough of her charm showed through, because the third month she met the man who would become her husband. An American of Lebanese descent, David Azar and his friends welcomed Zena into their social circle. Still, the language barrier persisted. "We'd be watching 'Saturday Night Live' and everyone would be laughing, and I'd just sit there. I remember the Coneheads – 'We are from France.' That, I understood."

When her children were 2 and 6, Azar took a job at the cosmetic

counter of the downtown Heironimus store. She had worked in a salon while in Africa and quickly became immersed in the field of cosmetology again. She went to school to do hair, got her license and she, her husband and a friend launched a salon that they operated for five years.

The partnership didn't work out, and Azar moved to Salon Du'Ta for 12 years. When the salon closed, she worked at a couple other salons but her sights were set on opening her own place.

"I wanted to do it so bad. But when it came time to sign things ... there

was some fear, nerves."

Azar opened Azario Salon & Day Spa in 2000. She started off with her and a friend and now has 13 employees. After years of hiring people and having to retrain them, she opened Azario Institute of Beauty in June of 2008. Like the salon, the school has prospered.

"When I first came here, I never thought I'd be a business owner. In Lebanon, women don't have much of a voice and little respect. I definitely wouldn't be in business for myself."

—Alison Weaver

IMMIGRANT PROFILE:

An appreciation for the American ideal >

Paulette Jayabalan's bubbling enthusiasm fills a room with the kinds of positive vibes trainers are expected to exude. In her case, it's real.

The Singapore native, who has been a resident of the U.S. since the early 1990, came to this country to get a college education, fell in love with it and stayed. She has worked in human resources, organization development, research and is now the civilian training coordinator for the Roanoke Police Academy.

Her home country is one Americans know little or nothing concrete about, though its name is as familiar as, say Hong Kong. Singapore is a republic and an island at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, an Asian city-state and one of the world centers for finance, a cosmopolitan outpost that plays a significant role in international trade.

Paulette, whose cultured accent tends to impress Americans, was with the Singapore editing desk for Dow Jones Newswires, which publishes the Asian Wall Street

Journal, Wall Street Journal, Barrons, and Smart Money. at one point and is now a regular contributor to FRONT as a freelance journalist.

She's married, settled and one who appreciates what she sees around her: "It has been and continues to be a wonderful and fulfilling experience ... Almost without exception, everyone that I have encountered both personally and professionally has been warm, welcoming, and extremely kind, gracious and respectful."

Americans tend not to be world travelers, but, she says, "People who have travelled to Asia understand the multi-ethnic culture that is Singapore. Those that have not travelled there generally know a little about Singapore, and I am happy to answer questions about the different aspects of life, languages (there are four official languages in Singapore), and local customs." She is frequently asked.

Americans, she says, are an impressive lot: "My experience with America has been that its people



Paulette Jayabalan
Dan Smith

are her strength. The ideals of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness first attracted me. The ethic of a hard-working honest, welcoming, and gracious people is what makes me proud to be here.

"My hope is that Americans continue to be willing to learn, to continue to embrace and be tolerant of the gifts, talents, and diversity that each immigrant brings to this great nation. It is our differences and strengths that shape who we are as a people."

—Dan Smith

IMMIGRANT PROFILE:

Who's the immigrant? >

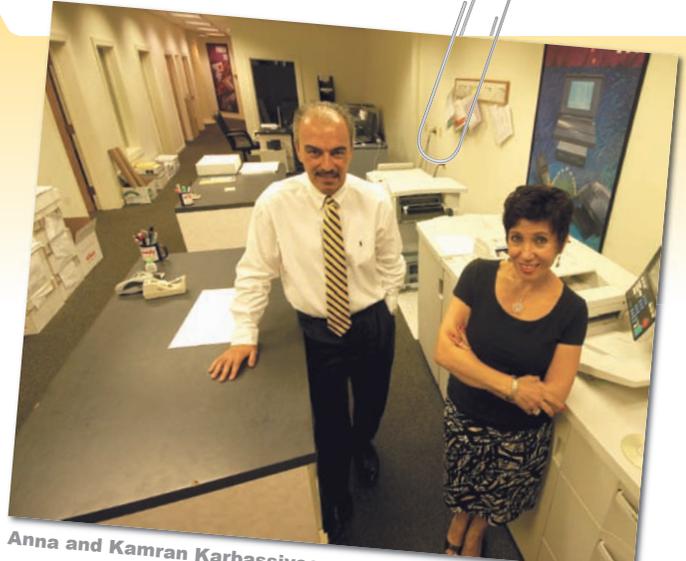
The first point of confusion—and there are many to follow—is just who in this pairing is the immigrant. Anna Karbassiyoon has the same Italian accent you'd expect from a first-generation immigrant being played in a movie. Kamran, her husband, sounds, if anything, like an invading Yankee come South, cultured, urbane, very much Northeast Corridor.

That's part of the illusion. Anna is an American who was born and raised abroad. Kamran is Iranian and he was educated—very well, thank you—in the United States and liked it so much he stayed.

Anna's father was a first generation American working in Italy (at the American consulate) when she was born. Her mother was an Italian (she became a citizen at 50). Because they lived in Italy and there was a requirement that only Americans could work for the consulate, Anna's dad had to quit and joined Catholic Relief Services. It gets better. She was raised in Chile and didn't really speak English until she picked it up going to college back here in her native country; University of Scranton, chemistry major.

Meanwhile, Kamran wound up in the United States on what he calls "a scholarship sponsored by my father" at the University of Kansas where there was a shock of culture he hadn't even imagined. This was a cultured internationalist smack in the middle of the corn belt. After a year of being looked at like he had two heads every time he opened his mouth, he transferred to the University of Massachusetts (chemistry). He had family in Massachusetts and that helped the adjustment.

BUT, the Iranian revolution—



Anna and Kamran Karbassiyoon

Dan Smith

Ayatollah Khomeini, hostages, the Shah, Jimmy Carter—began and his "scholarship" was cut off. "People couldn't send money out of the country," he says. They also couldn't visit abroad, so if he wanted to go home, he would have to resolve that it would be for good. He wasn't quite ready for that.

Anna and Kamran met at the University of Scranton (where he was pursuing a master's degree) and "she barely spoke English," he says now, laughing. "I was the immigrant." They fell in love, married and decided that where they lived would be determined "by whoever got the first job." That would be Kamran and the job was with Valtec in fiber optics. ITT later made an offer for him to join its ITT wing in Roanoke and two years later, it bought Valtec and sent Kamran to Massachusetts to close it. Alcatel bought ITT's fiber optics division, says Kamran, in 1987 and in 1991, he rejoined ITT's Night Vision division.

Anna had decided that she'd been a homemaker long enough (two sons—who speak Farsi and Italian; Danny, a former professional soccer player in England, and Cyrus, an IT entrepreneur in San Francisco) and in 1995 opened Sir Speedy, a quick printing business. She had been an electro plating engineer

and worked as a consultant and an adjunct teacher at Roanoke College. She had also been a drug company representative. Kamran's brother was in printing in California and when she saw what he was doing, she thought it might be for her.

Business for her—and later for her husband—was the new challenge. They were chemists, scientists, not business people, but they believed they could adjust to the challenge. Says Kamran, "We started reading and found that 80 percent of franchises succeed. The rate of success among other small businesses is 20 percent, the exact opposite." Sir Speedy offered stability, training and a recognized name. "You can't buy a franchise in technology," says Anna.

From the beginning, the little company was at the front edge of technology, accepting its first digital files in 1995. "We broke even after six months," says Anna, crediting her natural frugality and a good business plan. "We paid our bills. That was an accomplishment at the time."

Today, the company is "on top of printing, copying, mail control and acquiring data." Printing isn't just printing these days.

Both agree that his status as an

immigrant and the fact that she sounded like one was never an impediment. "We felt welcome always," she says. Even after 9/11, when Iranians and bed bugs were about equally popular, "We had friends come to our house to make sure we were all right," says Kamran. They were touched by the concern and the warmth. Americans, says Kamran, are often a victim of their own geography when it comes to understanding

the world. "Because the country is so vast, people don't have the opportunity to experience other cultures." In Europe, he points out, you can drive three hours and go through three countries, three cultures and three languages. Understanding other cultures is a necessary way of life.

The understanding that there is little difference between the various cultures comes with experience,

he says, and Americans don't get a lot of that. "When we go outside the United States, people know about this country," he says. "But we don't know about theirs."

Within the family, though, this witty, educated, urbane couple has all the internationalism it needs.

—Dan Smith

IMMIGRANT PROFILE:

The language barrier>

Bernard Marie has been in the United States long enough—25 years—to have an understanding that sometimes remains elusive. Immigrants with accents often face conflicting reaction.

The 70-year-old with dual French and American citizenship is a consultant, teacher, former publisher and software distributor. He says, "Language is usually not a problem, but my accent sometimes creates misunderstandings. Cultural differences in some subjects have always been difficult; however, my French identity can be a social advantage when I am regarded as highly cultivated and sophisticated."

That's the way it works: damned in one circle, almost worshiped in another.

Marie, who was born outside Paris just before World War II and was schooled in France, Britain and the U.S., came to the United States most recently as a consultant working for a French consortium, looking for American partners. He speaks three languages and reads and understands three others.

He was married and divorced



Bernard Marie

Dan Smith

here and has four male children, ranging between 24 and 40. He moved from Indiana to South Carolina and finally to the Roanoke Valley to work for the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford.

"I have always been an international consultant," he says. "For five years my [ex-]wife and I owned a monthly business magazine, *Indiana Business*. It was an unbelievable experience to be a third power—power of the press—in the American Republic, even at the state level."

Today he owns a distribution

company for Foreign Language Software, a division of his international consulting company. "Both companies are now very small," he says. "The software is mostly sold to universities and colleges via the Internet. I am asked to help companies on how to manage overseas contracts or a distribution network."

He is also a substitute language and history teacher at Salem High and Salem's middle school and he has been a Red Cross emergency vehicle driver who has served in some dicey spots including a hurricane, a flood and the Virginia

Tech mass shootings.

He notes a shift in American attitudes toward foreigners since he's been here: "In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Americans tended to be focused on their own culture to the exclusion of the rest of the world.

"Today there is much more interest in international affairs but still ignorance sometimes makes

explaining my political view difficult. I have often been regarded as a liberal and/or socialist because I am from Europe."

What would he change about America? "Nothing besides the speed limit on highways, a national railroad system and naming ambassadors who know the language and culture of the country where they are going

rather than being chosen because they are big donors to the presidential campaign," he says. "If Americans learned the history of the world, some mistakes on the international stage would not be made, such as French bashing in 2003. American education should make more time for world history, world geography and foreign languages, instead of sports."

—Dan Smith

IMMIGRANT PROFILE:

Edgar Ornelas has found his place >

Edgar Ornelas has given a lot of thought to where he fits in his new culture and his conclusion is that he wants to be smack in the middle of it, a full participant, a citizen.

The 32-year-old Mexican has been in the U.S. 21 years and graduated from Roanoke College in 2002. He has filed to become a citizen and is doing the sometimes difficult groundwork to make that happen.*

Edgar wound up in the United States after his aunt and uncle opened a Mexican restaurant chain (El Rodeo/El Toreo) and "invited my separated mom, my sister and myself to Roanoke." The aunt and uncle had moved to Roanoke from Los Angeles.

Ornelas, like so many immigrants, is busy and often an over-achiever. He became an insurance agent shortly after graduating from college (and still works in it with Southern Insurance and New York Life), he says. But that's just a start. He is a mortgage consultant with Valley Tree, owns El Charly, a Lation convenience store and has had a staffing agency.

Ornelas says he overcame a high



Edgar Ornelas: "Once you figure out the language ..."

Dan Smith

school personality that left him "shy, so I didn't feel comfortable then, but we are talking about high school where I think everyone is trying to fit in and find themselves. So I feel like I have been accepted just fine [since]. At church, people are curious to know more about my culture whenever they do a community picnic or dinner. I think it does require an understanding of the local culture and way of thinking to fit in a little better.

"I don't have a heavy accent or fit a lot of the Latino stereotypes, but I don't think that matters because I know some people that do and

they are treated just fine. You can tell that they are a good person and are friendly to everyone. I think it's more of your personal state of mind and what you want out of life. People are sometimes curious and I get the typical question, 'Where are you from?' at a social event and it's always good opportunity to educate and expose people to something new if needed and if the situation asks for it."

Like so many immigrants, Ornelas says the people who most easily understand him are those who have travelled and who are

educated. "Those Americans do fine," he says. "I think some aspects of the Mexican culture are overblown by commercials trying to sell a product or the media trying to sell a story, especially the movie industry. But I think most Americans know the difference, which is why I'm not bothered by it. If they don't know any better, they will eventually."

When Ornelas was younger, language was his first challenge as an immigrant. "Once you figure out some of the language," he says, adjustment takes off. "It took me a good two years. I think learning the culture and the people is the hardest thing. You have to

know the lingo, shorthand texting, knowing what is cool, what to wear, even mannerisms, current events, names of movie stars, music. You have to know what is going on with a TV shows, know proper etiquette in certain settings. Even the process to go to college was challenging. Growing up I didn't know about school sports and so on. You end up embarrassing yourself at some point and eventually knowing [what you need to know].

"In the end, once you figure that out, it's still your choice as to what and how much you really want to know. It would be the same if I where to go to another country.

And it's double the work and knowledge trying to keep up with this same stuff in Mexico. I get a harder backlash from Mexicans than I do Americans." He laughs.

What does he hope for Americans? "To remember who they are, where they came from, the history," he says. "Know your 'why.' This country was built in great principles that are slowly being forgotten. I hope to include myself in that" soon as a citizen.

—Dan Smith

IMMIGRANT PROFILE:

An American by choice >

Violeta Page sounds like the commercial with the heavily-accented East European saying over and over, "I love this country." The accent is considerably less pronounced, the smile large and open, the intent sincere.

The Americanization of Violeta Page didn't take long. She lost her mother when she was a little girl and grew up poor on a Lithuanian farm. "That's where I got the work ethic," she says. Ten years ago, when she was 23, a Lithuanian-American visiting her home country invited Violeta to visit America.

The transformation was almost immediate. She met a man; she married; she learned English; she went to work; she had children; she became a citizen. "It's home now," she says without hesitation. "It's where I live. A part of my heart is still in Lithuania, but this is home." She has a sister in Norway and a brother and sister in Lithuania still.



Violeta Page came here 10 years ago

Dan Smith

She works as a part-time Realtor with Spring Cho Real Estate Group and full-time in dining and nutrition at Carilion. "I love both jobs," she says, again with enthusiasm that doesn't ever seem far away from her. "I had to get a full-time job because of the economy," she says, "but I know it will come back."

Violeta speaks three languages (Russian, in addition to the two

mentioned) and found English "easy to learn. Really. It was."

Her acceptance here, among the natives? "I've never had any difficulty," she says. "This is an encouraging culture."

—Dan Smith

IMMIGRANT PROFILE:

Life in the American fast lane >

It was the Fourth of July and Kiran Patel was as excited as a child. "From here, I see all the fireworks," he said, standing behind the counter of his convenience store near River's Edge Park in Roanoke. "Very, very beautiful."

In less than seven years, Kiran and his family have captured the American dream.

The Patels—Kiran, his wife, Nayna, and their then 15-year-old daughter, Zarna – left their homeland of India and arrived in Chicago in 2003 with \$11 in their pockets. Or, more precisely, with \$11 in Zarna's pocket.

"It is a custom in India that whenever an elder comes, he gives money as a gift. A friend of my father's came to the house before we left and gave me \$11," Zarna recalls.

The Patels spent \$6 on drinks and chips before leaving O'Hare Airport. Kiran says that when he walked outside, "I see a lot of snow and I thought, 'I cannot live here.'"

Kiran called his cousin in Roanoke, who told the family to come south.

The first six months were grim, Kiran says. "I sat in my cousin's apartment. No job. No work.



The Patels in their convenience store on Franklin Road

Dan Smith

I was totally depressed."

The owner of an HVAC business for 30 years in India, Kiran soon had the opportunity to demonstrate his talents. He quickly earned his HVAC certification and began handling maintenance for three motels. Nayna found work at Rowe Furniture and Zarna took a part-time job as a cashier at Kroger.

They saved their money, and within a year, the Patels purchased the Pure gasoline station/convenience store on Franklin Road near Brandon Avenue. Nayna ran the store until Kiran could join her full time.

The Patels had applied for a visa soon after Zarna was born.

Fourteen years later, they were granted permission to come to the U.S. "They came for my future," Zarna says. "There's a craze in India to find a better future in Europe or here."

This year has been eventful for the Patels. Zarna, now 22, got married in February, and her parents purchased a home in March. Kiran marvels that his American life has been "fast," explaining, "In five years, I bought a business, I bought a home and my daughter is married."

His philosophy on the family's success is simple: "My daughter, my wife and I work hard. And, here I am."

—Alison Weaver



IMMIGRANT PROFILE:

An extraordinary alien >

When Akemi Takayama was a little girl in Tokyo, she went to a festival where she begged her parents to buy her a sheriff's badge emblazoned with "Naomi, Wyoming."

"I think there was something in my head always that I would live in the United States," she says. "My grandparents had visited, which wasn't too common for Japanese at the time, and they talked about how beautiful and sophisticated San Francisco was."

As the daughter of talented musicians, Akemi began learning to play the violin before the age of 3. She wrote in her kindergarten graduation book that she wanted to be a violinist when she grew up.

"As a teenager, I would tell my parents that my mind wasn't made up. I said if I found something else I liked better, I was going to do it." She laughs, saying, "I guess I never found anything I liked better."

She continued her studies through high school—turning professional at age 15—and into college at Tokyo's celebrated Toho School of Music. After earning her music degree, one of her private music teachers asked out of the blue, "Would you like to go to Wyoming?"

So, yes, the very urban Akemi had at least heard of Wyoming before she left the Tokyo metropolis for Laramie.

As a teaching assistant at the University of Wyoming, Akemi was required to give classes while earning her professional studies degree. "It was so difficult. I didn't even know how to say, 'Look at the top of the page,' so I just pointed."



Akemi Takayama

The culture shock was severe and the winter was "loooooong. It lasted from October to May," Akemi says. "Actually, it was a great place for me because I had nothing to do but practice. And I had to learn English fast."

After three years in Wyoming, one of her professors suggested she explore other parts of the United States. Cleveland Institute of Music was her next stop, where she continued a national and international performance schedule while earning her Artist Diploma and Master of Music degree.

Because Akemi was in the country on a student visa, "I had to keep going to school. It was the only way to be legal," she explains.

However, as Akemi's talents grew, she became eligible for a special O-1 visa which grants entrée to "aliens of extraordinary ability."

"I wasn't so sure how I felt about being an extraordinary alien," Akemi jokes. "But I got a green card." (She has since become a citizen.)

In 1997, Akemi was invited to join the prestigious Audubon Quartet,

then based at Virginia Tech. "Virginia is so pretty. Blacksburg and Roanoke are an oasis for the arts. There are fabulous things going on."

That job dovetailed with a position as concertmaster and soloist for Roanoke Symphony Orchestra. "Roanoke has been so good to me," she enthuses. "[Conductor] David Wiley is really good at connecting with people. And the media are so supportive."

In addition to her duties with RSO and Audubon Quartet, Akemi is an associate professor at Shenandoah University Conservatory of Music in Winchester (the new home of the quartet) and is concertmaster for Williamsburg Symphonia. She also performs with other professional ensembles and maintains a grueling schedule of domestic and international performances.

Add to that, she is married and the mother of four boys under the age of 10.

Extraordinary? Perhaps "superhuman" would be a better word.

—Alison Weaver

IMMIGRANT PROFILE:

Political refugee continues activism >

Ricardo Valdivieso didn't come to the United States willingly.

As a political prisoner held under Gen. Augusto Pinochet's regime in Chile, he had been arrested at 19, subjected to repeated mock executions, beaten with fists and rubber hoses, starved and shocked with electric wires.

A report by the Rettig Commission says that 3,200 people were executed or disappeared after Pinochet seized power. At least 29,000 were imprisoned and tortured. Valdivieso and others say the actual numbers are far higher.

A U.S. Embassy official visited him in jail in early 1976 and offered him refuge in the U.S. as part of a United Nations relocation program. Valdivieso declined.

"[President Jimmy] Carter was running for re-election, challenged by [Gerald] Ford. Carter's campaign focused on human rights violations and they chose 100 Chilean prisoners to showcase," Valdivieso says. "The U.S. government had supported Pinochet's coup, so I blamed them. I didn't want to go there. I said, 'Send me to Ecuador, Canada, Italy.'"

In May, U.S. officials returned and said, "You're going to be a U.S. citizen." They took him to the airport and put him on a plane to Atlanta.

Valdivieso began learning English and moved around the U.S., pursuing opportunities to assist human rights causes in Washington, D.C., Arizona and Houston. While working as a Spanish-language correspondent during a trial for nuns and priests who had fled civil war in Central America, he met a woman who was originally from



Ricardo Valdivieso

Roanoke. When the trial ended, they moved to San Francisco. When she wanted to return to Roanoke to be closer to her elderly parents, Valdivieso came along.

That was in 1990. He's been in the Roanoke Valley ever since.

Over the past two decades, Valdivieso has worked at Plowshare Peace Center, the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Services, at a bakery, as a court interpreter and as a photographer. He has been instrumental in helping refugees and immigrants from all countries join mainstream America.

And don't call him "Hispanic." He believes that's a designation of European background. "I'm not Hispanic. I have nothing to do with Spain. I'm Latino."

He was tapped to be a writer for a weekly Spanish-language column that began running in a Roanoke daily newspaper nearly nine years ago as an "experiment." His full-time job is with the Homeless Assistance Team, a division of Human Services.

Valdivieso is quick to note that many Latinos, in his opinion, isolate themselves once they arrive here. He says many are not "new media savvy," shunning the Internet and preferring to meet face-to-face in the growing number of Latino businesses in the Roanoke and New River Valleys. Latinos "are by nature very community-oriented. We like to dance in groups, do sports in groups. But we're keeping it to ourselves and not sharing it."

Despite being one of the few Latinos in the Roanoke Valley 20 years ago, Valdivieso says, "I never had any encounter of open hostility. Subtle hostility, but not open. Until recently."

While Valdivieso was covering a Tea Party event, a woman spied him and began yelling, "Go back to where you came from!" He calmly told her, "I am a freelance journalist." To which she replied, "We don't want you here!"

Valdivieso shrugs. "I'm not saying this is a perfect town."

—Alison Weaver



Welcoming immigrants >

Southern tradition bids us to welcome guests and strangers to our tables. This hospitality is meant for much more than having company or a dinner party in our homes. It should be extended into our workplaces and society as well.

Cultures vary across regions of the United States. Obviously, a person who grows up in a different culture has customs different than someone born and raised in the United States. Even people from English speaking nations find it difficult to adapt to the United States and vice versa. Imagine the difficulty for those whose native language is not English.

At work, cultural diversity is a determining factor in the behavior and values of the employees. Responses to superiors, to colleagues and to subordinates, may differ with the influence of the employee's culture of origin. Communication and concepts of formality vary among cultures. Taking the time to befriend the new immigrant at work and help them adjust to the culture shock in a new environment benefits the entire company.

Aside from the basic formal welcome, orientation process and having clear expectations defined for the newly hired employee, these simple tips will help the newcomers to the United States become an integral part of the workplace:

- Be host for a luncheon, potluck style to promote a friendly welcome for the newcomer.
- Introduce the new employee (taking care to pronounce his name distinctly and correctly) to all other employees and have employees introduce themselves to the new worker.
- Find out how the new immigrant prefers to be addressed (first name, courtesy title with last name, etc). Assign a colleague that is patient and considerate to assist the new immigrant for the first few weeks on the job.
- Listen carefully when the immigrant speaks. Be certain that your own English is articulate and standard as slang can be very confusing to non-native speakers.
- Implement a cultural diversity training program for employees to create a workplace of consideration and respect.

America is founded on the values of equality and freedom. According to Richard T. Herman and Robert L. Smith in their recent book, *Immigrant, Inc.*, welcoming highly-skill immigrants to our workplaces invites lucrative and creative innovation into our economy. To take full advantage of the infusion of insight that employees from a different culture can bring, great care should be taken to ensure an atmosphere of welcome and respect. 

(E-mail donna.dilley@gmail.com with etiquette and customer service related questions.)

Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

Executive Summary:
Immigrants are an important part of the workplace. They should be properly welcomed.

When the boss is a bigot >

Dear Getting a Grip: I work at a U.S. company with many employees from many nations. While some of my co-workers' accents make understanding their English difficult, their knowledge, expertise and world views make an extra effort at listening invaluable. One of the top executives at the company repeatedly comments on the accents of my co-workers from other countries, even in e-mail, in what can only be termed ethnic slurs. I hate being forced into the compromising position of needing this job and detesting a company leadership's open ridicule of non-Americans. How do I continue to work for this provincial bigot?

Dear Compromised: I won't say that in an ideal world, you, as an employee, should be able to express your concerns to the top executive and have them taken into consideration. In general, the pecking order does not receive reverse pecks well. Even bosses who say they're open to feedback from employees, or may even want to be, usually aren't.

Humans try not to, but they take feedback personally. And the hierarchical power structure of most companies can treat feedback as insubordination. "Thanks for your feedback" gets paired with public ridicule of ideas at meetings, assignment to lousy projects, or to none at all. Even in times of creativity instead of conflict, think, "Danger, Will Robinson!" when the benign-faced boss says, "I'd like your feedback on that, Bob."

I won't say that in a booming economy, you could pick up your ethics and take them elsewhere, because with a 10 percent unemployment rate, fear ends that conversation with a clever.

Getting a Grip: Every act or word of cruelty against any member of humanity that is witnessed and not challenged is a moral defeat for the witness and, ultimately, for us all. We are, at times, cruelly bound by circumstance to keep silent. If we feel like victims, too, we deepen the defeat. Our only choices are to keep the light of justice burning in our personal lives, to contribute nothing to the interaction, and to make our silence powerful with contempt. 

*Need to start "Getting a Grip" on a personal problem at work?
E-mail your question to grip@handshake20.com.*



Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary: Sometimes the moral dilemma at work doesn't have an easy answer.

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Settled on making, repairing clothes >

For decades immigrants have flocked to the United States to earn a living and make a better life. This is not news. Today certain vocations remain fertile ground for skilled immigrants. Roanoke boasts many seamstresses and tailors that meet our need for sewing and altering.

Berkovic Tailoring, owned and operated by Buba Berkovic, her husband, Enver and their daughter, Alma Jasarevic, exemplifies that niche. Buba and Enver began their tailoring careers in Bosnia, and spent time gaining experience in dressmaking and tailoring in Paris. In 1998 they were forced to immigrate to the United States. Their first jobs included stints with Rowe Furniture, Shenandoah Robes and even sewing parachutes locally.

Eventually they realized that they needed to risk opening their own shop if they ever hoped to make more than minimum wage. They bought some used sewing machines, opened a shop in Tanglewood Mall for one year, moved to Brambleton Avenue their second year and have thrived there since. Their business—tailoring custom clothing and altering existing clothing helps their clients get a better quality and better fitting wardrobe.

An equally inspiring story can be heard at Cave Spring Cleaners just a few blocks down Brambleton Avenue. Young Kwak is the proprietor from South Korea. Trained as a nurse, she immigrated to the U.S. in 1973 and found work in her field. Over the years she gained citizenship, married and retired from nursing to raise her children.

One day, however, she spied an empty storefront and announced to her husband her desire to open an alterations shop. Thus began her career in dry cleaning and alterations. She signed a year's lease and waited for customers. After three months, a slow start blossomed into a successful business with a loyal following.

Young attributes her success to her love of her work and her desire to do "honest work." In her charmingly accented English she says, "This is not easy money. I work hard and long hours. But it is honest work. I try to make my customers happy for future business. We are like family."

Our region is home to immigrants from countless foreign nations. Reaching out to support their business and make use of their skills brings rewards in friendship and inspiration far more valuable than the products purchased and the services rendered. We're lucky to have them. 

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Clothes and alterations remains a solid niche for immigrants.

Retiring as a U.S. ex-pat >

Executive Summary:

Some practical considerations for those who long to live under the Tuscan sun or out of Africa in retirement. Take note; there's a lot to know.

By Andy Hudick

Did you enjoy your last vacation in that foreign land? Once you ventured outside the normal tourist corridors did you think the cost of living seemed less than in your home town? Do you think the climate outside the United States is more suited to your needs? Are you considering the idea of retiring abroad?

Here are a few things to think about that may help you with the decision:

Medicare does not cover you when you are abroad (with few exceptions). So, if you plan to live outside the U.S. you can skip enrolling in Medicare Part B (\$110 per month minimum) and plan to pay cash for your health care needs. You could also consider buying a health care policy for your selected country (see aaro.org for some ideas). Medical costs are often less overseas for cash paying Americans.

As long as you remain a United States citizen, no matter where you live, you will pay income tax to the IRS on your income. Many countries have a tax treaty with the U.S., so you will rarely be taxed twice on the same money. However, some countries will require you to pay tax on income that the IRS excludes from taxable income. Find the details in IRS Publication 54 and Publication 901 on your specific retirement choice abroad (or ask your tax consultant for a projection).

Property ownership rules differ from country to country. A non-citizen is precluded from owning real property in certain countries.

Investment rules may also be different than what you are used to dealing with in the states. Ask a few questions if you intend to do anything other than rent your dwelling unit.

There is a lot of information available on the various costs to live abroad. Some of the things you will read as absolutes seem to be conflicting facts. The best way to find out the financial facts may be to go and live in your chosen paradise for a few weeks or a couple of months. See how the costs stack up compared to your home town in the U.S. Open a checking account in your new town, pay a few bills, and see how it feels to celebrate a holiday away from the U.S.

Do you like change? Do you like to learn about new foods and customs? Will you tire of the non-English speaking environment? Do your new neighbors like Americans? English speaking people are not always appreciated overseas. Take a test drive and see if your chosen community has a positive feel. And, now that you have spent a few weeks in your chosen retirement destination...come home and plan a return several week visit before you sell your home and make the final move.

The logistics of living overseas could create a dilemma for you so consider making the following plans: get your visa arranged; determine how your health insurance will work; find yourself a knowledgeable tax preparer here and in your new country (tax rules change); determine your budget for household expenses; maintain two bank accounts (one at our new home and one at the old home).

For the right reasons—climate, financial, personal change, lifestyle, adventure—living in a new land outside the United States borders could be right for you. Just be certain you have planned ahead for a variety of contingencies. Make the change work for you. 

(Andrew M. Hudick of Fee-Only Financial Planning in Roanoke can be reached at andy@feonlyroanoke.com.)



Ken Lasky: "You can't make yourself legal if you've entered illegally."

Michele Shimchock

A focus on immigration law >

Executive Summary:

Lawyer Ken Lasky's goal in many of his cases is to get that specially-trained worker into this country so he can be of value to your company.

By Michele Shimchock

Although Ken Lasky of the Roanoke law firm Magee, Goldstein, Lasky & Sayers did not attend law school with the express intent on becoming an immigration attorney, when one of his colleagues quit private practice to pursue a career in politics, Lasky inherited his colleague's immigration business.

He admits immigration law is not a practice in which one wants to dabble; it is highly categorized, structured, and detail-oriented. And it has been the sole focus of his practice since 1992.

Immigration law is 100 percent Federal law and is controlled by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Individual states do not have any right to

assign immigration status. "There are many different aspects to granting an immigration status," Lasky says, "and my primary focus is on businesses who want to bring in professional workers to work for them."

Most of his business is dependent upon corporate referrals. Occasionally, however, he will represent family-based immigration cases.

"Everything involved in immigration basically entails asking permission to come here, or, if a foreign national is already working here, asking to transfer to work somewhere else," says Lasky.

H1B status is granted to a worker who has a bachelor's degree or higher, and the majority of Lasky's practice is centered on obtaining these types of visas. The L1 is related to worker transfers that take place within an entity that has multiple subsidiaries or sister companies located in multiple countries. R1s are for religious workers, and TNs are for workers from Canada and Mexico who are in the United States under the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA.

"In immigration, there are lots of different ways to do things, and certain statuses are only available to certain people depending on whether or not you meet

the requirements of a given category. And the rules have evolved over time,” Lasky explains. “Work-based visas are issued on a temporary basis. With respect to the H1B, status is granted in two three-year increments.”

If a worker wishes to stay in the United States beyond the limits of his visa, Lasky recommends immediate steps be taken to obtain a permanent resident visa (a green card) because, “when the H1B expires and if a worker hasn’t made enough progress in his green card case, he has to leave the country.”

Green card cases can take anywhere from six months to 20 years to complete, depending on the circumstances. “There may be hundreds of thousands of immigrants allowed into the United States in any certain category, but there may be three million people ahead you,” Lasky says.

Just make sure you have entered the United States legally because “once you have entered the country illegally, there is not much you can do to gain permanent residence.”

Hiring workers is problematic, he says. “It’s really almost the flip side depending on your perspective. As an employer, do not hire any illegal workers because there are a variety of penalties involved that could make it difficult to do any future immigration work and could also result in fines or,” he says, “if you have enough of a pattern, it could result in prison.”

For the foreign national, Lasky says, “Probably, the biggest no-no that limits your immigration ability is entering the United States illegally. Any benefits and rights to acquire anything in the immigration arena is cut off. You can’t make yourself legal if you’ve entered illegally.” 

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VCOM has been ranked as a top medical school for Hispanic students. Pictured are three students from the Hispanic Community Medical Outreach Club.

Orleans and Missouri; and responded to the crisis on the Virginia Tech campus, this is an organization that starkly defies the suggestion that “those who can’t do, teach.”

According to Shaadi Elswaifi, professor of microbiology and infectious diseases, one element that is central to both mission and operation is the unerring focus on the basic osteopathic philosophy. “The idea,” he explains, “is that health is far more than physical. It is also emotional, cultural, and spiritual. And that idea applies, not just to current or prospective patients, but to how we work together as colleagues and how we teach our students.”

VCOM: ‘A cultural mélange’ >

Executive Summary:

At the College of Osteopathic Medicine, multiculturalism is part of the core of the teaching philosophy.

By Rachael Garrity

The mission statement of the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) in Blacksburg is deceptively simple: to provide “medical education and research that prepares globally minded, community-focused physicians who improve the health of those most in need.”

The juncture between “globally minded” and “community-focused” can be quite complex—and demanding. Having worked in the past five years in countries as diverse as Honduras, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador; provided disaster relief in New

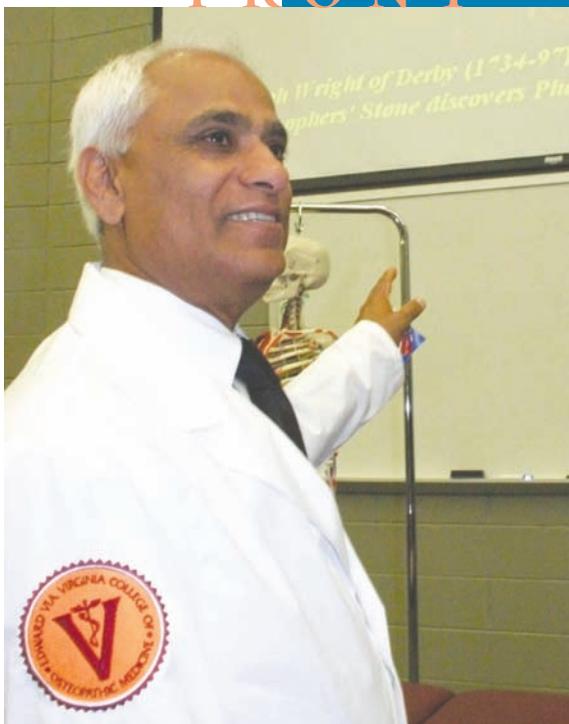


all photos: VCOM

VCOM students participate in medical mission trips abroad—like this one to Kenya—to learn about other cultures and to expand their medical knowledge.



Shaadi Elswaifi



Hara P. Misra

That means treating a patient or teaching a student requires understanding a raft of different habits, values, customs and political climates, and the fact that at VCOM the faculty itself is a cultural mélange is not surprising. Indeed, the faculty and staff in Blacksburg alone (there are several regional campuses for third and fourth year students) include members from Iran, China, Turkey, India, Thailand, Bosnia/Herzegovina and Egypt. The stories of how they came to the U.S. and why they chose Blacksburg and VCOM weave a tapestry as colorful as any national flag.

Elswaifi, for example, is Egyptian, though he spent time also in Saudi Arabia and England. When he decided to come to the United States in 1999 to earn his Ph.D., Virginia Tech was his choice, in part because of a cousin living here. He's been at VCOM for the last 3½ years, and is enthusiastic not only about the career prospects, but the area itself. "Sure," he admits, "I miss some of the cultural advantages a large city can provide, but I love the outdoors, and this is a beautiful area and a welcoming community."

For Hara P. Misra, on the other hand, a small

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VCOM's diversity in medicine club sponsors programs that celebrate diversity.

town was not new. The son of an elementary school teacher in a remote village in India where much of the population is tribal, he came to the U.S. to go to graduate school in 1966. With a masters degree in nutrition and a Ph.D. in biochemistry from Virginia Tech, he worked at universities and hospitals throughout the country before returning to Blacksburg in 1985. Now professor of biochemistry and associate vice president for research, he is the only one of the eight children in his family to have left India.

"Actually, I didn't plan to stay," he remembers. "But the decision was definitely a good one. When I came here there were only eight students from India at Tech. Now there are more than 300. And when I return to India, I encourage others looking for educational or professional opportunities in the sciences to take a close look at what we have to offer. It's an argument much easier to make, too,

given how much both VT and VCOM have grown in international recognition and stature."

Misra's wife is a respiratory therapist at the Veterans Administration hospital in Salem. One of their sons is in the final months of a residency in internal medicine in Blacksburg (and a graduate of VCOM), and another son is a chiropractor in Northern Virginia, where the Misras' daughter also lives and works as a physician's assistant.

With unflinching honesty, Misra insists, "I am most fortunate. My son-in-law and daughter-in-law are Americans, and we are one family. We make friends, and they are family. Once we know each other, we accept our cultural difference, and we meld."

That is a sentiment echoed strongly by Suporn Sukpraput, director of the Preventive

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Medicine Research Center and assistant professor in the Preventive Medicine and Community Health Department. One of the newest members of the VCOM faculty, having moved here in March from Boston where she had done much of her graduate work, she says: "Of course, a small town is not as diverse as a large city, but that is good. There is a kind of exchange. I've never tasted Southern food or been introduced to Appalachian culture before. And local people may not know much about the Thai people and our food. Each of us is interested in the other."

While all of Sukprut's seven siblings chose to pursue their education in other countries, she is the only one in the family who has not returned to Thailand. She was recently married to the son of Ferrum College President Jennifer L. Braaten. 



Suporn Sukprut

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Shafagh Ganjikia



Simon Kaczor

innovation/manufacturing-related services, semiconductors, and software."

One such company in the Roanoke Valley is Prognosoft Inc., founded in 2002 by Shafagh Ganjikia and Simon Kaczor.

Both Safagh and Simon immigrated to Quebec as children—Safagh from Iran and Simon from Poland. They met while studying

science in the two year pre-university program. From there, Simon went on to earn his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and his master's degree in applied science at the Polytechnic School of Montreal. Safagh earned her bachelor's degree in physics at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and moved back to Montreal to earn her master's degree in biomedical engineering.

Upon completion of his master's degree, Simon worked for Bombardier Aerospace doing research for the Canadian military. When government budget cuts reduced the funding for research, he sought other opportunities and found Meridian in Roanoke, which sponsored his work visa to the United States. "All I knew about Roanoke was that it was in the mountains," says Simon, "but when I visited in November [of 1999] and was walking around in a T-shirt on the City Market, I decided I could enjoy living here."

netFRONT

Beauty and the geek >

Executive Summary:

The founders of Roanoke's Prognosoft landed in Roanoke and found themselves at home.

By Janeson Keeley

A Duke University study has found that immigrant-founded companies in the United States generated \$52 billion in sales in 2005. According to InformationWeek, the businesses were "primarily in the high-tech fields of bioscience, computers/communications, defense/aerospace, environmental,

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After being hired at Meridian, Simon and Safagh married. Safagh was then able to immigrate as a dependent, but she could not get a job without having a company sponsor a work visa. She chose to start Prognosoft so she could work from home and care for their children, now five and seven.

Simon worked with Meridian when it had only two offices and 100 employees. "It was a small company, and I feel good about being a part of the core group that helped develop the products that helped it grow," he says with pride. However, after 10 years, Safagh asked Simon to join her full-time working for Prognosoft. He is the primary software developer, while she does the marketing and research. "We're Beauty and the geek," jokes Safagh.

A home-based business, Prognosoft specializes in custom software development

for engineers and scientists. The company is preparing for the national launch of its Web-based electronics recycling inventory and process management software. "There was no comprehensive software product for this growing industry," reports Simon, "so we developed a solution that addresses the needs of recycling companies but doesn't require them to have in-house IT teams."

In the future, they may spin their recycling software off into a company separate from Prognosoft. Safagh, still interested in biomedical engineering, is considering returning to school to study occupational therapy and related technologies in a lab setting.

But they have no intention of leaving the Roanoke Valley. "We both moved around a lot and never felt like we belonged," says Safagh. "Here we feel like we have roots." 

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Vinod Chachra: “VTLS needed my undivided attention if it were going to succeed.”

Michael Miller

In 1967, Vinod Chachra left India for Virginia Tech to complete a master’s degree in industrial engineering. He planned to return to India afterwards to work in his father’s business.

In 2010, Vinod celebrated the 25th anniversary of the founding of VTLS (Virginia Tech Library Service originally), the first company to open its doors in the fledgling Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center back in 1985.

The story of Chachra and VTLS could be written as a textbook example of how an immigrant can be a success in America. But the truth is that little of his success has anything to do with Chachra’s citizenship status, and everything to do with his innate abilities and desire to succeed.

Just like any entrepreneur.

No way back home >

Executive Summary:

The more VTLS’ Vinod Chachra accomplished at Virginia Tech and with his new company, the more he was needed here.

By Michael Miller

It began in graduate school, where Chachra volunteered to teach a five-credit undergraduate FORTRAN class just to prove to his advisor that he should not be required to take the class himself. He had learned the programming language, but had not actually taken a class that would satisfy the requirement.

After earning the master’s degree, he decided

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to postpone his return to India long enough to pick up a Ph. D. He was accepted to Harvard, but chose instead to attend the program at Stanford, even though it meant he would have to wait a year to enter. He worked that year for FMC in Fredericksburg, where he developed a special algorithm to reduce the waste in its cellophane cutting process.

After one year in the program at Stanford, his advisor decided to take a leave, forcing Chachra to make a decision about what to do next. Naturally, he called his old professor, Paul Torgersen, for advice. Torgersen convinced him to return to Virginia Tech to finish.

Chachra stayed on at Tech, working numerous software and IT problems. T. Marshall Hahn, Tech's president at the time, asked him to develop a more streamlined system for dealing with student class scheduling for the growing University. Next, he became director of software development for the computing center, followed by positions as vice provost for IT and Libraries, and vice president of IT. Chachra was the first Chief Information Officer of any university in the U.S.

One of his projects was to develop a new library system. When it was completed, Chachra did what every faculty member does: he wrote a paper about it. The paper was read by an administrator from Australia, who wanted to purchase the system from the university. Since the university doesn't sell products, he decided to found VTLS.

Leaving the university for a startup company was a difficult decision for Chachra, but he felt "VTLS needed my undivided attention if it were going to succeed." Like all startups, VTLS was a struggle to keep alive in the early days. "For the first 18 months we lost approximately a \$1,000 a day. Every day was critical to the survival of the company. It was scary." Finally in the 19th month VTLS began to produce positive financial results.

Along the way, Chachra became a U.S. citizen, although he does not feel that his citizenship status really had any effect on his success one way or the other. But the cultural differences have had a major influence on him. In America, he found an appreciation, and in fact almost a demand for independence of thought and action. He found a spirit of willingness to help, but a reluctance to tell somebody else what to do without first being asked. "In America," he says proudly, "a person is valued for what he knows or what he can do, not where he came from."

In his office, Chachra has a world map with markers for every place he has visited. There are a lot of markers because he loves to travel, but nowhere else has he found the "spirit of independence and liberty" enjoyed in America.

We may take that for granted, but for Chachra, it has made all the difference. 

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Juan Antonio works on a shoe in his old-school shop on Brandon Avenue in Roanoke.

all photos: Dan Smith

Work Spaces

Keeping a dying art alive >

Executive Summary:

A retired Roanoke banker has become something of an angel for a young Mexican shoe repair professional.

By Susan Ayers

Antonio's Shoe Repair has the characteristics of an old-fashioned cobbler's business. Formerly known as Schafer's Shoe Repair, the space is compact, but well organized, allowing 25-year-old owner Juan Antonio to deftly navigate as he moves from one job to the next. Most of the machinery and tools in the shop were owned and used for years by Randall Mitchell, the late owner, who hired Antonio.

An assortment of shoes ready to be picked up have been carefully placed on shelves and project a wide array of styles from men's

Italian loafers and Western boots to ladies' black patents and fashionable neon sandals.

The list of services that he provides in addition to repairing shoes is extensive, and includes patching leather jackets, replacing zippers, working on handbags, enlarging shoes up to one size, shortening belts and buffing or covering scuffmarks.

"I am not from the city," says Antonio. "I came from a tribe in Mexico called Chinanteco, which is my primary language. Spanish is my secondary language and English is my third."

Antonio learned shoe repair as a 10-year-old from his grandfather, who "made shoes for the whole community at a low price."

At 16, Antonio moved from Mexico to Roanoke, where most of his family lives. "I worked construction, did carpentry work and for three years worked at the Kroger warehouse," he says. "I didn't think there were any shoe repair shops in this country. I just thought Americans always bought new shoes."

His mother was doing laundry and saw Shaeffer's shoes next door. Antonio took some of his shoes there for repair and when he returned to pick up his shoes, the repairs had not been completed. "I was disappointed that my shoes weren't ready and I saw a backlog of shoes that needed repairs. I talked

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

with Randall Mitchell and learned he had been ill and had been unable to repair the shoes. I offered to help him catch up by working for him part-time.” Mitchell died in December, but before dying, appreciated Antonio’s dedication and niche for the trade. He put the lease into Antonio’s name.



According to Shoe Service Institute of America, shoe repair shops doing work the old-fashioned way is a dying art. There are only 7,000 shoe repair businesses in the U.S. The economy is pushing people to repair shoes rather than buy new and the practice is environmentally sound.



The established Schafer’s Shoe Repair moved twice before landing on Brandon Avenue next to the Dairy Queen and some long-time customers have had trouble finding it. Antonio is investing most of the money from the business into additional equipment, recently buying a used outsole stitcher from a Wytheville business that was closing.



Janet Furrow, a friend from church, has been helping Antonio in customer service and he hopes to eventually hire her.

Retired Roanoke banker Warner Dalhouse has become a friend and benefactor. “Mr. Dalhouse ... has done a lot for me. He is humble and nice and is a good example to follow. I want to become more like him.”



“His craftsmanship is superb,” says Dalhouse, “and his work ethic is admirable. We sent out 65 letters to friends of ours telling them about Antonio’s business and recommending that when they need that kind of work done to consider giving him a try.

“Included with the letter were business cards that we bought for him. He had told me that he would have to close the shop and get two more jobs until he could save money to reopen. I’ve been in business long enough to realize that usually doesn’t happen. This was a clear case of deserving some assistance.”





Atieno Asiyo at the Binaba Shop in Roanoke

Dan Smith

The education of a Kenyan radical >

Executive Summary:

Atieno Asiyo runs Roanoke's Binaba Shop at least partly in an effort to show Roanokers that it's a pretty ordinary world out there.

By Jill Elswick

Atieno Asiyo was a college student in 1974 in Nairobi, Kenya. The country was under the rule of Jomo Kenyatta, its first democratically-elected president. With a talent for math and design, Asiyo was the first woman accepted into the architecture program at the University of Nairobi.

"It was a British-style education," says Asiyo. "Very structured."

Asiyo was a good student. She went to class and did her assignments. But things bothered her about the local economy. She was concerned by the lack of affordable housing for low-income residents. She wanted architecture students to study solving the local housing problem.

An outspoken woman, Asiyo learned leadership from her mother, who at the time was superintendent of Kenya's women's prisons and later became a goodwill ambassador to the United Nations. Asiyo began to organize student protests and was soon a leader, focusing on social issues. "We thought we could be the conscience of the country and provide perspective for the leadership," says Asiyo.

During a demonstration she faced down a truckload of armed men and was swept away by a crowd of her friends. Kenyatta soon began arresting student protestors. Asiyo's mother determined, "You need to be out of the country for a while," drove her to the airport

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Jimmie Blanchard, owner

and sent her to the U.S. to college. At Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, students tailored their own programs of study. "You could do anything you wanted, but you had to take initiative," says Asiyo.

She majored in computer science and engineering. She got married, had two sons, and established a career. She got jobs at Duke University and at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, overseeing information technology support. "I had arrived," says Asiyo. "I had my dream car, a Mercedes."

Meanwhile, her friends and family back in Kenya were sending her handcrafted items, asking her to find a market for them. She opened a shop called Africana in Durham, then another one in Raleigh, to sell the goods.

That's how she met Vera Johnson and Kathy O'Keeffe of Roanoke. The two, who Asiyo

playfully describes as "a black woman at a white church" (Johnson) and "a white woman at a black church" (O'Keeffe), were working with their respective Roanoke churches—St. John's Episcopal and Kingdom Life Ministries International—to explore issues of race and spirituality among women. They came into Asiyo's store and bought a lot of merchandise.

"I fell in love with them right off," says Asiyo. "Their dynamic reminded me so much of my grandmother and my mother."

Johnson and O'Keeffe opened their own African crafts store in Roanoke, called The Binaba Shop, in 1998. The store carried (and still does) collector-grade African masks, jewelry, soaps, chocolates, and other crafts. It is part of a non-profit organization called Kimoyo, which builds hospitals in Ghana and promotes multicultural understanding in Roanoke through educational programs.

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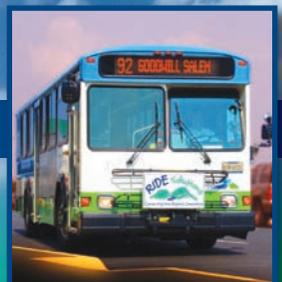
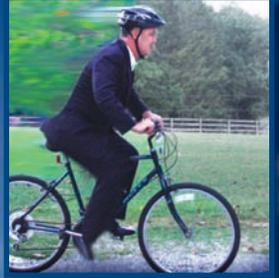
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Asiyo became the store's buyer.

In 2000, Johnson and O'Keeffe asked Asiyo to move to Roanoke to help manage The Binaba Shop. Asiyo oversaw a staff of 140 people in North Carolina, so "coming to Roanoke was not an easy thing for me."

She looked for a sign and one day on a drive to Roanoke, her car filled with the scent of magnolias. It was the middle of winter. Magnolia is Asiyo's favorite scent. "It was confirmation," she says.

While visiting Roanoke, Asiyo discovered her hometown, Kisumu, was one of Roanoke's "sister cities" and she moved to Roanoke, three months after being offered the job.

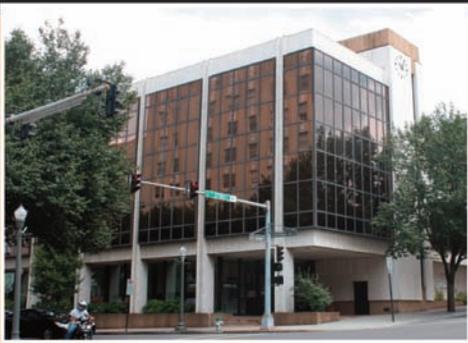
Kimoyo has built one hospital in Ghana and is working on another, at a cost of between \$100,000 and \$150,000 each. Through Kimoyo, Asiyo educates public schoolchildren about

African countries. Asiyo says she feels like a "missionary" to Roanoke and wants to educate Americans that "it's not all about, 'They're starving, send money.' There are regular people out there. There are cities."

Roanoke has become home for Asiyo. She attends church at Kingdom Life Ministries, where O'Keeffe is one of the pastors. "Roanoke feels a lot, physically, like Kisumu," says Asiyo. "If it just had a lake."

Asiyo is content here and many of her family members have moved to the United States. She helps serve as a link to the homeland for their children.

But children have a way of adapting to the cultures in which they were raised and her pride in her American sons shows. They doubtless learned from her, just as she learned from her own mother, the lessons of leadership. 



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Rachael Garrity

Tony and Mary Jakubowski: "I'm a traveler, not a tourist."

A truly international couple >

Executive Summary:

The Jakubowskis have made extraordinary contributions to our civilization and our culture and now their students are doing that.

By Rachael Garrity

Mary and Tony Jakubowski are originally from Poland, but the combination of life circumstance and a thirst for adventure has quite literally made the world their classroom.

Mary's journey began when she—a small child—and her mother were captured and sent to the Gulag in Siberia. From there, it

was Persia, then Pakistan, then India and finally England in 1947, where the family waited for two years for the State Department to verify her mother's U.S. citizenship.

An accomplished scientist, under escalating threat because he did not belong to the Communist Party, Tony (formally, Antoni) had fled first to Italy and then to Germany, until finally in 1965 the United States offered him protection.

When another issue of citizenship—the lack of it—barred him from working for NASA, he added a PhD in aerospace to the medical and engineering degrees

he had earned in his native country.

His career defies being "summarized," but the highlights include 32 papers for major journals or scientific meetings, and a stint as associate editor of the *Journal of Spacecraft and Rockets*. In one 10-year period (1982-1992), the students he mentored earned first place five times in American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics design competitions, and in 1989, they took first, second and third places.

In fact, it was recruiting students that had taken Tony to Detroit where he met Mary, who had settled there with her family, married and had two children. At this point a widow, she had taught for years in the inner city schools.

When they married and she moved to Blacksburg, she became librarian at Elliston-Lafayette Elementary School, known to her students then and

remembered today as the beloved "Miss J."

In addition to sharing what she continued to learn from a life of travels, she set about writing grant proposals and successfully funded 11 different projects. Not surprisingly, when she was selected as librarian/media specialist of the year in 2003 for the Roanoke region, one of her colleagues was quoted as saying, simply: "She came in as a person who was very diverse and offered new perspectives for culturally deprived students in this area."

While age and health issues may have on occasion put what some in Appalachia might call a small "hitch in their stride," both Jakubowskis seem to be hanging onto their indefatigable spirit.

Tony's experience with such projects as the Hubble telescope make it easy for guests at one of their dinner parties to forget to eat.

Mary recently published a poignant, highly autobiographical novel *Whispers from the Steppes*, and is at work on a sequel. And, of course, she's the cook and hostess extraordinaire at those same parties.

Throughout the decades they've spent here, they've continued to travel widely, and at the same time cross cultural lines at home.

As a Virginia Tech professor, Tony regularly invited Muslim and Buddhist students to their home at Christmas, giving them a "place to go." Mary, who fiercely insists, "I'm a traveler, not a tourist," is still a point of contact for countless former students. Not long ago, one of them, now in his 40s and dressed in his overalls and work shirt saw her at Walmart. "Miss J, Miss J," he called, waving and running. "I'm going to Spain. I remember what you said and what you showed us, and now it's my turn." 

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Francis Moon with his wife Veronica at the Full Moon Café.

David Perry

Two times an immigrant >

Executive Summary:

Francis Moon has been making major adjustments all his life. His Full Moon Café is the latest.

By David Perry

Francis Moon is an immigrant twice over. At the age of two, his family whisked him across the border between North and South Korea in a boat, using a sock to muffle his cries. He grew up amid the chaos of the Korean War.

Today, he and his wife Veronica are successful business owners in their second adopted country. The Moons own the Full Moon Cafe Deli-Bakery Restaurant on Brambleton Avenue in Roanoke County.

Francis has worked in and owned restaurants and food service business across the country. "I've been in Illinois, Michigan, New York, New Jersey and now

here," he says. The prospect of a better life brought him to America.

"In 1970, South Korea was still a poor country. Many people were starving," says Francis, who earned a college degree in animal science in South Korea. "I had a good job at Ralston Purina. I was one of the elite."

But Francis saw bigger things on the horizon. "I wanted more freedom. The United States offered more opportunity for me and my children. My dream was to come to the United States."

He and Veronica crossed the ocean and settled in Rockford, Ill., where Veronica had secured a job as a registered nurse. Francis found a job at an Uncle John's restaurant as a busboy, a far cry from his corporate position back home. Francis knew some English already, having served alongside American G.I.s in the Korean army as an interpreter, but he admits, "I don't have that much talent for language."

He experienced some discrimination, too, but says it's not isolated to the U.S.

"Discrimination is found not only in this country," says Francis. "In this country, it's

based on color and background. In Korea, they have different kinds of discrimination. People don't like other people from certain provinces."

Francis worked hard and soon owned his own restaurant. He recalls, "In Rockford, many Korean people said, 'You are successful in this country.' But that wasn't good enough. That's why I left Rockford and moved to New York," where he learned to make French pastries and Jewish bagels, and became a successful restaurateur and wholesaler."

Francis also found that business worked a little differently in the states. Because of his education and status in South Korea, he says "My son automatically would get a high position in a company. In America, you start on the bottom."

He mentored his children to always achieve so that race was never a factor in their success, telling them, "You are Asian. You have to compete with the white people. If you have the same grades as the white people, who are they going to choose? The white people choose white people. If you are far better than the white people, they can't touch you. They take you."

Even though he recognizes the role race can play, Francis says "America is freedom and someone with ability can do anything in this country."

Amid the doom and gloom of recession

In Brief

Name: Francis Moon
Age: 65
Company: Full Moon Cafe Deli-Bakery Restaurant
Location: Roanoke County
Title: Owner and chef
Background: South Korean immigrants Francis and Veronica Moon opened Full Moon Cafe in 2005 after a successful career in several food-related businesses across the country. A stickler for quality, Francis is not only an immigrant, but a world traveler, too. "I went to Paris many times and watched real French people make a croissant," he says. "My croissant compares—I make it better than the French people."

and high unemployment, Francis is upbeat. "Many people compare this country to the Roman Empire. It was a glorious time, but the Roman Empire is gone, and America will be the same way.

"But I don't think so. America is a huge country. We still have many different resources—natural and human." 

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The Cranwell International Center at Virginia Tech works with immigrants and foreign students, faculty and staff.

Virginia Tech

The international nature of Virginia Tech >

Executive Summary:

At least partially because of large numbers, Virginia Tech is at the center of international discussion and the exporting of education.

By Tim W. Jackson

Few organizations in this region of Virginia deal with immigration and visa issues on a daily basis more than Virginia Tech, which has about 2,400 students on non-immigrant visas and a large international faculty and staff.

Just about all of those people use Tech's Cranwell International Center, which works with students, scholars, faculty, spouses and visitors from 120 countries in all regions of the world.

In the fall of 2009, for example, VT had 618 students from China and 518 from India. Many countries, of course, had only a single student attending Tech, including a few most of us would find difficult to locate on a map: Benin, Berkina Faso, Mali, Oman, Qatar, Tanzania, Yemen.

Dealing with such vast numbers of internationals—and the paperwork and bureaucracy that comes with them—can be an arduous task. But at the Cranwell Center, VT has created a clearinghouse of expertise in the areas of immigration and visas.

Center Director Kim Beisecker oversees services that include immigration, orientation, English conversation programs, Friendship programs, academic courses, personal and academic counseling, crisis counseling and intervention and community programs.

Beisecker says that international students must first obtain an entrance visa, which has



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to be approved by an embassy official. The student must prove to the official that he does intend to stay in the United States and can afford to live here.

The Cranwell Center is then ready to support international students in any way possible. Beisecker says the Center works closely with the graduate school and with offices such as International Research Education and Development, where employees like Ian Loeschner have expertise in non-student permanent residency processing, which helps international faculty and staff become U.S. residents.

One family grateful for the work of the Center is that of Michael Brocher of Christiansburg. He is German with an E-1 visa, his wife is Chinese with an E-1 visa. Their daughter, a Virginia Tech student, is Chinese with an F-1 visa. She had an E-1 visa until her 21st birthday. (The E-1 treaty trader visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows foreign nationals of a treaty nation to enter into the U.S. and carry out substantial trade. An F-1 visa is a non-immigrant, full-time student visa and is what many of Tech's 2,400 international students hold.)

"The Cranwell Center helped us with my daughter's visa," Brocher says. "With its knowledge and hospitality everything progressed easily and my daughter's transaction went smoothly."

Beisecker says the Center assists many students as they segue into the working world, with many trying to obtain an H-1B visa. That visa allows U.S. employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in specialty occupations.

Beisecker says that when employment demands are great, obtaining an H-1B visa is like a lottery. "There's a cap on the H-1B visa and only so many can be obtained," she says. "They aren't capping out right now due to the economy."

It can be a risk for an employee to invest in an international student who is trying to make the transition from an F-1 to an H-1B visa because the student may not obtain the H-1B. But Beisecker reminds employees that students have 12 to 29 months available of practical training in their field upon finishing their educations. Beisecker says that time can be a great internship for employers to see if an international person can fill a position.

Bocher says international community members often excel in "high-tech skills that are important to modern offices or manufacturing environments."

Beisecker says the NRV and the Commonwealth of Virginia seem to recognize the impact of internationals in area business and that, "as an export, education is important to our economy." 

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CONTRIBUTORS

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Susan M. Ayers

AUGUST 2010 > Contributor of the Month

Valley Business FRONT congratulates **Susan Ayers**, whose cover story on residential real estate in the August issue was a must-read in this region, is relatively new to journalism, but she is hardly new to business. Susan has served as an executive in several capacities and is a former investment banker, which helped her understand the real estate issue much better. "She's a sponge," said Editor Dan Smith. "I don't recall anybody who came to us with so much to learn who did it in so little time and so thoroughly. She obviously has the curiosity, discipline and intelligence to do this job well and I think the real estate story gives an indication of how far she has come and how much better she can be. If she's this good this quickly, I don't know what the limit will be." You can read Susan's current and back issue articles at vbFRONT.com.



Parvin Pejman at Festival in the Park.

Dan Smith

Finding herself in a paintbrush >

Executive Summary:

Parvin Pejman can't practice medicine here, so she uses her art as a form of healing and as a healthy outlet.

By Michele Shimchock

If you met Roanoke artist Parvin Pejman at a coffee shop early one evening, you would not immediately know the power in her small hands or assume the humility and humanity in her heart. You would not know she is a storyteller in watercolor and acrylic, or that she held the hands of thousands of children as a pediatrician in pre-Revolution Iran.

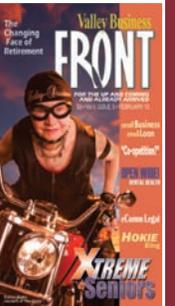
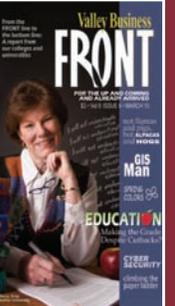
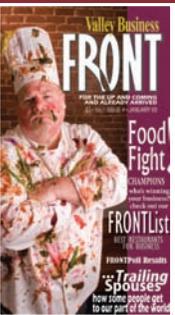
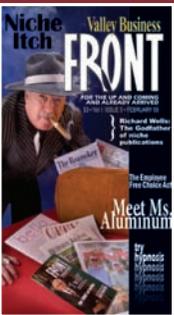
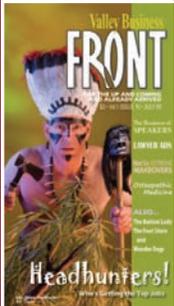
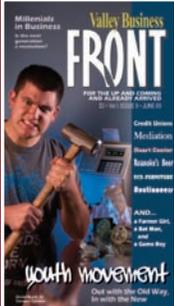
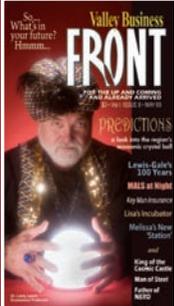
The 1979 Revolution brought Pejman and her family to the United States. "When I came to

this country I couldn't get my medical degree," she says. "I was top in my country, and I came here without knowing the language or anything. I was so depressed."

Pejman, however, would not be kept down. After a visit to Paris, she opened her own French-method weight loss clinic in Durham, N.C., but a 1990 an eye operation forced her to close it. She then went on to study accounting and work in real estate.

In 1999, Pejman's husband, once a prominent orthopedic surgeon in Iran, had back surgery. The couple moved to Roanoke to be near their daughter, and, she says, "because I love the mountains."

The sensitive Parvin absorbs the troubles of the world, and she has turned to art to enlighten a path to healing and sharing. "I said I should do something for my mind because all of these things in my mind that bother me come to the paper." She began her art studies in Roanoke at Virginia Western



Coming Up..

October 2010 Angel Investors

Do you believe in angels? They may be hard to find, but venture capitalists and new money sources for business are out there. For start-ups, expansions, product development, entrepreneurial ventures—the FRONT brings you angels in October. Look for this very special angelic edition, dropping out of a cloud near you soon.

November 2010 The FRONTList

Our annual "Best of" edition. In 2008 we presented elves and the "Naughty & Nice" List. In 2009, we gave you "Super Heroes." What's in store for 2010? Find out in November's FRONT.

FRONTguide2010

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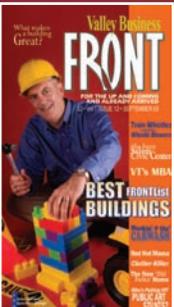
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Community College and continues to study new techniques at The Studio School.

She was quickly accepted, though "I don't know how. Maybe because I was honest, kind to everyone, always smiling. I love people. This is the way of my work. When I was pediatrician, I took lots of pictures with my patients in the hospital."

Pejman had a small space at the 52nd Sidewalk Art Show this year. She has displayed her artwork at Mill Mountain Coffee & Tea in Salem. One of her pieces, "Window to the World," was accepted to WVTF's annual Juried Art Show 2010. "I do art because it helps me," she says. "It has a healing power of the mind, body, and spirit."

Parvin Pejman is 78 years old, but her skin would never admit it. She tries to paint every day and always keeps two paintings going at

once, and though her art brings with it the power of healing, art also brings her frustration. "Sometimes, I change the color 10 times. I put [the painting] away in my office and won't look at it for one week. I don't think about it. And, then, I come back to it and see something wrong or something I should add. For this reason, it takes a long time to call a painting finished."

"I am not a painter of scenery," she says. "I am focused on human subject matter. There should be some meaning with it. There should be some backdrop, some knowledge, to give advice to someone."

Her lament and longing to communicate the bigger picture is evident in each careful brushstroke. "In Iran, there are lots of family and people around all the time. It is a social life. It is not an individual life. And I miss that." 

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My View

By Dan Smith
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

For the past 400 years, America—even before it was the United States of America—has been the land of immigrants. Some will go back many centuries before that to the Siberians crossing the land strip to what was to become Alaska and walking through Canada, America and Central and South America, settling in pockets along the way and spreading east. Others will look at the Vikings and even the Chinese, many, many centuries ago, as immigration influences.

But for our purposes, modern immigration took place between 1889 and 1924 (the Age of Mass Migration it is often called) and after 1965. The 19th Century immigrants came from Europe and Africa (slaves) and the more recent waves are from Latin America and Asia.

Those immigration waves brought 25 million people each and we now have 30 million immigrants.

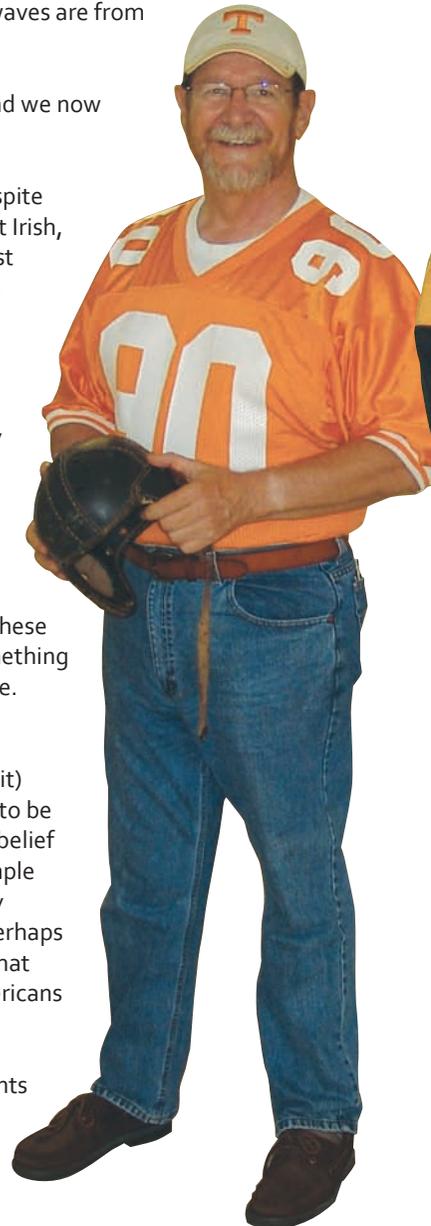
Immigrants have rarely been welcomed with open arms, despite that view of ourselves that we harbor. Discrimination against Irish, Catholic, Jew, African, Pole, Chinese, Mexican, Italian and just about any ethnicity and religion that isn't Western European white Protestant has been common. We've even practiced a form of institutional holocaust against the Native American tribes that had been here for centuries when we landed. We often took land from them that many tribes would gladly have shared, since they had no concept of land "ownership."

The simple fact is that despite often harsh, discriminatory and thoroughly unfair treatment, immigrants have helped meld the core values of our country: hard work, generosity of spirit, sympathy for the underdog, a belief in a supreme being and an enthusiastic eagerness as we face the future. These are people who came here looking for—and expecting—something better and who were—and are—willing to make that the case.

Much of the anti-immigrant fervor (and you can count such staunch Americans as Ben Franklin among those fomenting it) was race-based. Anglo-Americans have often been thought to be somehow superior and legislation has institutionalized that belief (Chinese couldn't own land for much of our history, for example and Africans were kept in slavery or virtual slavery until fairly recently). Attitudes today reflect some of that racism, but perhaps more influential is a bad economy that aids the perception that immigrants are "taking American jobs," whether or not Americans want those specific jobs.

According to ssrc.org, the amount of money illegal immigrants send home from their jobs in America "far exceed the funds going to poor countries from foreign aid, direct capital

continued to Page 52



Sweeping generalizations >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

BLOG: [ontapfrompub.blogspot.com]

"There are two things I can't stand in this world: people who are intolerant of other people's culture, and the Dutch." —from the movie Austin Powers—Goldmember.

The person who automatically presumes another person is a certain way (possessing strengths or weaknesses) because of culture or ethnicity is frustrating. During a blind draft (where the players aren't actually reviewed on the field) the assistant coach "advises" the coach to pick Adelio Suarez because his name "sounds" Cuban, so he'll be an asset to our baseball team.

What?

Equally frustrating, however, is the person who denies any cultural or ethnic distinctions, or presumes it superior to suppress such observations. After watching a play, one friend takes 10 times longer than necessary describing one of the actors as tall, or loud, or wearing a green shirt—because she's afraid to state the obvious: that he was black.

Huh?

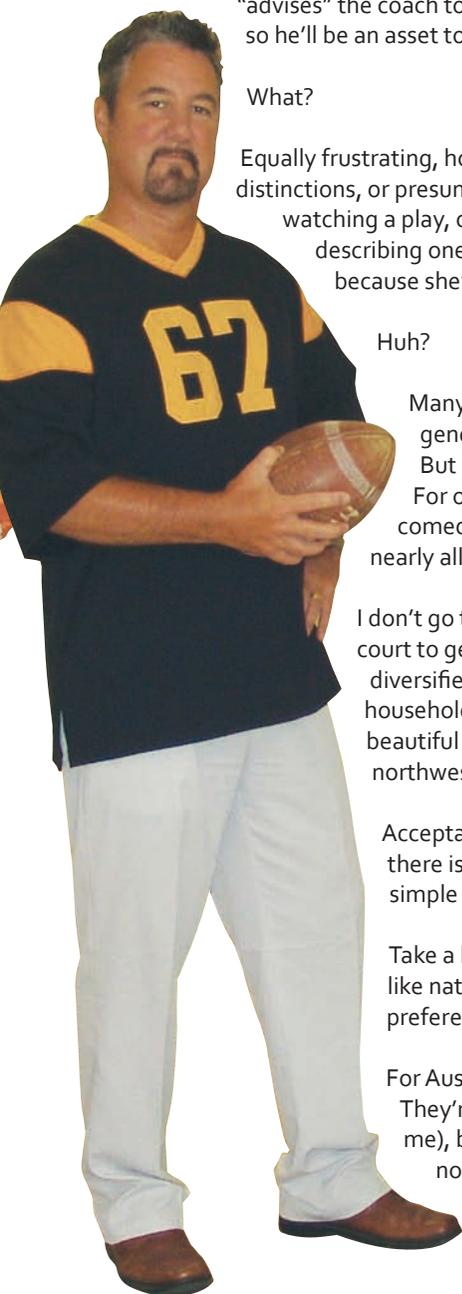
Many of us know by now that making broad, sweeping generalizations is not a good idea and is seldom productive. But such a practice is not always damaging, racist, or evil. For one thing, abolishment would put 90 percent of the comedians out of a job (especially the ethnic ones who bring nearly all ethnicities to tears with their illustrative commentaries).

I don't go to an Irish pub to get a taco. Likewise, I might visit a food court to get Schezuan shrimp followed up by Baklava. The well-diversified neighborhood generously sprinkled with multi-cultural households all up and down the street can be no more or no less beautiful than the dense pocket of Italians inhabiting the entire northwest quadrant of a city.

Acceptance is only a short walk from tolerance; but getting there is easier once we all understand it's mostly a matter of simple preference.

Take a look at the stories in this very issue. Immigrants, just like natives or homelander, come with their own set of preferences, likes and dislikes, sweeping generalizations.

For Austin Powers, it's the Dutch. For me, it's the lowans. They're not easterners (eastern, mid-Atlantic, in the U.S., like me), but neither are they west coast. Technically, they're not northerners or southerners. People who can't commit frustrate me. 



Smith / My View

from Page 50

investment, and manufacturing exports.” Those illegals come here, not because they want to live here, but because the money they earn can support their families, a desire shared by all of us.

We are depending heavily on certain immigrants to give us the workers we need in technology and other disciplines that require high degrees of education that our children don't seem to be interested in attaining. Either way, we appear to be blaming the immigrant for our own shortcomings, disinterest or lack of planning.

Playing into all this most prominently is that America is such a huge country that most

Americans are rarely exposed to anybody but themselves. We believe ours is the best, most advanced and most civilized and sophisticated culture primarily because we don't have anything else to compare it to. A quick trip to another country—even a Third World country—can be eye-opening. As Kenya native Atieno Asiyo of Roanoke's Binaba Shop says (in a wonderful story by Jill Elswick, Retail FRONT), “It's not all about, 'They're starving, send money.' There are regular people out there. There are cities.”

The sooner we grasp that concept fully, the more quickly we can move toward fully understanding how important immigrants are to our past and to our future. 

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More

Dan Smith

than most can stand...



Letters

Misquoted

Editor,

I have to say that while I appreciate the idea of having a LEED focused article in Valley Business Front ("LEED is the standard, but does it work?" August 2010 issue), I am disappointed with the inaccuracy in the quotes attributed to me, specifically as they relate to PVC. I said exactly the opposite of what your writer reported: "In my view, industry has done a wonderful job ...". This makes no sense whatsoever.

Similarly, and I made this point as plain as I could, we "attempted" to eliminate the use of PVC in the buildings. We were not altogether successful in this effort despite our passion toward doing so.

There is a distinction (in my mind at least) between SmithLewis Architects and SmithLewis Architecture (the name of our company). In my opinion, not all architects create architecture, and not all architecture is created by architects. This may pale if compared to the difference between lightning and lightning bugs, but it is important nonetheless.

Gregg Lewis
SmithLewis Architecture

(Editor's Note: The FRONT regrets any misunderstanding the story may have created. The story said, "In both projects Lewis and the building team avoided using PVC pipe for the most part, though it wasn't required.")

Good commentary

Editor,

Thanks for Dan Smith's thoughtful commentary (August FRONT, "It's time to do something") in support of the Poor Mountain Wind Energy

Center. I would only disagree with his assessment that the small and very vocal group of protestors is representative of the environmental community. Dan correctly observes that their position is not "NIMBY." They have instead adopted a "NIABY" point of view (Not In Anyone's BackYard), as they have asserted their blanket opposition to utility-scale wind energy. This view is not in line with major environmental groups which have made strong statements in support of properly sited wind energy facilities, notably Sierra Club and Audubon Society.

Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition supports the Poor Mountain project as a step in the right direction, away from our virtually complete dependence on coal for our electric energy needs. The U.S. Green Building Council Southwest Virginia Chapter and Renewable Energy and Electric Vehicle Association also support the Poor Mountain project, and other endorsements are expected soon. Wind is an important part of our energy future, and we wholeheartedly agree with Dan that "we have to do something significant, and we have to do it now."

Mark McClain, Director
Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition

Way to go, boys!

Editor,

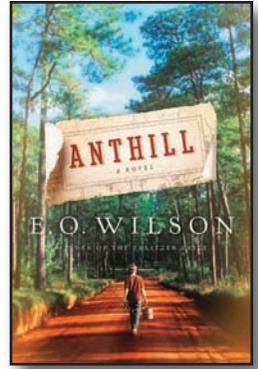
Valley Business FRONT is absolutely amazing. I love not only the content but the great online programming. Way to go.

Susan Young
Roanoke

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

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



Ants

In your studies of ants, do you prefer fiction or nonfiction? Both are now available in a pair of new books, Edward O. Wilson's *Anthill: A Novel* (W. W. Norton & Co., \$24.95) and Mark W. Moffett's *Adventures Among Ants: A Global Safari with a Cast of Trillions*, (University of California Press, \$29.95).

Wilson is a national treasure as a biologist, the winner of two Pulitzer Prizes and a pioneering field naturalist. He has the guts or the ego to publish a first novel in his ninth decade of life, and some reviewers have been tough on his dry style. *Anthill: A Novel* captures the flavor of sweet home coastal Alabama and its exquisite longleaf pine forests. The human part of the story is strongly autobiographical, revealing Wilson's response to modern America. If read as a parable rather than a novel, it offers a middle way in environmental battles, allowing both conservation and economic development.

The writing in *Anthill* is more Pilgrim's Progress than *Prodigal Summer*, and the characters are types rather than individuals. Wilson's profound discomfort with post-1970 America is obvious, and women and minorities fare poorly in his world. Why, you can imagine him saying, can't they be more like me?

Moffett is one of Wilson's students, and his book could provide content for a great series on the Discovery Channel, digging up stinging ants in exotic locales and pursuing other hairy endeavors. The "cast of trillions" is essentially all female, in many shapes and sizes, even within the same species. Moffett studies foraging and warfare among ants, so drama abounds. His

unwavering enthusiasm, fine writing and superb photos make this a worthwhile book for anyone who is curious about the natural world.

—Diana Christopulos

The Missing Mentor

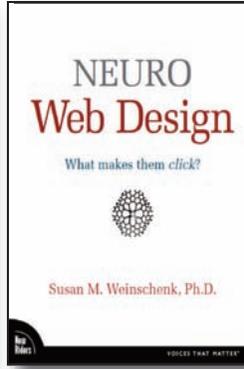
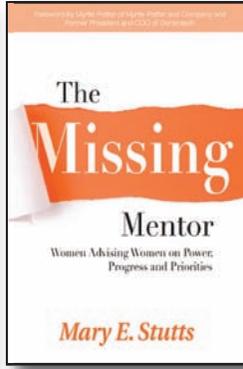
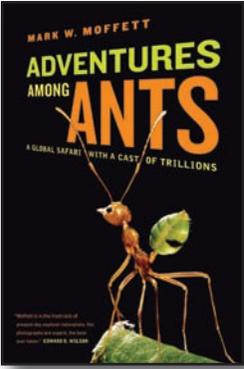
In *The Missing Mentor* (Household, \$16.95) Mary E. Stutts tells an intriguing and inspiring tale of women conquering obstacles, accepting challenges and taking advantage of opportunities to achieve professional success, continue their education and raise healthy happy families. This is no Wonder Woman tale; it's sound advice from a woman about women and for women. It's a real life story of choices and how to prioritize them to achieve balance.

Over the years, I have learned from inspiring women, but for most, finding a mentor is difficult. My advice to all aspiring women leaders as well as those well into their climb up the corporate ladder: Spend some time with *The Missing Mentor*; it's a quick read. But allow a couple of hours to take notes. Contemplate the lessons taught by Stutts while making correlations to your career. If you cannot find a mentor, challenge yourself to become one. Teaching is often the best learning experience.

—Dina Bennett

Web attraction

According to psychologist Susan Weinschenk, it all boils down to three things: food, sex and



death. The author of *Neuro Web Design: What Makes Them Click?* (New Riders, \$24.99), takes a look into the subtle psychology behind human behavior and how it applies to Web sites.

According to Weinschenk, those sites that titillate our “old brain” are the most likely to convert casual Web browsers into e-consumers. The “old brain” is that part of our minds that controls involuntary actions like breathing and digestion, and also continuously scans the environment for things to eat, opportunities to have sex, and things that mean us harm. By tapping into these most basic instincts through appropriate imagery, and knowing the other psychological cues that cause us to act (reciprocity, ratings and reviews, building commitment, creating scarcity, and others), Web designers can turn a sleepy e-commerce site into the next Amazon.com.

The book has a pop-psychology feel, but provides practical insights into how practitioners can improve their Web site's effectiveness, and maybe improve their people skills, too.

—David Perry

Death of a newspaper

There are three kinds of people who I suspect would most enjoy Tom Rachman's *The Imperfectionists* (The Dial Press; \$25). First, are the insiders—people in the newspaper industry, or by direct association, those connected to the media or any struggling enterprise (that leaves out very few, eh?). Second, writers, aspiring writers, and writing teachers—who want a near perfect illustration of character development through pure

dialogue (Rachman masters this, though one or two characters are one-dimensional, with stereotypical flaws piling on). And third, the peeping Toms among us—that is to say, you, standing there in your grocery checkout line, bank teller's line, sitting at your table in the restaurant, with your ears and eyes pressed on everyone else around you, just hoping to catch a glimpse of their lives.

A worthwhile read, if for no other reason than to see remarkable descriptions of your co-workers, the book is not so much a novel as it is a collection of short stories. Rachman does weave them back in for a very brief wrap-up at the end, but the characters are colorful enough; and we're presented with one of those linear off Broadway character study plays (or television sitcoms) that is entertaining with an occasional sprinkling of philosophical insight, including one of my favorite lines, “Nothing in all civilization has been as productive as ludicrous ambition ... the love of man to be worshipped by man.” A formulaic (but effective) format, each chapter introduces one character, co-titled with an actual newspaper headline. The last chapter's headline was difficult for many of us to see in print again—but the ominous selection was intentional and synonymous with the final and expected conclusion.

—Tom Field

(The reviewers: Dina Bennett develops courses at Mountain Shepherd Wilderness Survival School. David Perry is with the Western Virginia Land Trust. Retired Diana Christopoulos has been a college professor, HR exec and business owner. Tom Field is FRONT publisher.)



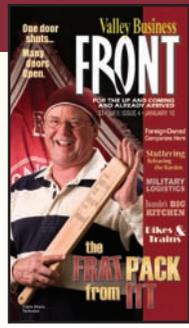
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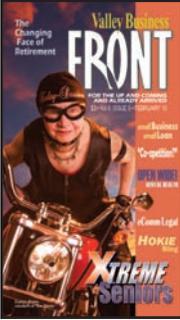
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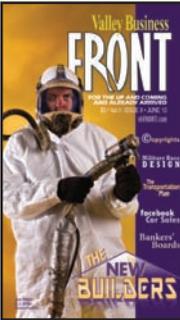
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April 2010



May 2010



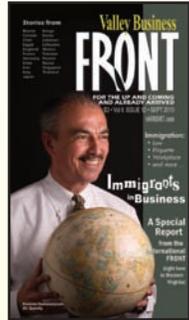
June 2010



July 2010



August 2010



September 2010

FRONT favorites

Volume II is complete (October 2009-September 2010)

Vote for your favorite cover or your top choice contributor (or vote for both) and look for the results in our upcoming FRONTlist / Best of 2010

How To Vote >

It's easy. Send an e-mail to poll@vbFRONT.com and tell us your favorite cover and/or top choice for contributor of FRONT Volume II.

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Revisit any back issue in entirety, online at vbFRONT.com

Volume II Contributors

Susan M. Ayers
Anne Giles Clelland
Jay Conley
Bonnie Cranmer
Jane Dalier
Donna Dilley
Jill Elswick
Keith Ferrell
Tom Field
Huong Fralin
Monica Fritz
Rachael Garrity
Stephanie Hardiman
Pamela Hartle
Becky Hepler

Andrew Hudick
Tiffany Hodges
Tim W. Jackson
Paulette Jayabalan
Rob Johnson
Janeson Keeley
Pete Krull
Gene Marrano
Michael Miller
Linda Nardin
Deborah Nason
David Perry
Laura Purcell
Michael L. Ramsey
Leigh Ann Roman

Jo Lynn Seifert
Michele Shimchock
Dan Smith
Patsy Stewart
Wizzy Strom
Kathy Surace
Duffie Taylor
Nicholas Vaassen
Deborah Vaughan
Greg Vaughn
Alison Weaver
Lori White
Joel S. Williams

FRONT'N ABOUT



photos: Dan Smith

Name change >

The former Summerville at Ridgewood Gardens in Salem held a reception August 7 to celebrate the changing of its name to Emeritus at Ridgewood Gardens and the weather nearly got in the way. A series of severe thunderstorms left darkened skies, but did nothing for spirits. In these photos, Executive Director David Beard (center near staircase) waited to greet visitors as other visitors piled on the food at a sumptuous buffet.



VTK celebration >

VT KnowledgeWorks' **Summer Celebration** was held in August to a near full house in the VTK buildings (where it was pushed by a thunderstorm). The gathering was entertainment and mingling to acknowledge members, sponsors and affiliates.

photo: Jane Dalier

Runway models >

Valley Business FRONT editor **Dan Smith** (in his ever-present baseball cap) and columnist **Donna Dilley** were among the runway models August 12 at the Jefferson Center for Goodwill Industries' Second Runway, a fundraiser that was quite successful. During the show, Goodwill's clothes were featured—and for sale—and they included five spectacular new wedding dresses, as well as odds and ends that included household wares and jewelry.



photo: William Mahone

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



Pearl Fu runs Local Colors from an office in the Jefferson Center.

Dan Smith

The living legacy of Pearl Fu >

Executive Summary:

Roanoke's best-known international ambassador didn't really have much choice but to lead and to set an example. It is in her bloodlines. So's the sense of humor.

By Dan Smith

For Pearl Fu, it has always been about continuing a legacy of service. Even when she found herself half a world away from her home in this strange land of oddly appealing people, she knew what she had to do. Her father and her grandfather before him dictated it.

These were Chinese giants of the Yi minority, men who challenged authority, rose and fell from power, towering, handsome men who earned the loyalty of their people with their simple, modest wisdom and powerhouse leadership.

Her grandfather was Gen. Long Yuen (Dragon Cloud), the governor (or "king," as he was called at the time) of Yunnan Province and a man who was rescued by American icon Gen. Claire Chennault of the Flying Tigers when Yuen fell from the grace of oppressive rulers. Chennault owed his good friend Yuen one and paid it handsomely.

The old general, whose figure stands as a monument in his native province today, adored his bright, funny granddaughter and named her Dragon Precious Pearl. His son, Pearl's dad, was Lung Shing Tso, who reluctantly served Nationalist Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek and attended military college in France. Father and grandfather, both army generals, were part of Chinese aristocracy, says Pearl, but they lived simple, frugal, unpretentious lives that endeared them to their people.

Pearl, who has become something of an icon in her adopted province of Roanoke, Virginia, is an ad-mix of Chinese royalty, vaudeville actor, huckster, elegant international spokeswoman, high-energy organizer and diplomat. Might we also mention comedian, whose self-deprecating humor often catches those who don't know her completely off balance? She once showed up at Halloween as Tina Turner. She introduces herself as "Spring Cho," a well-known local Realtor.

She's recognized in her brightly colored costumes—often having nothing to do with her heritage, but worn to honor another culture, say a Scottish kilt—and for Local Colors, the international festival she founded a quarter of a century ago that has grown into a major event in the western half of Virginia. The festival showcases the region's wide variety of cultures—in native dress, serving native foods—and has grown from an initial three participating cultures to nearly 100 today. She put it together by force of will and still operates it that way—as its CEO and only employee.

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

She has battled bureaucracy, reluctance and fear to create one of the truly positive symbols of a region that has opened itself to diversity—and Pearl Fu has set that bar high, often raising it a notch because she’s who she is and she can do that.

Pearl’s stature—not all that much physically; she probably doesn’t touch five feet—has grown to the level that when the Library of Virginia recently wanted to honor the immigrants who helped shape the Commonwealth’s history, Pearl Fu was among the 10 profiled. That’s 10 in the history of America’s most historic state.

Pearl came to America because she had that singular ambition burning in her since she was a child. She was a singer, a music student who landed at a Catholic girls’ school (her parents thought America too wild for a modest young Chinese girl, having seen evidence of that in “Blackboard Jungle”). This was 1959 and Pearl had no intention of staying in a virtual monastery. She moved over to the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore (part of Johns Hopkins today). “I dreamed of going to Broadway,” she says. But she met a post-graduate student from Northern China and they were married right after graduation, before the Great White Way opened to her.

She and her husband, a low-key research scientist who spent a career at Ingersoll-Rand, were from vastly different backgrounds. “It was like being from the North and the South in America,” she says, noting that the Yi minority is “like a Native American here.”

While Pearl came from comfort, her husband was one of 10 children, raised by his grandmother and a man who escaped to Taiwan after the communists took over China. “His was a hard life,” says Pearl. Hers wasn’t. “People thought I came from poverty because I’ve always been unassuming—like my family—but I was taught to work and take care of myself, to extend myself to the unfortunate. My family taught me to live simply, basically, always be humble and low-key.” The low-key part didn’t stick with this Broadway Baby wannabe.

Pearl has seen attitudes towards foreigners change over the years, but they became darker after 9/11. “The government would hardly allow anyone in,” she says, “especially Chinese people. Brilliant scholars are not being allowed in.” There were subtle changes, too: “Virginia Western [Community College] used to give in-state tuition to in-state students living here with a green card,” she says. “They stopped that and many students can’t afford to go now. Shutting out kids is not right.”

‘Course, Pearl doesn’t just sit and watch injustice. She jumps in the center of the fight—smiling and cracking wise and getting things changed with a deep understanding of humanity that supersedes a specific culture. “Smile,” she says. “Put yourself in their shoes. Make an effort. I open up; they open up. It’s simple.”

For Pearl Fu, it’s always simple. The right thing usually is. 

“The Answer My Friend...”

Wind turbines at the new William Fleming High School Stadium will generate a portion of the power required to run the stadium. When the turbines produce more power than the stadium uses, the excess power will flow backwards through the meter into the APCO grid for use by other APCO customers. The Stadium’s electric bill is in turn reduced by the amount of power returned to the APCO grid.

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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Accounting

Goodman & Company in Roanoke has made the following promotions in its Roanoke office:

James C. Wienke, CPA, to senior manager; **Kathryn R. Overacker**, CPA, to Senior manager; **Sarah "Beth" Kelley** to manager; **Brian L. Gibbs** to senior associate.

Banks

Todd Murray has joined First Bank of Virginia as vice president at the Christiansburg office.

Carolyn Calhoun has been named assistant VP and assistant branch manager of its Wytheville branch.

SunTrust Bank, Western Virginia in Roanoke has named **Gayle Gruchow** vice president and client advisor within its Private Wealth Management Division.



Reed

Insurance

Carla M. Reed has joined Charles Lunsford Sons in Roanoke as commercial lines insurance account executive.



Holt

Moore, has been selected to serve a two-year term on the board of the Roanoke Bar Association. Partner **Kevin Walker Holt** has earned the highest rating through Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review.



Knight

the Roanoke United Methodist Home. Knight is also a professor of geriatric medicine at the Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine.

LEGAL FRONT



Cohan

Organizations

David N. Cohan, a partner with the Roanoke law firm Gentry Locke Rakes &

Amanda "Mandi" Bishop

has joined The Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg as a legal assistant.

WELLNESS FRONT

Eldercare

Dr. Aubrey Knight of Carilion Clinic Center for Healthy Aging and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine is the new medical director for

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Industry

Blacksburg-based Schultz-Creehan CEO **Nanci Hardwick** recently presented "The Emergence of an Innovative Metal Processing Method" at the annual National Center for Defense Manufacturing and Machining Summit in Greensburg, Pa.

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Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to 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.



Fielder

Schultz-Creehan in Blacksburg has named **Bob Fielder** senior R&D program director. Fielder will lead R&D efforts in clean and renewable energy projects, with an initial focus on wind energy.

PixelOptics of Roanoke, a composite lens company, has named **David Provow** VP of global manufacturing.



McBride



Sullenger

engineers, have passed the Fundamentals of Engineering Exam to become Engineers-in-Training.

Wiley & Wilson in Lynchburg has named **Aaron Tice** process and treatment engineer in the civil engineering department.

Construction Supply

Brian Muelenaer has been named VP of operations for Smith Mountain Building Supply, replacing Bill West, who retired in July.



Currin

new Richmond office.

Economic Development

Natalie Kruse has joined the Blacksburg Partnership as outreach and events coordinator.



Yost

Contractors

MB Contractors Inc. (which, until recently, was Martin Brothers Contractors) has named **Bob Yost** director of operations. **Carthan F. Currin III** has been named director of business development at MB Contractors'

EDUCATION FRONT

Colleges

Feride Daku has been named Virginia Tech's director of finance and administration for the Office of the Vice President and Dean

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Architects, Engineers

Draper Aden Associates in Blacksburg has announced that **Kathleen (Coco) McBride** and **Ken Sullenger**, both staff



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Career FRONT

for Undergraduate Education.

Dr. Timothy J. Kowalski, D.O. has been installed as the vice dean for the Via College of Osteopathic Medicine in Blacksburg. **Bea Jones** has been promoted to the position of director of application services.

Roger Dalton, director of government affairs for National College in Salem, has been elected to the board of directors of the Career College Association.

Jamil Srou has been named director of international student recruitment for National



Srou

College in Roanoke.

Radford University accounting professor **Bruce Chase** recently co-authored a new training manual *Right the First Time: Cases in Not-for-Profit Accounting and Auditing*, published through the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Dr. John H. Burton



Burton

has been named chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

OTHER FRONTS

Advertising/PR

Scott Samson has



Samson

joined tba (the becher agency) in Roanoke as public relations account manager.

Appointments

Laura Rawlings, executive director of The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge, will serve as a grant panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C. Rawlings will

gregvaughnphotography.com



Rawlings

serve on the Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth panel in December along with representatives from local arts agencies across the country.

Hotels

Parrish Phillips is the Inn at Virginia Tech's new director of food and beverage. **Jennifer Jo Morgan** has been



Phillips



Morgan

appointed Preston's Restaurant manager at the Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center.



Norton

Organizations

Michael P. Norton of Goodman & Company in Roanoke has been named president of Bethany Hall, a resident facility for women.

Junior Achievement of Southwest Virginia has named **Don Lorton** of Carilion Clinic and **Scott Miller** of Birchwood Development as

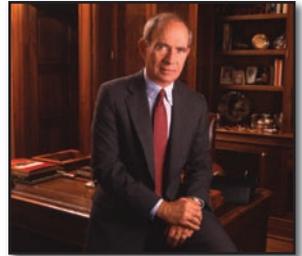
co-chairmen of its board of directors. Other officers are: chairman-elect, **Cory Renick** of The Renick Group; treasurer, **Bill Stone** of BB&T; secretary, **Kara MacLeod** of Kroger; major fund drive chairman, **Susan Still** of HomeTown Bank. New board members are **Lisa Barnett** of Botetourt County Schools; **Theresa Womack** of MemberOne; **Charles Robbins** of BB&T; **Patty Tuttle** of Wachovia Bank; **John Register** of Valley Bank; **Alisha Starkey** of Cox; **Renee Sowers** of Medical Facilities of America;



ADVANCE AUTO



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ROANOKE TIMES



ROWE

Career FRONT

Julie Arthur of Bank of America; and **Ellen Copenhaver** of Roanoke City Schools.

Steven C. Peak, technical executive of TMEIC GE in Roanoke, has been awarded the 2010 "Above and Beyond" award from Junior Achievement of Southwest Virginia.

Recognition

Anne McDevitt was

honored recently by the Sodexo Foundation for a lifetime of fighting hunger in Blacksburg. Since 2006, she has been employed by Sodexo Senior Services and is the general manager at Warm Hearth Village.

The Roanoke Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross has named new officers for 2010-2011: They are: **T. Joe Crawford**, Steel

Dynamics, Inc., chairman; **Thomas T. Johnson**, Boxley Materials Co., first vice chairman; **Stanley A. Huffman III**, community volunteer, second vice chairman; **Melissa Richardson**, community volunteer, third vice chairman; **Ann B. Layman**, community volunteer, secretary. New board members include: **David Burch**, community volunteer; **Marsha Combs**,

community volunteer; **Anne Hartman**, community volunteer; **Modena Henderson**, Carilion Labs; **John James**, Associated Asphalt; **Barbara Robertson**, Cox Communications.

So much more.

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morefront.blogspot.com

So many FRONTreaders just can't get enough in our monthly magazine. "Give us more!" they say. Well, we say, "OK." Read more stories and latebreaking updates on our moreFRONT blog.

- > Another Downtown Project for John Garland
- > Tanglewood Mall To Become College Campus
- > Take Me Out To The Ball Game ...
- > Fishwick: A Man of Many Seasons
- > More Security from CCS in New Company
- > Strokes Up; Recognition of Signs Is Credited
- > Liberty Law Earns ABA Accreditation
- > Woods Rogers Opens Charlottesville Office
- > Valley Computer Showroom Opens
- > Clark Nexsen's New Office LEED Certified
- > Tech, GM To Create Tire Test Facility

- > Cover Story—Commercial Real Estate: Best of a Bad Situation
- > Rawlings To Serve on Grant Panel
- > Summer Celebration at VTK
- > MedCottage Introduced in Roanoke Valley
- > Hollins Fundraising 'Blew the Lid Off' Goal
- > Pixel, Aspex Reach License Agreement
- > A New Home for Environmentally-Friendly Floored
- > New Machinery Leads to Schultz-Creehan Expansion
- > Pilots' Group Opposes Bent Mountain Wind Farm
- > UXB in Blacksburg Wins Army Contract

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

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Participates in study

Highlander Construction & Development

of Christiansburg was one of 10 builders in Virginia involved in a joint study conducted by the Center for Applied Behavior Systems at Virginia Tech and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. The purpose of the project was to conduct research on the environmental sustainability and occupational health and safety activities of small construction businesses.

Researchers believe the information collected will help them understand how companies and individuals in the construction industry make choices in the work place, which affect their health and safety as well as their environmental impact. Results of the study will be used to help educate the construction industry and the general public about the potential alleviation of looming environmental threats and the benefits of choices and practices which protect workers health and safety.

NB posts increase

National Bankshares

of Blacksburg has announced second-quarter net income of nearly \$4.0 million, a 19.03 percent increase over the nearly \$3.36 million reported at June 30, 2009. For the six months ended June 30, 2010, the company posted record net income of nearly \$7.77 million, up by 15.14 percent over the record \$6.74 million earned in the first six months last year. This

translates to basic net income per share of 58 cents and \$1.12 for the second quarter and the first six months of 2010, respectively.

Wins green award

New River Valley-based **Shelter Alternatives**, a design-build company, has won the 2010 Virginia Green Innovation Award from the Virginia Sustainable Building Network. The company was named Best Green Business.

Owner Ed Tuchler says the award acknowledges Shelter Alternatives' long-term commitment to sustainability as custom home builders, and applauds recent efforts to adapt to changing markets with the creation of a new business, Energy Check, which provides home performance testing and energy retrofit contracting services. For 21 years, Shelter Alternatives has worked environmentally. VSBN President Annette Osso, said, "This company was green long before the term became popular." In addition to focusing on building science, the company incorporates sustainable practices into its daily work methods.

County digital winner

Roanoke County is ranked among the top digital counties in the nation for its use of information and communication technology to support and provide public service. It placed fifth in its population category in the annual Digital Counties Survey.

The survey, administered

by e.Republic's Center for Digital Government and the National Association of Counties, identifies best practices and recognizes those counties that provide exemplary electronic service to their public.

"Roanoke County places an emphasis on information technology, and we are pleased to be recognized for our efforts," said County Administrator Clay Goodman.

This is the seventh year that Roanoke County has been named among the top ten digital counties in the nation. In 2004, 2005, and 2006, Roanoke County placed first in the Digital Counties Survey. In 2007 and 2008, the County earned second place in its population category. In 2009, the County regained its top spot for a community its size.

Grant for IT training

A \$4.7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor will lead to the formation of a 25-member team drawn from industry, academia, and government focusing on health information technology (IT) training in communities hard hit by job losses in Southwest Virginia. The grant will be used to train health care professionals and help advance the application of medical IT throughout the region, and it will provide employment opportunities for displaced and underemployed workers and open the door to new career opportunities.

Called HITE, for **Health Information Technology Education**, the initiative will target health care workers in nursing,

pharmacy, and medical-assistant fields. The grant provides \$426,000 to underwrite work at Virginia Tech during the three-year life of the project.

MedCottage unveiled

The first prototype of the MedCottage, invented by a Salem minister, has been unveiled—a portable, modular medical home designed to make it possible for families to take care of loved ones on their property as an alternative to long-term care facilities. The 12-by-24-foot MedCottage, loaded with technology and amenities for the health, comfort and safety of the elderly or those recovering from illness or injury, was developed as an alternative model for healthcare as 78 million baby boomers prepare for their senior years—potentially straining nursing homes and government-funded healthcare programs.

"The MedCottage model for healthcare offers a totally new paradigm," says the Rev. Kenneth Dupin of Salem, founder and CEO of N2Care and the innovator behind the MedCottage. "With a daunting reality looming, we must, as a society, consider every option to take pressure off the system. The MedCottage is such a cost-effective alternative—and baby boomers are ready for new options for aging in place."

Pixel agreement

PixelOptics of Roanoke and **Aspex Eyewear** of Montreal have created a

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new license agreement under which Aspex will become PixelOptics' exclusive licensee for emPower! electronic eyeglass frames for North America. Aspex will manufacture, distribute and sell emPower! electronic eyeglass frames in North America capable of housing Pixel's electronic focusing eyeglass lenses.

Hollins exceeds goal

Hollins University has completed the largest comprehensive fundraising campaign in its 168-year history and the largest ever for any women's college in the South. The Hollins Campaign for Women Who Are Going Places, which began in 2002, officially ended June 30 with \$161.6 million raised, far exceeding its goal of \$125 million.

The campaign helped Hollins grow its endowment from \$85 million in 2003 to its present value of \$130 million and enabled the university to eliminate all debt and strengthen its financial foundation.

Wins wine award

AmRhein Wine Cellars in Roanoke has been awarded both the Gold Award and the Best of Category Award for its 2008 Pinot Grigio by the Atlantic Seaboard Wine Association. AmRhein was among 110 wineries from 11 Atlantic Seaboard states entering 538 wines in the competition. All

wines were judged by a team of 20 judges, ranging from wine makers, wine retailers, sommeliers, wine educators, wine writers, wine importers, and club beverage managers, coming from seven states. "This wine is a personal special accomplishment, and it's nice to have the effort recognized by such an esteemed competition," said Russ Amrhein, viticulturist for AmRhein Wine Cellars.

Education at Tanglewood

Virginia's State Council of Higher Education has unanimously approved the establishment of a new **Miller-Motte Technical College** at a renovated Goody's retail space in the Tanglewood Mall. The college will also use space on the lower level, where both Crystal Cottage and Hayden Music used to do business. Both stores have relocated inside the mall in order to make room for Miller-Motte. The new campus will be the 40th in Delta Career Education Corporation's system and is slated to begin enrolling students in January 2011. At its peak, the new Tanglewood campus is expected to enroll nearly 600 full-time students.

Murphy resigns as Luna CEO

Roanoke-based Luna Innovations Inc. has seen its income decrease by \$618,329 for the first three months of 2010 (bad, but not like last year's \$2.4

million loss in a similar period) and its longtime **CEO Kent Murphy** has resigned. Murphy says he will become an advisor and will serve as vice chairman of the board of the company, which employs 200 people.

Luna remains one of the most promising companies around, despite hard times of late. Much of that came on the heels of its Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing, following litigation in which it had to pay a stiff penalty.

Murphy's resignation as CEO has been planned for several months.

John Fishwick dies

John P. "Jack" Fishwick, president of Norfolk and Western Railway from 1970 to 1981, died Aug. 9 at the age of 93. He had joined the Norfolk and Western law department in 1945 following Navy service in World War II. After holding various posts in the law department, he became senior vice president and was elected to the Norfolk and Western board in 1963. He was named chairman and chief executive officer of the Erie Lackawanna

Railway in April 1968, and president of the Delaware & Hudson Railway later the same year. Both were affiliated with Norfolk and Western at the time. He became president and CEO of N&W in 1970.

In 1980, he opened talks with Southern Railway, which ultimately led to its consolidation with N&W and the formation of Norfolk Southern Corporation in 1982. He was a member of the NS board from its formation until retiring from the board in 1989. Fishwick was born in Roanoke and educated at Roanoke College and Harvard Law School. As the head of N&W, Fishwick advocated the promotion of women and minorities, and started a treatment program for employees with drinking problems long before such programs were in vogue.

Compiled by Dan Smith

FRONT Notes posted daily online at moreFRONT.blogspot.com.

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

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Advantage Resource Group	65	Lotz Funeral Homes	28
Brambleton Imports	65	Chas. Lunsford	41
Brandon Oaks	44	Men's Warehouse	65
Building Consultant Services	65	Mountain Lake Hotel	45
Carilion Clinic	BC	Pheasant Ridge	60
Controllers, Etc.	65	Ride Solutions	37
Davis H. Elliot Company	65	Rife + Wood Architects	59
Energy Healing	65	Roanoke Natural Foods Co-Op	70
Feed America Southwest Virginia	52	The Shires	65
First Citizens	38	Source 4	49
Floored	36	Spectrum Design	31
G&H Contracting	27	StellarOne	61
Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore	29	TAP	39
Gwyn & Harmon / Carolyn Green	65	Valley Bank	2
Hall & Associates	32	Greg Vaughn Photography	62-63
HCA / Lewis Gale	4	Virginia Veterans Care Center	30
IDD	32	Donald Wetherington Law Firm	33
KD Capital Solutions	65	Woods Rogers	25
King Law Group	43	Wytheville Meeting Center	3
LeClair Ryan	71		



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— Page 33

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