

Valley Business FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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Advance Peak

Yellow Grease

Loans for Women

Country Doc

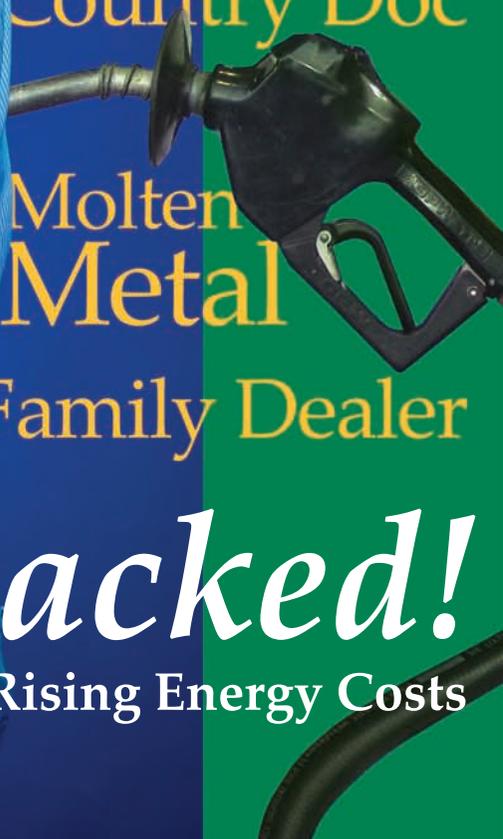
Molten
Metal

Family Dealer

Hijacked!

Rising Energy Costs

Carl Bumgarner,
Fleetmaster Express



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WELCOME to the FRONT

It has been nearly 40 years now since the words "cheap" and "energy" have been used in the same sentence without being laughed off as an oxymoron. Since the early 1970s when energy was, indeed, cheap, a lot has happened, not much of it good, but some of it instructive. We have learned to live with energy costs the rest of the world envies, but we consider excessive. We have learned to conserve. We have begun to learn that alternatives exist to what we have done for so many years.

Business was not brought to this point without a fight, but it seems to have finally engaged with the reality that certain measures that conserve energy, improve the environment, and create an economy based on new inventions is a good thing. Business has become a leader in the new energy economy, a pace-setter in new technologies, one of the first to recognize that bad energy decisions are bad security risks.

Nothing is going to be all better overnight, but we've made a significant gain in those 40 years and it looks like the next 40 will be even better. Read our cover story and see how business is helping.



Tom Field



Dan Smith

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does the same
with your
energy bills.**



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Rising Energy Costs



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AUGUST



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Dan Smith



Julie Snowman

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 57.

Editorial Advisory Board

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

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

CONTRIBUTORS



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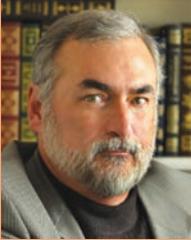
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- Stuart Mease** Rackspace (Tech/Industry)
- Mary Miller** IDD (Tech/Industry)
- Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners (Development)
- John Williamson** RGC (Tech/Industry)

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.

“I just love the Blue Ridge and the art and culture here

— Page 47

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Greg Vaughn Photography

Hijacked

Rising Energy Costs

Playing our “trucker” FRONTcover model this edition is R. Carl Bumgarner, president of Fleetmaster Express of Roanoke. Also chairman of the Virginia Trucking Association, Carl is a third generation trucking company executive who knows all too well what it feels like to be “held up” by soaring fuel prices. We suspect one of the keys on his chain might be for the maximum strength aspirin locked up in the medicine cabinet.

Energy drain >

Executive Summary:

The problems of expensive energy are enormous and growing exponentially. Here's what some area companies are doing about it.

by Dan Smith and David Perry

The numbers are often staggering. Consider these:

- When one of Roanoke-based Freightliner’s trucks fills its 300-gallon tank with diesel fuel, the cost is \$1,200 and the truck travels 1,800 miles, about halfway across the country.
- Appalachian Power burns 15 million tons of coal a year, at \$90 a ton (down from \$180 a ton in 2008). That’s \$1.35 billion a year for fuel to provide electricity.
- Steel Dynamics in Roanoke spends \$1.5 million a month in electrical costs to keep its furnaces running and another \$500,000 a month for natural gas.

Every business and family in the United States has seen its energy bills move into uncharted territory in recent months and most are working hard at getting those costs under control. For families, the costs mean doing without something else. For business, the prices in an already-bad economy can mean dissolution.

Lightbulbs are being changed for more efficient versions; thermostats are being turned down in winter, up in summer; solar units are being installed and wind turbines considered; car trips are being shortened and routes re-considered; left turns are being eliminated for delivery vans; what used to be “radical” environmental solutions are becoming the norm.

Companies like Orvis in Roanoke, with a wide-ranging energy efficiency plan; Breakell Inc., which heats and cools with solar panels; Cox Communications with its truck idling reduction program; Roanoke Cement with a compressed air program that reduces electrical use by four percent; and several governments in the region that have enthusiastically grabbed hold of efficiencies, are setting the pace.

Ride Solutions in Roanoke, through its Volunteers for Energy program, (www.rvarc.org/energy) is working to help businesses deal with high energy prices by providing free, preliminary energy audits that cover electricity, transportation, and general



Diana Christopolus and Mark McClain of the Cool Cities Coalition: "Business in general is far ahead of residential" in energy efficiency.

Dan Smith

sustainability practices," says Director Jeremy Holmes.

Environmentalism, which was so demonized by business 20 years ago, is being seen as one of the solutions to the energy pinch. Using less energy and using it more efficiently is an important bottom-line issue that has value to the country as a whole. It has national security implications, so even when business' motives may not be saving the environment, they are contributing to that end.

Cool Cities

The Cool Cities Coalition has grown exponentially in this region over three years, including an impressive array of businesses and governments because its goal is efficiency and cost savings. Industry, in fact, is far and away the leader in new efficiencies in energy use, according to a study by the City of Roanoke.

Diana Christopolus of the Cool Cities Coalition says the reasons for business' success in this area are obvious. "I think business in general is far ahead of residential for several reasons. Businesses use hard data. There are people whose entire job is figuring out how to save money, and senior managers listen to them. Small changes add up to a lot of money in business. Businesses are not democracies. If the CEO says 'we are going to change the thermostats,' then it is going to happen—though of course we definitely advocate involving everyone from the beginning, talking about what, why and how, and incorporating ideas of everyone into the process.

"People often want to do whatever makes them happy at home.

““”

The human damages resulting from the use of coal in electricity generation [is estimated] at \$62 billion per year nationwide, or an additional 3.2 cents per kilowatt-hour on average. That includes the air pollution cost to humans, but not environmental costs like damage to the ecosystem, or the cost of greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change. If utilities had to consider these externalities, think how different our fuel mix would be.

—Diana Christopolus,
Cool Cities Coalition



Dan Smith

Billy Weitzenfeld



Alternative energy use is still growing very slightly and much too slowly. Until Virginia has a mandatory Renewable Portfolio Standard the renewable/alternative industry will continue to struggle in our region and in our state ... The real question is: are major corporations using their political clout to influence public policy related to carbon and climate? Not sure about that.

—*Billy Weitzenfeld, Association of Energy Conservation Professionals*

While some people love to try the latest technologies, many want to keep things the same. At home, small cost reductions may not appear significant."

Billy Weitzenfeld, director of Association of Energy Conservation Professionals, puts it more directly: "Businesses are not much different than homes in how they use energy; they are just bigger animals."

There's a lot to keep in mind with the accelerating cost of energy. The cost, of course, is increasingly burdensome on business, and environmental considerations of fossil fuels are slowly moving to the front of the line from both the standpoint of overall cost and business ethics. Weitzenfeld points to "a national epidemic of respiratory illness mainly due to burning coal to create electricity." Business and industry are frequently discovering that the environmentally friendly alternative is also the choice that is healthy for the bottom line. Sometimes, though, it's a choice of bad and worse.

Appalachian Power recently closed several old—and little used—power plants that were heavy polluters. They used coal, as do most of ApCo's plants in this region, and American Electric Power's (ApCo is a subsidiary) system-wide. The price of coal has fluctuated dramatically in the past few years (\$180 a ton in 2008, \$90 a ton now, according to ApCo), but coal has increasingly come under fire from environmentalists and now even industrial recruiters and economic developers.

Christopolus talks of persistent rumors that a number of top companies are looking at where utilities get their power (coal, gas or other fuels) in determining whether to locate plants within those regions. There was a great deal of chatter recently about Microsoft declining to locate a sizeable plant in Christiansburg because of the coal used by the power company.

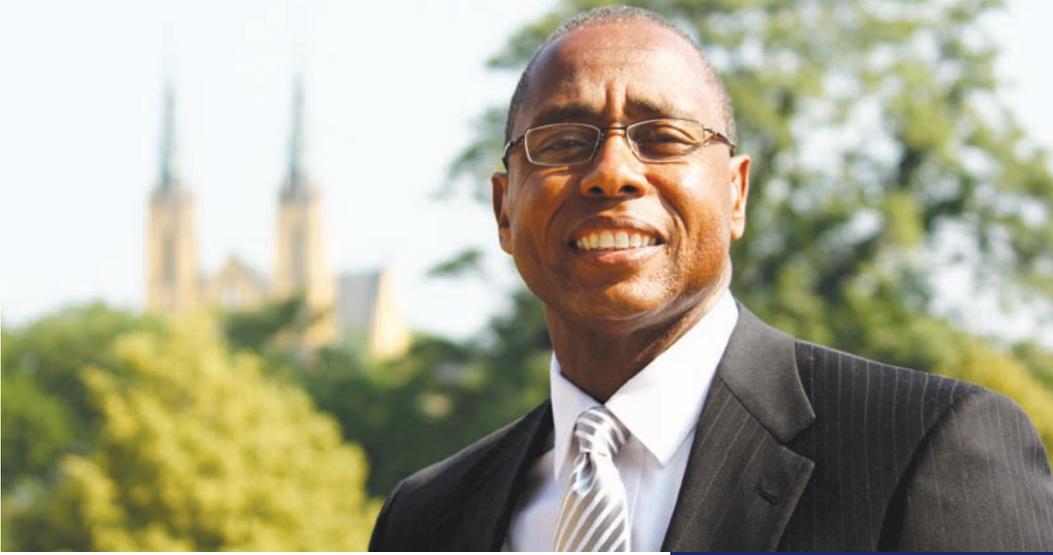
Rumors

Aric Bopp of the New River Economic Development Alliance says those rumors were mostly apocryphal. "There is no truth to the story that Microsoft declined to move to Christiansburg because of the fuel mixture ... They asked, but that was not the determining factor.

"We definitely get questions. Companies are now more sensitive to the issue. Every company wants to be perceived as green. Honestly, though, there is a lot of lip service given and only a handful of companies are willing to spend the extra money."

Says Christopolus, "Many of the leading national companies have corporate commitments to not only profit but also people and the planet. You would recognize the list [in this region], which includes Novozymes, Orvis, Cox, Volvo and many others. They do not want to ruin their corporate greenhouse gas numbers by locating in a place that uses coal for over 80 percent of its electricity with a national average about 45 percent."

Christopolus credits American Electric Power for considering alternative fuels for the future: "The 'environmental' rate



Charles Patton

David Perry

increases that local residents and other users continue to experience are frequently related to the expenses of protecting human health and the environment by bringing [the dirtiest] plants into compliance with federal clean air requirements.

"It is good to see the AEP's new leadership finally closing plants like Glen Lyn. [We hope] they will be replaced by cleaner energy sources, including renewable sources like wind and solar. We also urge AEP to help residents and others reduce their overall use by assisting with energy conservation and energy efficiency, the cheapest solution to energy problems."

American Electric Power is putting together a 10-year plan to cover power generation, says new president and CEO Charles Patton. "We think there are technologies that would allow us to burn coal cheaper," he says. "We've been called the Saudi Arabia of coal. We have plenty of it. If we're going to compete globally, it's imperative to take advantage of that precious resource."

However, says Patton, "We're going to be looking at gas. Our fuel forecasters tell us that there are over 30 years of proven natural gas resources that can be delivered at a relatively inexpensive price. I just think we're at a point right now that we're going to have to pursue least cost strategy."

Patton insists that "I get it. We recognize there are people out there for whom this economy is an insurmountable hurdle. The challenge is how do to address those issues. You can't address them by making AEP the villain here. What we have to do is understand the underlying challenges."

ApCo is running at a five percent profit, though it is authorized to make 10.5 percent, Patton says. "We are financially the worst performing company in the AEP system. That's with reducing our workforce, and despite increasing diesel costs and health care costs, our budget has increased 1 percent a year. "These are real, legitimate costs that we're going to have to figure out how to address."



In our country, we have been blessed with energy resources for as long as any of us can remember. Unfortunately, that's changing. As we enter a global economy, the cost of energy is going to go up. If you travel to Europe, you know that you're looking at 18 cents a [kilowatt hour]. People say, 'Why don't you do more windmills? Why don't you do more solar? Why don't you do more this? Why don't you do more that?' Making that transition from power that has historically been 5 cents, 6 cents, now 9 cents a kwh and think of it being 18 cents, I can tell you that's a difficult transition.

—Charles Patton,
CEO of ApCo



John Williamson

Dan Smith



We feel like the price of fuel is here to stay. It has been higher in Europe than here for many years, mostly due to taxes, but they have found ways to survive. The oil cartels recognize we are taking every measure we can and as we make improvements they see that as an opportunity to raise the price without breaking our backs.

—Carl Bumgarner,
Fleetmaster

John Williamson, president of RGC Resources, the gas company in Roanoke, says, "I do think businesses need to read up on the trends in relative energy sources to position themselves to avoid future energy cost increases. From a biased view, I think electric rates are going to continue to increase much faster than natural gas because of regulatory pressures on coal plants, the latest round of nuclear scares and the high cost of alternatives (wind, solar, etc.). Oil is extremely volatile and probably 70 percent imported, so there is no domestic policy that can help that in the short run.

"Conservation is a key for existing business along with careful analysis for new or replacement equipment purchase decisions."

Truck challenge

Trucking, already in the midst of a driver shortage for a number of reasons, is suffering from high diesel fuel prices, which passed \$4 recently. Says Frank Ellet of the Virginia Trucking Center in Roanoke, "Fuel has reached the point of costing more than the driver. We're seeing customers today who want low mileage first. If you increase mileage from 5 to 6 mpg, you have a savings of 18 to 20 percent. (At \$4 a gallon, 300 gallons per truck, that's \$1,200 to go 1,500 or 1,800 miles.) The driving factor is fuel economy, not price."

Carl Bumgarner of Fleetmaster in Roanoke says experience in 2008 with high prices (\$4.75 a gallon) taught his company a lesson. "Our company purchases about 300,000 gallons a month ... We knew we had to do something fast and decided to take several initiatives. ... We have had a fuel surcharge enacted since 2001 (kicks in when the price is over \$1.20 per gallon) ... [and] this produced around \$50,000 more per month to help cover our fuel cost. Today we monitor it very closely and are recouping at least 95 percent of our cost.



Frank Ellett

Dan Smith

"One way to control cast is to leverage your buying power with truck stop chains ... Another strategy is the use of terminal bulk fueling stations (buying it by the tanker load and dispensing at your facility) and making our drivers out on the road aware of where to purchase fuel each day depending on price.

"We decided to lower the speed of our vehicles. On board computers allow us to set the governors to the top end speed that we desire. The rule is for every 1 mph slower you go when traveling above 55 mph you save 0.1 miles per gallon [and] that equates to around \$250,000 per year when fuel is \$4 per gallon."

Dale Bennett of the Virginia Trucking Association says environmental measures have been costly and effective. "Trucking is on track, through a series of engine and fuel refinements, so that, when compared to 2002, particulate matter and NOx emissions were reduced by more than 50 percent by 2010 and by more than 70 percent by 2020.

"To illustrate the significance of these reductions, the particulate emissions from 60 trucks purchased in 2007 with mandated emission control technologies equals the particulate emissions of 6 trucks purchased in 2006 and of a single new truck purchased 20 years earlier."

The cost? "A new engine purchased today is \$11,000 to \$15,000 more expensive than an engine purchased prior to 2002," says Bennett.

Driving to work

People who drive a good bit on a daily basis, including real estate sales professionals, who have both gas prices and a market in the toilet to deal with, are scrambling. Delivery trucks are being re-routed and are delivering less frequently in many cases.



We're coming out of the recession because companies have been putting off the investment and their fleets are getting old. That and the need for lower fuel consumption are driving the increase in sales [at his truck dealership]. [Customers are] having to wait on their orders 6 to 7 months in some cases. Manufacturers ramped down and can't or won't ramp back up [to previous levels of production].

—Frank Ellett,
Virginia Truck Center



I know people are driving less so the demand argument seems more speculation than actual demand, but my question is when are they going to spike gas again to see how much we can take? And when we put farmers out of business because they can't make ends meet (because they are using diesel which is more expensive) all you will have are the big corporate farmers and no price checks. Then we will be in a whole world of hurt.

—Alecia Nash,
*Renaissance Computers
Education & Repair*



Alecia Nash

Dan Smith

Restaurants are forced in some cases to offer less-fresh food or pay extra for daily deliveries. Real estate people are looking hard at their drive times in the worst market in years.

Alecia Nash of Renaissance Computers Education & Repair in Roanoke, who makes housecalls, sees “a direct correlation between gas prices and the number of calls/jobs I receive for work. I also see it in all of the small businesses I deal with. When gas prices shot up from \$3.30-\$3.50 range to \$3.70-\$3.90, people pulled back. It took five weeks to get my volume back up. It is like the trick with the frog, if you put a live frog into hot water he will jump right out but if you put that same live frog into cold water and heat it gradually you can have tasty frog legs for dinner.”

Roanoke-based Steel Dynamics, which makes steel from recycled metal, uses an enormous amount of energy each month and plant manager Joe Crawford believes that “given our operating levels, we are utilizing electric power as efficiently as possible and operating under the most efficient rate structure available. In other words, we attempt to be a smart energy shopper.

“We purchase a base level of power, and then fulfill our



Making steel at Steel Dynamics costs \$2 million a month in energy.

Dan Smith



John Bryant

Dan Smith

operational requirements with the variable rate structure for the additional power we need. This gives us the option of operating when there are excessive demands on the grid and the variable rates are higher."

The company meets annually with suppliers to "review usage trends, contract terms and operational issues, but meet as needed to address various issues as they occur."

Bottom line: "Having good, reliable power at rates that are competitive with other areas of the U.S. and the world, is a necessity for the long-term viability and success of our company."

While large food chains like Kroger and Food Lion are scrambling to keep food prices as low as possible in the face of the added expense of high gas prices, John Bryant of the Roanoke Valley Natural Food Co-op in Grandin Village says, "We haven't had to adjust prices and we haven't seen a lot of people who are concerned. They don't seem to have made the connection. Produce prices fluctuate anyway, so we set our margins according to what we're paying the farmer. Frankly, there hasn't been a lot of variation from the norm."

The co-op specializes in local, organic and high quality produce which is naturally more expensive than what the chains carry and that kind of food is a priority for its customers, who are accustomed to paying premium prices for it.

The railroad

PR Manager Robin Chapman of Norfolk Southern says fuel is "a major cost factor for us. We price to the market, and the cost of fuel is a factor in that, but our prices are governed for the most part by confidential contracts. We aggressively pursue improvements in fuel efficiency through improved locomotive technology and technology-assisted improved operating practices."

The company stands strong in defense of coal. "Norfolk Southern is bullish on coal, which currently fuels about half of the nation's electricity generation and remains abundant in the U.S.," says Chapman. "NS supports clean coal technology research to reduce the carbon footprint of coal-fired utilities. Also, the nation's



Typically, fuel ranks as the second largest expense to labor for a trucking company. In a normal economy, fuel can account for between 20 percent and 25 percent of all operating expenses, but when fuel costs are high as they are now, that percentage can grow to between 30 percent and 35 percent.

—Dale Bennett,
Virginia Trucking
Association



Higher fuel prices actually drive more freight off the highway to rail because trains are inherently more fuel efficient per ton of freight than trucks.

—Robin Chapman,
Norfolk Southern
PR Manager



Steve Waterman

Dan Smith



It's the same kinds of things our parents tried to teach us as teenagers: turn off the lights when you leave a room, turn your computer off at the end of the day, don't plug in your cell phone adapter without a cell phone attached to it. One client we're working with has such a huge employee behavior element, we're helping figure out how much money the company is paying for these kinds of things it they can turn those dollars into an incentive/reward program.

—Jeremy Holmes,
Ride Solutions

high-quality metallurgical coal remains sought after by steel producers worldwide."

Cox Communications in Roanoke has significantly decreased the time its vehicles spend idling, thus saving quite a bit of money. Cox's Roanoke program, which serves as a pilot for its system, has reduced idling among its 80 vehicles from 400 hours a month to 10 hours. Steve Waterman, manager of field services, estimates the savings to be in the \$100,000 a year range.

Cox uses a GPS system that is projected on a wall in its building to help guide service vehicles to the most efficient route to their destinations, another savings.

At the Jacksonville Center in Floyd, says Misty Harris, It's a matter of following the directions your mama would give you: "We're a non-profit community arts organization located in a renovated dairy barn, so escalating energy prices can hit us pretty hard. We've made it part of our opening and closing procedures to make sure we avoid excessive energy use. We have lock boxes on the thermostats, and we try not to run the air conditioning or heating unless it's absolutely necessary. It can be especially tricky to keep the pipes from freezing in winter, and this becomes an agonizing extra cost when it gets really cold."

Construction

Adam Cohen of Structures Design-Build in Roanoke has been generating a lot of interest with his Passivhaus technology. He has three commercial properties under construction using the technology, he says. Those include the Jewish Student Center at Virginia Tech, the Gereau Center in Rocky Mount (the first public school Passivhaus project in the U.S.) and a dentist's office in Roanoke.

Cohen says, "The Passivhaus methodology cuts overall energy use of a building by 70 percent. It cuts heating and cooling cost by 90 percent-plus ... There are few places where you can invest your money and get an 8-15 percent return ... Anybody buying an old building should consider this before they move



Adam Cohen

Dan Smith

in. If you're considering building something new, it doesn't make sense not to explore it."

Wind energy is slowly becoming an option (and solar has been available for decades). The American Wind Energy Association recently reported that the industry grew by 15 percent in 2010 and provided 26 percent of the country's new electricity-generating capacity. Roanoke County is wrestling with whether to permit a new generating facility in the face of protests from those living near the proposed site.

AWEA recently said that America's wind power industry installed 1,100 MW of new capacity in the first quarter alone and entered the second quarter with another 5,600 MW under construction. The "under construction" figure is nearly twice the capacity that the industry reported at this juncture in both 2009 and 2010.

Diana Christopolus concludes with some simple observations:

- "The price of coal (and other fossil fuels) can vary dramatically.
- "Combined cycle natural gas is now cheaper than coal. Natural gas is much less polluting than coal in many ways, and AEP is looking at gas as a replacement for some of its older coal plants. However, price can vary dramatically and there is the fracking issue.
- "Onshore wind is often price-competitive with coal. It can compete with only the smallest of subsidies. And the price of the fuel does not vary. It is free.
- "Solar is getting cheaper. Not long ago it was over 30 cents per kWh. Now it is around 15 cents. And it can be located almost anywhere in a distributed format. Very secure. Free fuel." 



Europeans "don't mind spending money on things that have benefits for their kids' kids. Americans don't seem to have that same mindset.

—Adam Cohen,
Structures Design-Build,
Roanoke



Teach your children well >

When I started my business a decade ago, clients came from the corporate world. They were mostly mid- to upper-level executives brought up in the 1970s and '80s when an "anything goes" mentality was in full force. As they climbed the corporate ladder, they found that they were hampered by a lack of social and dining skill.

Soon, many of these high powered people were asking me to train their children, admitting that they just didn't have the time or skills to do it themselves. That started the children's etiquette portion of my business.

You will give your children an extra edge and the gift of a lifetime if you teach them manners and proper dining skills. Good manners leads to the kind of confidence that is needed for the development of strong leadership skills.

Teaching proper manners should not be a passive activity—especially when working with younger children. They need to be involved and entertained—and they love to participate. The well-mannered child:

- Practices kindness in dealing with others, the Golden Rule.
- Respects authority.
- Tries not to interrupt.
- Respects other religions and other cultures.
- Shakes hands easily.
- Makes good eye contact. (Many children are shy about making eye contact, so teach them about the "safe zone.")
- Knows the value of a "thank you" note. (Some colleges withhold disbursing scholarship money to students until the thank you letters from the recipients have been mailed to their donors.)
- Displays proper behavior in public places. (Don't subject those around you to screaming children—remove them.)
- Knows proper e-mail, telephone and cell phone etiquette.
- Demonstrates proper table manners: when to pick up a napkin, how to eat soup, how to hold a knife and fork properly.
- Knows that texting at the table is a no-no.

I tell my young students to practice social and dining skills. I remind them that, if they play a musical instrument, they practice before a performance or a recital. The same is true with manners.

Teach your children the value of good manners, respect and proper dining etiquette. Those skills will last a lifetime. 

Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:

Good manners begins with you teaching your children how to behave in a variety of circumstances.

Heading off the hugger >

Dear Getting a Grip: *When I was first hired, my boss welcomed me to the company family and hugged me. Now, when we get a new contract, a job is finished, or it's Friday, I get hugged. I believe his hugs are personal or social rather than sexual, but I prefer a professional physical distance at work. It's getting upsetting to constantly think about trying to position myself across a conference table to barricade myself from him if I know good news is imminent. If I asked him to stop, I know he would be surprised and hurt at first, maybe resentful and vengeful later. What can I do?*

Dear Hugged: You're right that making a request to another person to change his behavior is usually perceived not as a need expressed by the requester, but as a personal rejection. Especially when the request is really a directive about a person's physical presence, i.e. "Stay away from me and don't touch me."

No place—no workplace, no neighborhood, no city or town—exists where people's behavior won't annoy us, even violate us. When we perceive another's behavior as a violation, but speaking out about that violation could have consequences more severe than the ones we're already experiencing, this can feel like a demoralizing, no-win situation.

Getting a Grip: Let's take an arm's length look at this issue. People tend to be consistent. My guess is that your boss, unprofessional in one realm, is unprofessional in others and your workplace isn't optimal on many levels. Consider looking for a new job and lining up some strong possibilities for new positions. Then state your "no hugging in the workplace" policy to your boss. Even if you plan to leave regardless of his answer, this will be much-needed practice for you in having important conversations sooner rather than later. And you'll likely be consistently upset with your boss until you do. 

Need to start "Getting a Grip" on a personal problem at work? E-mail your question to grip@handshake2o.com.



Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:
Working through the issue of personal space and the respect for it.

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Men and jewelry: A minor trend >

Generally, in a business setting the number of jewelry pieces a man can wear appropriately is small. Some will argue that it is now acceptable for men to wear heavy chains or earrings and, true, many celebrities do. However, in a typical business setting the opposite is true. Men's jewelry should be tasteful and understated, a quiet expression of elegant style.

The list of appropriate jewelry is short:

- A gold or silver neck-chain only seen if the shirt collar is worn open and never worn on the outside of a dress shirt.
- A wedding band worn on the third finger of the left hand.
- A second ring, worn on the right hand, such as a signet ring. University rings with a gemstone are also appropriate, as well as a family coat of arms ring if you are an aristocrat. Wearing more than two rings can make a man's hand look feminine.
- A watch or pocket watch, which comes in hundreds of styles lately.
- Cuff links, which are enjoying a resurgence in popularity, in a multitude of quirky designs.

With these limited pieces a man can express his personal style in a way that doesn't overshadow the business at hand.

In addition, a man's line of work should be considered. A lawyer should avoid controversial or excessive jewelry while in court or representing clients. Doctors and medical personnel should wear little jewelry because of the risk of infection to patients. Other fields such as the media, advertising, real estate and the like have more flexibility, allowing more personal expression in their jewelry choices.

Clearly the rules are changing for how much jewelry is acceptable for men to wear. Today many younger men wear large earrings in both ears and bold neck chains. However, just because it is acceptable for men to wear earrings and large neck chains, doesn't mean it's appropriate to wear them in the workplace.

Whatever your geographic location, career path, and lifestyle, if you want your attire to help you project your best professional image, limit bold and trendy jewelry to your personal life. For the workplace choose a few pieces of understated, masculine jewelry that will enhance your professional image. 

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Make it understated and choose your pieces carefully.

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Susan Still: Do your homework and be well prepared.

Susan Ayers

For women, getting the loan is problematic >

Executive Summary:

While women have historically had difficulty getting business loans from traditional sources, there are ways to maximize the chance the loan will be approved.

By Susan Ayers

While unemployment numbers remain high and the economy struggles to recover from a recession, the state of women-owned small businesses is going strong.

American Express Open Forum reports that there are 8.1 million women-owned businesses in the United States. Those businesses employ 77 million people. And it doesn't stop there. Women-owned businesses are growing at about 1.5 times faster than the rate of the national average.

Women interested in starting a business or expanding their existing business often have

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difficulty getting credit from banks. Some financial professionals in our region talk about how best to prepare for getting the loan.

“Be prepared,” says HomeTown Bank President & CEO Susan Still. “Develop a relationship with a commercial lender that you feel comfortable with prior to needing a loan. When you need the loan, be able to articulate the exact reason for it, such as working capital or equipment purchase. Tell how you plan to repay the loan from what sources and over what timeframe.”

It is important to be prepared to furnish documentation and take needed action.

A preparation checklist includes:

- Historical financial statements, including annual and year to date results. Three years of historical information is typical.
- Provide acceptable (marketable) collateral for the business loan. Whether this will be required will depend on the financial strength of the business.
- Because small businesses depend on the owners’ knowledge, expertise and commitment, be prepared to co-sign or guarantee the business loan.
- A well thought-out business plan, including projections that are in line with historical results, is important.

“A business plan with projections is especially meaningful if it reflects an accurate depiction of the business results to date, as well as credibility of future results,” says Still. “The plan reflects the business owner’s commitment to proper planning and an indication of reasonable expectations.”

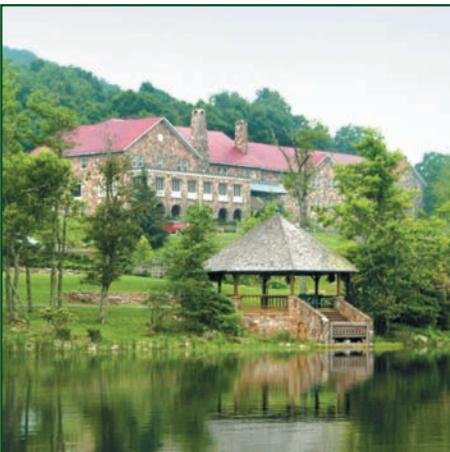
There are often impediments in obtaining a commercial loan, including a lack of familiarity in requesting a commercial loan. Overcome this by proper planning. With a new business, there is the lack of an operating track record. And an existing business may have a poor track record of results.

“Many small business loans, especially for new businesses, are financed out of personal savings or borrowing from a relative,” says Still.

There are several helpful resources for women business owners including those interested in starting a new business.

The Small Business Administration’s Office of Women’s Business Ownership (programs provide business training and counseling, access to credit and capital, and marketing opportunities, including a path to federal contracts.

The Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) is expanding its program for women business owners, focusing on pairing established small business owners with those just starting.



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With 240 employee-owners, Scott's approach to ownership is a refreshing change of pace. But that's not the only trend Scott Insurance is bucking. When so many companies are reducing staff to cut costs, Scott is adding bright young faces to its office in downtown Roanoke, home to about 20 employee owners. "Any time a company adds three young professionals in the Roanoke Valley it's important," says Bibee. "The company is growing and we're doing quite well in Roanoke."

"We specialize in commercial insurance and risk management services. Our risk performance specialists are unique in the industry and provide tools for employers to better protect their assets while increasing productivity," says Bibee. She is quick to note that while commercial insurance has historically been the foundation of the company's business, Benefits and Bond Services are rapidly expanding segments of Scott's entire risk management platform. Locally, Scott clients include furniture and automotive part manufacturers, real estate developers, technology companies, retirement communities and road builders, to name a few.

Established in 1864 and headquartered in Lynchburg, VA, Scott Insurance is a regional agency, with branch offices in Roanoke, Richmond, Charlotte, Raleigh, Greensboro, Knoxville, and Nashville and captive operations in Grand Cayman. *Business Insurance* lists Scott as one of the Top 100 largest brokers of US business, and their clients are located across the country as well as internationally.

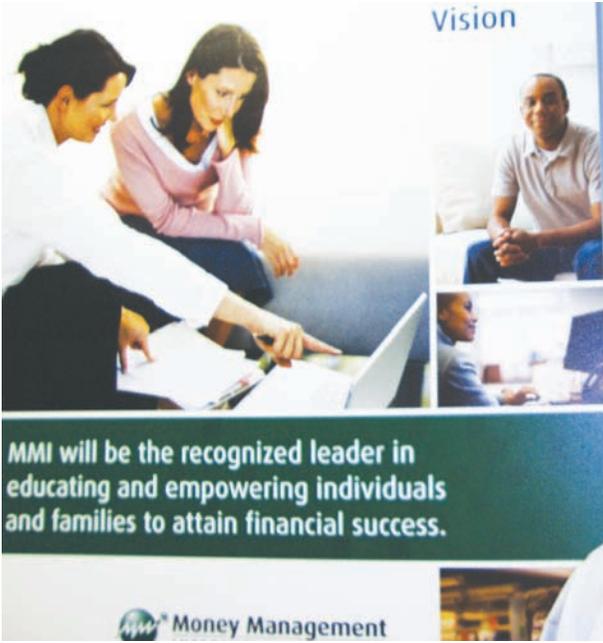
For more information on the services that Scott Insurance can provide your company, call Vickie Bibee in the Roanoke office at (540) 343-8071 or visit www.scottins.com.

Employee Owned



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Brendan Vitorio helps with planning.

Susan Ayers

"Money Management International held 70 financial workshops in Virginia in May and 65 percent of those attending were women," says Brendan Vigorito, a credit counselor. "Many women attending were trying to start their own businesses."

Vigorito says that until you have been established as a business, your personal credit is your business credit and that the two are inseparable for at least a couple of years.

Vigorito also serves as an intermediary for the Virginia Individual Development Accounts Program (VIDA), which can help with training and assistance with start-up costs.

The VIDA program will match your savings \$2 to every \$1 you save in a VIDA account. Matching funds cannot exceed \$4,000 per participant and participants do have to qualify for the program. Vigorito provides the required financial education for the program.

"Businesses that are doing the best have kept their debt down and are thriving," says Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center Director Wayne Flippen. "They've controlled expenses and made adjustments before they got into serious trouble." 



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Blair Wood of the Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg

Accepting the challenge >

Executive Summary:

Creekmore Law Firm newcomer Blair Wood has made excelling at the unusual a normal part of her cycle.

By Rachael Garrity

Forget the pinstripes, the stuffy sentences, the suspicion that not only business, but life, may be measured in “billable hours.” Witness instead a wet suit, easy laughter and a tall, athletic woman who admits that she is a workaholic and her life isn’t really as balanced as it should be, but she really can’t figure out how to represent her clients ethically any other way. Meet Blair Wood.

A wet suit? Before earning her law degree, Blair served in a variety of capacities in the world of forensics. Having grown up in California and Southern Utah, she moved to East Tennessee when she married, and applied to the Oak Ridge police department, following in the steps of her mother, who is a police officer. Already a certified scuba diver, she included in her training courses at the Swiftwater Rescue School and the Dive Rescue International PSD School, and

eventually became the training officer for the dive team.

“Typically, we were called out three to five times a month,” says Blair, who is 33. “Oak Ridge is surrounded by water, and there was lots of evidence to try to retrieve.”

After that she trained as a methamphetamine lab technician. That work required a totally different kind of suit—and gloves and other protection—as she and her colleagues cleared meth labs of dangerous substances.

Then, in 2005, she trained at the Medicolegal Death Investigation School, and became coroner for Anderson County, Tenn. Didn’t she find that a bit grisly? Her answer is serious and considered:

“As a coroner, you represent the body. In essence, your findings are the last words this person will ever speak. It is a meaningful role, and one that I really had a tough time walking away from.”

Having taken the Legal SAT, though, and nearing the time when its results would no longer be valid, she applied to Appalachian School of Law, and received a full academic scholarship.

“It was a tough decision,” she admits. “Frankly, I was afraid I couldn’t do it, just might not have what it takes. So I put everything I had

into it. My husband [of 12 years now] stayed in Knoxville and I moved to Grundy—way back in the remote area of coal mines—and concentrated on doing the very best I could.”

By the time she graduated in May of last year, she had made dean’s list every semester, was first in her class, had served as Justice of the Honor Court and as senior articles editor for the Appalachian Journal of Law. She wrote for the Energy & Mineral Law Foundation, from which she received another scholarship.

Add to that a series of awards for excellence in achievement, a stint as a research assistant for a professor working on First Amendment and group defamation issues, and clerking for the Office of the Solicitor of the Department of Interior, the Federal Public Defenders Office and a law firm in Knoxville. Seems

that “all she had” was more than a little.

It was her work on the law journal that introduced her to the Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg, where she now concentrates on business litigation and energy and mineral law.

“This is business law,” she explains. “For many of my cases, the subject happens to be coal and gas, but I also serve clients in other areas.”

While the legal profession may have been unfairly criticized in recent years, and it’s decidedly inaccurate to describe every member as slow to produce and quick to collect, this young woman’s level of activity and commitment is hardly the norm. Indeed, she’s not just an exception to the rule—she’s exceptional. 

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Susan Osborne's road as a country doctor has been a bumpy one, full of ethical standards and satisfaction.

Sara Beth Jones

Country doc on a mission >

Executive Summary:

For Floyd native Sue Osborne, medicine is about a whole lot more than money and pills. Her practice at Barter Clinic demonstrates that clearly.

By Sarah Beth Jones

For many family doctors, moving to a small, rural community like Floyd, where the nearest hospitals are a half-hour drive on a good day, would be a daunting challenge. For Dr. Susan Osborne, founder and practitioner at the Barter Clinic, it's just another of a long line of opportunities to help underserved communities stay healthy.

"It's been a ride," Sue says of the winding path that took her from being a Floyd County High School graduate who vowed never to return, to her decision to open a clinic based on the idea that everyone should have access to quality medical care.

As a student at the Virginia Commonwealth University, Sue majored in art but took a lot of biology classes, imagining a fall-back career of medical illustrations. Disenchantment with the art department and the realization that she would have to live a modest, big city life in order to be a medical illustrator led her first to post-graduate studies in biochemistry and then to become the first Virginian to enroll in the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine.

"I thought osteopathy would offer a more holistic approach, but you still have to ingrate it into your practice," says Sue,

who doesn't shy from writing prescriptions when required by an ailment, but prefers to help people make lifestyle and dietary changes that will improve their overall health.

Along her path back to Floyd, Sue spent seven years in the Indian Health Service, an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, where she discovered that cultural barriers to care were often more powerful than monetary ones.

In 1990, Sue moved to Richmond where she partnered in her first clinic offering a barter system. While there, she came under fire from a handful of obstetricians who reported her to the Board of Medicine for assisting in home births.

Sue spent \$50,000 and four years on probation for aiding and abetting in the practice of midwifery. Against her lawyer's advice, Sue admitted at her hearing that she would

continue assisting in home births. While other doctors had their licenses revoked for similar charges, the Board made the unprecedented decision to allow Sue to keep practicing medicine. Since then, she has helped deliver many babies, including twins during a trip to Haiti after the 2010 earthquake.

A job offer in Blacksburg brought Sue, her then-partner and their baby son, Mars, back to Southwest Virginia in 1997. Within months, the clinic she joined folded, leaving the family living in an Airstream trailer with no jobs and no prospects. After a slate of unsuccessful interviews, Sue decided to found the Barter Clinic, which was housed in different spaces around Floyd before settling in the Cross Creek Complex in 2005.

The name is a hat-tip to Abingdon's Barter Theatre and, like the theater, is intended literally, though reporting barter to the IRS adds an additional layer of complexity to her business.

"In the summer, we get a lot of produce," says Sue. "We were once given a baby bull. We raised it on my dad's farm and Mars would bottle feed him."

In exchange for her inclusive approach to medicine and commitment to hour-long appointments with every patient, Sue makes less than \$10,000 a year.

What little free time she has, she spends sewing costumes for the Young Actors

In Brief

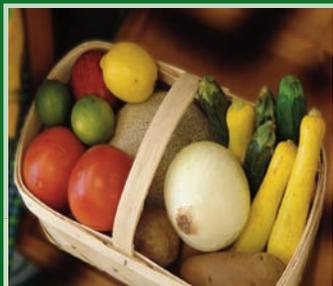
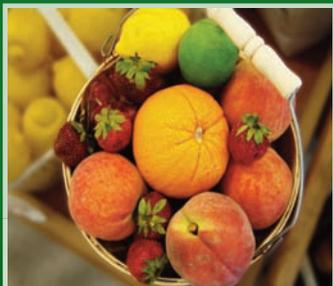
Name: Susan Osborne, D.O.
Age: 53
Business: The Barter Clinic
Type of Business: Medical practice
Location: Floyd
Founded: 1997
Background: Born in Petersburg and moved to Floyd at 14. Undergrad at VCU; D.O. at the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. County Medical Examiner for Floyd County; operational and medical director for the Riner and Christiansburg Rescue Squads; medical director of the Natural Life Birth Center in Franklin County; member of the Disaster Medical Assistance Team, Winston-Salem. Son Mars is 15 years old.

Co-op, supporting Mars in his many creative endeavors, practicing fiddle and doing yoga. Her big splurge is participating in a \$10 per week drawing group, the results of which can often be seen in the clinic's waiting room.

"It's cheaper than therapy," says Sue. 

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Janeson Keeley

Dan Smith

been shown to improve conversion (getting a website visitor to do something) by 85 percent over text alone."

Depending on your business goals, you can use video to establish your brand, educate, inform, market, promote and persuade.

Roanoke CPA Wayne Firebaugh uses video as part of a public relations campaign to brand himself as an regional and national authority on college planning. Firebaugh says, "The website (www.waynfirebaugh.com) and my blog provide evidence of my written abilities and expertise, but the video blog is key to demonstrating my ability to interact in video and audio media environments."

"We use video for marketing, education and information. We use ...videos to remind our customers of special events," says Kimberly Eakin, owner of Wine Gourmet. "The videos are usually posted to our Facebook page, website (www.winegourmet.biz), blog, YouTube account and eNewsletter a few weeks before the big event."

On SynergySessions.org, you'll find videos of interviews with local business owners. "Filming gave us access to situations we normally would have difficulty accessing," says Lynda McNutt Foster. She adds, "It is a great public relations tool to connect with the small business owners we want to serve. To us, it's a real win-win situation."

Zach Thompson, partner at RYP Marketing of Daleville (www.rypmarketing.com) uses

netFRONT

Show and tell >

Executive Summary:

Video on your website is an invitation for visitors to stay longer and do more while there.

By Janeson Keeley

Brian Duvall, CEO of DuvallMedia.com, a Roanoke Web production company, reports that the use of video on a website helps keep prospects on the site longer and "has



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video on his website to welcome visitors. "Video gives our out-of-town contacts the boost in confidence to 'sign on the dotted line.' In short I believe video means more sales for our company," he says.

Not experienced with video? Here are some tips:

Mickey Johnson, senior account executive with Fox 21/27 TV, makes videos to promote local businesses (www.youtube.com/user/mickark57). He advises, "Don't try to tell people everything you do. Just pick a point or two and go deep. Save the rest for the personal contact once you've got their attention."

Firebaugh suggests, "Practice on camera because it is different speaking to a camera ... than it is to a live audience. I used the TelePrompTer app on my iPad to help me." "Your content needs to be original," Duvall warns. "You can't use popular songs in your

productions without the written authorization of the record label or recording artist. Same for photos and graphics."

Submitting your video to all of the available video hosting sites can be very time consuming unless you use a syndication service. Duvall recommends TubeMogul.com. "You simply upload your video to TubeMogul, type in your title, description and tags then hit the LAUNCH button. TubeMogul then distributes your video to a number of video hosting sites like YouTube, MySpace, DailyMotion, MetaCafe, Veoh, and others."

Video can be an effective part of your marketing strategy, but when using video, track your results. "Split-test videos on your website to see which video works best and to see if the site will perform better without video. Let the prospective client be the judge!" 

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Frank Roy with a biodiesel bulk combination truck

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Where does all that grease go? >

Executive Summary:

Valley Proteins takes it away for use as something else and gives the environment a boost in the process.

By Becky Hepler

When you consider the billions of French fries, chicken nuggets, doughnuts, hush puppies and other assorted items brought to crispy tastiness in a deep fat fryer, it's a wonder we're not up to our nuggets in discarded grease.

Where would we be without Valley Proteins? It's the ultimate in recycling, taking waste products from other processes and repurposing them into usable commodities.

"The rendering industry recycles volumes equal to 25 percent of what goes into the nation's landfills," says J.J. Smith, the company's president. "The biological load is 100 times what goes into landfills, so we're filling a very important function,

regarding the health and safety of our environment. "Valley Proteins started in Pennsylvania and has become regional, stretching to Georgia (including a Salem facility) with outposts in New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma and corporate headquarters in Winchester.

Originally created to turn animal waste byproducts into animal feed, the company has expanded into other areas. The explosive growth of fast food restaurants created a ready source of the raw material that becomes an essential ingredient of animal food, "yellow grease."

The company expanded into the area of grease disposal and re-purposing for restaurants and other food institutions. Valley Proteins helped keep the restaurants in compliance with EPA and state regulations regarding grease traps through its maintenance program and adding to its green reputation by keeping over six million pounds of waste grease a week out of landfills. "We provide the containers and about once a week to once every three weeks we collect the grease from them," says Smith, who with his brother Michael, run the company started by their grandfather Clyde in 1949.

The Salem facility is a collection and transfer



Josh Maskell running a centrifuge



Mitch Riggelman steam cleaning the restaurant grease barrels

station for the area from Lynchburg to the New River Valley, covering over 600 restaurants. The material is trucked up to the processing plant outside of Harrisonburg where solid materials are filtered out and used for the animal feed. After future clarification, the product is now "yellow grease," suitable for use in animal feed, where it adds calories and nutrition. The product also has other industrial uses. This yellow grease can be used as a bio-fuel and with further processing, it can be used as biodiesel fuel.

The company's boilers have been set up to

use this bio-fuel, and many of the trucks run on bio-diesel fuel. Burning bio-fuel in the boilers saves 200,000 barrels of oil a year while drastically reducing sulphur emissions, according to Valley Proteins' website. Using the three million gallons of bio-diesel saves 10,000 barrels of oil in a year.

The biggest issue facing the company is that it is dealing in a product whose price is unpredictable. "Our product is a commodity and you just can't control for that," says Smith, "The price for yellow grease can go from 71/2 cents to 50 cents a pound, but our costs to produce it are the same." 

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Bickley (left) and MSE professor Alan Drushitz (center) assist a student in filling a mold with molten metal.

Lee Ann Ellis

Fire in the hole at Tech >

Executive Summary:

Kroehling provides the fire for new Virginia Tech research foundry for the education of engineering students. It marks the return of an old skill at the school.

By Michael Miller

"They thought we were crazy," says Dr. Robert Hendricks, director of the new Kroehling Advanced Material Foundry at Virginia Tech. "At a time when most universities were shutting down their foundries and many corporations were outsourcing their work, Virginia Tech wanted to set up a new facility."

But that's precisely why Tech wanted to set up a foundry. There are few such facilities available to educate engineering students in cutting-edge casting and metallurgical techniques needed for next-generation products. Over 90 percent of manufactured goods require castings, and the U.S., as the world's second largest producer, creates over \$30 billion in castings each year, according

to the American Foundry Society.

Few realize that a foundry/forge was an integral part of the school in the late 19th Century, when it was known as Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College. But in recent years, engineering students have learned basic metal casting technology by pouring small amounts of aluminum in a tiny laboratory located in Whittemore Hall.

The Kroehling Foundry on Plantation Road is the core of the Virginia Tech Foundry Institute for Research and Education (VT-FIRE). The vision of building such a facility for VT-FIRE was set many years ago, but funding to design, build and equip the facility was difficult to obtain. "We estimated that we needed about \$1.5 million," says Hendricks, "but over a period of six or seven years they were only able to collect about \$60,000."

MSE Department Head David Clark put Hendricks in charge of reviving the effort. "He gave me three months to figure out how to make it happen," says Hendricks, "or we were going to shut it down. It was embarrassing to keep talking about it without following through. He was not going to let that situation continue."

Hendricks realized the plan was sound but

the business model needed rethinking. The usual way to get funding for such an undertaking was to ask for large, one-time donations from major sponsors. But no companies seemed willing to do that, perhaps due to the strained economy. So Hendricks devised another plan. "What if we ask for sponsors to pledge smaller annual amounts to be spread over several years?" That model turned out to be a winner, but significant assistance was still required to make it a reality.

With the help of VT alumni Paul Huffman and John Kroehling, Hendricks lined up sponsors like Precision Castparts Corporation, who not only pledged financial support, but saw enough value to support the effort through scholarships and other in-kind assistance. He got some internal buy-in, such as from the Art and Architecture Department whose students routinely need to make castings. Then he took his pledge list to the Virginia Tech Foundation and asked if it could loan

him the money to build the facility based on the pledges. "Ray Smoot told me, 'Sure, that's what we do,'" says Hendricks. "It's like we have a mortgage from the Foundation."

With the facility in place, Virginia Tech is now able to offer a minor in foundry engineering that focuses not just on the basics of an old industry, but on new technologies that could revive that industry in the U.S. The facility contains a classroom fully equipped for distance learning, and is operated as both a hands-on learning experience and a research laboratory.

Although the foundry had its first student pour only in February this year, the success is obvious. Already several students have been hired into the industry based on their VT-FIRE experience, and Hendricks is now working to become a unique research facility for the castings industry. 

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all photos: David Perry

Common area with industrial design and natural light

Work Spaces

For benefit of company and community >

Executive Summary:

Advance Auto, Roanoke's home-grown Fortune 500 company, strikes a blow for cost efficiency and community spirit with its Crossroads location.

By David Perry

Some top national companies would build a downtown high-rise or a tree-lined "corporate campus" to call home. Not Roanoke's Advance Auto Parts, number 476 on Fortune magazine's hit-list of America's largest companies and the second-largest retailer of auto parts.

Advance's "Store Support Center" fills most of the former Crossroads Mall in northeast



Steve Eddings

Roanoke, which teetered on "dead mall" status for years as nearby Valley View Mall and other, newer retail space took business elsewhere. Now Crossroads Mall enjoys new life as the "Crossroads Corporate Business Center." Advance is partway through a renovation and expansion of its headquarters that will bring its total footprint in the building to nearly a quarter-million square feet.

Once the home of stores like Waccamaw Pottery and Circuit City, as well as a branch of the Division of Motor Vehicles, the Crossroads Corporate Business Center is being painted with splashes of Advance red and black while being retrofitted with industrial-themed lighting and architecture.

"It's less expensive to do it this way than it would be to develop a piece of property," says Advance's VP of Facilities, Energy and Property Management Steve Eddings. "We like the location. We wanted to redevelop and help the community. This was a terrible-looking mall."

The first two renovation phases that Advance made at Crossroads, dubbed "CR1" and "CR2," are nondescript, cubicle-filled spaces full of tans and grays, drop ceilings and fluorescent lighting.

In contrast, "CR3," the latest renovation, screams "auto parts retailer." The company motto is plastered like a billboard on the wall as you enter the CR3 section, while workspaces feature Advance's red, white, yellow and black color scheme. Conduits and ductwork have been painted black and left exposed in the ceiling. Metal trim lines the walls, while carpeting has been replaced by refinished concrete.

"We wanted that industrial feel," says Eddings. "We're really trying to say 'automotive



Industrial metal trim



Center of old mall, soon to be "Warehouse District"

parts," with the new design. "If you didn't know you were in Advance Auto, you wouldn't know it by looking [in CR1 and CR2]. You know it [in CR3] because of the colors and the industrial theme."

Other improvements are less about company image than about efficiency. A cafe with wireless internet provides a meeting space for employees, as do centrally-located break areas filled with natural lighting and first-come, first-served common meeting areas. Cubicles have been lowered by about a foot from their 60-inch height ("We're trying to get away from being locked in a cube," says Eddings), while only managers get additional privacy through closed-off cubicles or offices.

The total cost of the CR3 renovation was about \$4.5 million, bringing Advance's investment in the Crossroads facility to about \$8.5 million, according to a company press release.

The next phase of Advance's mall takeover will involve turning the cavernous center of the old mall into what Advance calls the "Warehouse District" over the next couple of years. The space still has a large "Jo-Ann Fabrics" sign on one end, but it will soon become what Eddings describes as a collaborative, functional space that will accommodate both small meetings and gatherings of all 900-plus workers employed at the Roanoke headquarters. Today, an all-hands meeting requires going off-site to a hotel.

"The City of Roanoke has been a good business partner for us with CR3," Eddings says. "They've ... brought some great ideas to the table. It's more of redevelopment project in that I doubt that anyone else would have done what we did with it in this part of town." 



Cafe



Old cubicles in CR1 and CR2



Red cubicles in CR3 section



Sally Woodson

Kili Teh

Handing down the dealership >

Executive Summary:

It's been grandfather, to father, to Sally Woodson at Woodson Honda in Roanoke and she says she's more than ready.

By Kili Teh

Like a mighty oak planted and nourished in its native soil, Rick Woodson Honda has taken root and thrived in the Roanoke Valley

for 40 years. New owner Sally Woodson, the third generation owner, says she plans to continue her grandfather's and father's legacy.

Sally trained alongside her father, Aurich Rick Woodson, since she was 22 years old. He gave her a hands-on education in which she learned the basics of the automobile dealership business. Sally's father received the same education from his father, A.A. Rick Woodson.

"I started in my early 20s driving a parts truck," Sally says. "I moved into each area: the service department, then the office, sold cars for awhile, then into management. I went into finance management back in 1994." She has been at the dealership for 26 years, and in more recent years acted as general sales manager and vice president. Aurich Rick Woodson "was a strong believer in not putting you at the top, but making you work your way up. That wasn't so much fun at the time, but now I'm glad that he did."

When her father died in 2005 after a fall, she was in line to be the new owner, but settling the estate took six years and was only finished in April.

Sally believes her family's focus on its relationships with people and the community is even more fundamental to the company's longevity. The dealership is a microcosm of Roanoke Valley's close-knit atmosphere, she says. Sally believes this key tenet of corporate culture has resulted in repeat business, low turnover,

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and retaining and recruiting top talent.

"Honda has a great reputation, but we also work to take care of our customers," Sally says. "We get a lot of repeat customers. We have a lot of people on staff we've had a long time. One of the technicians in the shop worked for my grandfather. He started as a teenager and has been with us ever since. I believe in taking care of employees, making sure they're happy. In turn, that's contributed to our success because it's a fun place to work."

Sally credits her solid connections within the community with enabling her to find and keep top talent. "Fortunately we've been able to recruit a lot of good sales people who have good reputations and have been in the business a really long time," Woodson says.

Sally says Woodson Honda is the oldest dealership east of the Mississippi and is ranked 4.8 out of 5 on dealerrater.com. Consumer Reports has named Honda number one for three consecutive years. The brand also has two models on Car and Driver's 10 Best list.

Woodson says the dealership has experienced steady growth over the past six months. This is partly due to the summer months when people purchase new vehicles in preparation for road trips with their families.

Her new partnership with Woody Woodward of Brambleton Imports in Roanoke has also brought a good balance to her inventory,

In Brief

Name: Sally Woodson
Age: 47
Company: Rick Woodson Honda
Location: Roanoke
Employees: 56
Background: At a relatively young age, Sally Woodson is already a respected veteran in her field. She was born and raised in the automobile dealership business. Her grandfather A.A. Rick Woodson taught her father everything he knew and her father passed on the same impeccable education to her. She says a good product with a good reputation and taking excellent care of her customers and staff is paramount to her success.

fostering her profitability. He brings expertise in high-end used sales. "We've increased our used car inventory obviously, but people still want to buy new Hondas," Sally says.

It looks as though Rick Woodson Honda will remain a family affair into the next generation. Her son Harrison Bowles "wants to be fourth generation," says Sally. "He was just talking about it yesterday. He's wanting to help out this summer." 

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Dorothy Bolt, Dan's mother, behind the counter at Country Creamery

Laura Purcell

We all scream for ice cream >

Executive Summary:

Sweet treats are homemade at Country Creamery in Floyd.

By Laura Purcell

"I never had any intention of getting into the ice cream business," Dan Bolt, owner of Country Creamery in Floyd, says. He stumbled into it because he wanted to find a use for the small, circa-1900 motors he enjoys refurbishing.

He built a portable ice cream maker using one of his motors, and for the last five years has sold ice cream at events like FloydFest and the Hillsville Flea Market. "It was really popular," Bolt says. "People liked watching the old fashioned motor run, and they seemed to like the ice cream."

In fact, people liked the ice cream so much they kept asking if Bolt had a brick-and-mortar business. When space in the Winter Sun Building in Floyd became available, Bolt knew the timing was right. "It's time to let

people come to us for a change," Bolt says.

The intoxicating smell of the Creamery's freshly-made waffle cones may lure you to the shop, located on the lower level of the Winter Sun Building across from the El Charro Mexican restaurant. There are several flavors to choose from, including standards like vanilla and chocolate, summer fruit inspirations like blueberry and peach, and the most popular—and Bolt's personal favorite—cheesecake.

"It goes perfectly with fresh strawberries," Bolt says. Creating ice cream flavors is a family endeavor, and they plan to incorporate more local produce and source items from the Floyd farmer's market and local dairies.

Country Creamery has seen steady business, and good crowds on weekends, since it opened in March. "Weekends are phenomenal," Bolt says. "On Friday nights, there are people wall-to-wall. We're blown away by how supportive our customers have been."

Bolt says the business sells about 40 gallons of ice cream a weekend, but that's a conservative estimate, and he has not yet had a full summer season. There is a good mix of local, repeat customers as well as out-of-towners who stop by as they explore the Blue Ridge Parkway and Crooked Road.

One customer from Canada even offered to purchase a franchise. Establishing a franchise might not happen right away, because Bolt likes that he can control every aspect of their small shop. "If we make a bad product, it is on us," he says. However, with so much success early on, Bolt is considering opening a second location in Radford, Christiansburg or Roanoke.

While Bolt is relatively new to the ice cream, he's no stranger to business. He owns Hollybrook Mulch in Radford, American Mulch and Stone in Christiansburg, and Bolt Milling Company in Willis, among other businesses. Still, embarking on the ice cream shop did cause him some concern.

"For eight months, I would come in on weekends and evenings to work on the shop," Bolt explained. "After sinking so



Homemade waffle cones and all the toppings you could imagine

Laura Purcell

much time and money into something, part of you wonders if it will be worthwhile."

When the shop opened, Bolt says, "we hit the ground running, and I felt all that uncertainty melt away." 



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Tom Cain: Roanoke is “either going to build some more strip malls, or it’s going to do some things to make itself safe from flooding.”

David Perry

Critical choices involving water >

Executive Summary:

Tom Cain’s mission is to convince Roanoke City’s government that controlling its water resources will reduce flooding and can be a boon to economic development.

By David Perry

“I grew up along the eastern continental divide and now I live along the continental divide,” says Tom Cain, referring to that twisting ridgeline snaking the length of the Appalachians that determines the fate of a drop of rain that falls on a rusted metal barn roof.

“Roanoke is a little fulcrum in nature,” the environmental activist says. “On one side of the mountain, water is going to the Ohio River basin and on down to the Mississippi. The other side goes to the Outer Banks and Botetourt County goes to the Chesapeake Bay.

“This is the place from which waters descend,” Tom explains. “You can actually make a difference if you can get people to focus on that. It’s an important place from which to leverage results. If you do it right, you’re helping a large part of the continent. If you’re doing it wrong, you’re hurting it. I think that implies some moral responsibilities.”

Tom arrived in the area to work on disaster mitigation at Virginia Tech about 10 years ago. Today, one of his focal points is the Lick Run watershed, which runs from Interstate 81 in Roanoke County to where the creek empties into the Roanoke River near downtown Roanoke.

“The City of Roanoke flooded twice in 1985,” he explains. “The primary flood was from Lick Run. That water left town and was gone about an hour, and then backed up and re-flooded.”

Tom fears the City of Roanoke’s plans to finish the interchange at Valley View Mall—making it accessible to both north and southbound traffic on I-581, but also putting more of the Lick Run watershed in impermeable concrete and asphalt—is setting up the valley for another disaster.

"The city has a choice," says Tom. "It's either going to build some more strip malls, or it's going to do some things to make itself safe from flooding."

Tom plans to influence that decision-making process. "We're going to be organizing a watershed association to pull together the stakeholders to make a decision about what they want to do. Do you want to go on with serial flooding every 20 or 30 years, or do you want to do what humans can do to avert that potential?"

Tom also plans to pull in downtown business including banks and the railroad. He says that taking a wiser approach to flooding issues in the valley could have tangible benefits for businesses.

"There are some simple strategies that if adopted upstream could make a difference in their flood insurance rates, could make a difference in whether they're assessed a storm-water management fee, and ultimately makes a difference if the area is governed as well as it could be," Tom says. These strategies include things like water-permeable pavement, rain gardens, vegetated roofs and swales.

Tom Cain says that it's important to think about the larger picture, and how Roanoke's actions affect its downstream neighbors. "I try to look at everything as an integrated, whole system. To me, building bigger storm

In Brief

Name: Tom Cain

Age: He says he's in his 60s

Title: Community activist and organizer

Lives: Roanoke

Background: This Elkins, W.Va., native pursued an undergraduate degree in history and English from West Virginia University by default. "When I went to college I tried to major in 'undecided,'" says Tom. "When you come from a small town in the hills, what do you know? They wouldn't let me do it, so that's how I ended up with a history degree. But I've never regretted having a liberal arts background. I feel sorry for people who don't, really." He also has a degree in architecture from the University of Tennessee and was once a Peace Corps volunteer in the Pacific. He's been in Roanoke for the past 10 years working on watershed issues.

drains to dump the water faster into Vinton isn't the strategy the government should be putting money into." 

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Amy Sunshine Avery-Grubel

Sara Beth Jones

Miss Sunshine and the art of innovation >

Executive Summary:

The Jacksonville Center in Floyd has a little Sunshine in its life these days and it is leading to some nice successes.

By Sarah Beth Jones

Amy Sunshine Avery-Grubel was born in Ithaca, N.Y. and raised in a Floyd commune called Zephyr. She has backpacked around Europe, spent a summer in China, and lived in New Zealand, Colorado, Pennsylvania and California. As much as she loved many of the places she has lived, she has always found herself drawn to to Floyd because, “there’s just no place quite like it.”

When Amy returned to Floyd in 2009, she did so with a master’s degree in geography from Penn State and a lot of community

spirit. That fall, she joined the staff of The Jacksonville Center for the Arts as the Educational Programming Coordinator.

“Going in, I felt like the job at the Jax was an amazing opportunity to combine so many disparate parts of my background—from the training I got in education, to my work in food service, to my childhood of attending craft fairs with my mom [potter Jayn Avery],” says Amy. “The position has been even more challenging than I anticipated, but also extremely rewarding.”

As a hat tip to the instrumental role Amy has come to play at the center, her title was recently changed to Director of Educational Programming.

“In many ways, Amy has revolutionized our educational programming,” says John McEnhill, executive director of the center.

Despite the financial constraints faced by the Jax as an arts-focused not-for-profit,



Development Coordinator Lee Chichester (from left), Educational Programmer Amy Sunshine Avery-Grubel, Delegate Charles Poindexter and Executive Director John McEnhill

Sara Beth Jones

Amy has added a number of programs to the center's offerings including:

- OnDemand classes so that educational programming is scheduled around adult students' availability.
- Afternoon Arts, an affordable weekly arts class for kids ages four to eight.
- Kids' Creativity Jubilee, a day of creative classes to coincide with the Floyd Town Jubilee.
- Floyd Art Reach (FAR), a host of programs aimed at supporting arts programming in Floyd County schools, on and off campus.

"Right now, Lee [Chichester, development coordinator for the Jax] is working on getting funding to expand FAR programming," says Amy.

Last year, FAR partnered with Floyd County Elementary School to pair twice-weekly after-school art classes with reading tutoring for at-risk kids.

"We know of at least two kids who agreed to the reading tutoring in order to participate in the art class," she says. "Our next goal is to find funding for busses so that more at-risk kids can participate, but our ultimate goal is

to find a way to provide arts education for all of the kids in Floyd County who want it."

Amy's approach to the ongoing financial constraints have led to some innovative approaches, such as offering work/study options where those with limited financial resources can work for the center in exchange for free classes. She also ran a Groupon deal for blacksmithing classes.

"We made little to no profit on our Groupon classes but we were able to reach a whole new group of people who may have been feeling the pinch of the economic downturn too deeply to try a class at the full price," she says.

"Amy pushes us all to try new ideas and reach out to the community in new ways," says McEnhill.

Thanks to her push and innovation, the center held roughly 15 percent more classes this year than last, and provided free after-school arts education to 53 children during the 2010-2011 school year.

"Maybe it's because I was raised here by artistic people but I just love the Blue Ridge and the art and culture here," Amy says. "The Jacksonville Center gives me the most amazing opportunity to be a part of building the community through the arts." 

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all photos: Becky Hepler

Amy Erb: "Absolute joyfulness in her work."

Found art >

Executive Summary:

'Surely there was something I could do with these' cultural outcasts says artist Amy Erb. And she was right.

By Becky Hepler

Art and the materials to make it is anywhere you find it. Just ask Amy Erb, a Town of Blacksburg custodian and master of the collage. She has been making pictures and sculpture from the materials she picks up every day in her work and she has developed a small but devoted following.

Raised by parents who lived through the Depression and living on the economic fringes, Amy is no stranger to making do, and trying to use resources to their fullest extent. "We never had much trash to be picked up because we hardly threw anything away," she says. Whether it was cutting buttons off clothes that were about to be used as cleaning rags, or using good jars for canning, every consumer good had at least two if not three different lives.

Working for the Town of Blacksburg, with its commitment to be a greener, more sustainable

community, was a good fit for Amy's value system and it was there, while she was doing her job, that she got the inspiration for her art work. "This was before we had mixed paper recycling, and when I'd be cleaning the offices and emptying the trash, I'd find these materials—folders, papers, magazines, that were beautiful and I felt bad about throwing them away. Surely, there was something I could do with these things," Amy says.

Like a crow, Amy began stashing the more colorful things in boxes she kept in her cleaning closet for this purpose, and then she'd find the piece that would jumpstart her imagination—usually a box that looked like a frame. So she would create a picture to fill that frame, tearing the paper into interesting shapes and piecing the colors together in an impressionistic fashion that showed a practiced eye at nuanced shading and good perspective.

At the old Blacksburg Motor Company, now the newly restored Planning and Engineering offices, there is an interior window with a deep ledge, so this past Christmas, Amy took discarded black poster board and using several shades of orange, red and brown, created a picture of a fire in a fireplace. She set it up beneath the window ledge, which became the mantel piece for the fireplace. In the window area, she hung a landscape she had made. Co-workers immediately hung stockings and set up cards on the ledge. Everyone who passed it had a smile. Carol Davis, then an intern for the town, now working for the New River Planning District, says, "I am touched by



Amy Erb's supplies.

the absolute joyfulness in her work.”

Amy has honored requests, doing a beach picture that complements the other ocean-themed décor in the office of Lorraine Plemmons, senior administrative assistant at the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue and Fire Department. Amy also creates pictures for colleagues that pay homage to their interests, like the snowman picture in Building Inspector Kathy Cook’s office.

She is remarkably humble about the response her work generates. “It’s much more positive than I ever expected,” she says. “I mean, sometimes I have a piece that I don’t think is particularly spectacular and then I get these ooohs and aaahhs and it really kind of boosts my self esteem. It encourages me to do more.”

Whether there is real appreciation for the arts or it’s a response to the sweet, good-natured woman who has a profound commitment to



An example of Amy’s “found” art.

recycling and to bringing her vision of beauty to the world, the workers in the Town of Blacksburg offices have taken Amy and her work to heart. As Kathy Cook says, “You never know what surprising thing you’ll find from Amy when you come in the next morning.” 

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My View

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

Excutive Summary: *The effort to clean up our energy mess has been going on for far longer than you might imagine, but we're still far from where we need to be.*

In the mid-1970s, as many of us sat in gas lines, paying in excess of \$1.50 for a gallon of gasoline for the first time in our lives, we wondered, "When will the cheap energy return?" Of course, it didn't and won't. We have lived with prices far in excess of what we were accustomed to paying for more than 30 years now, but we must remember that our prices—high as they are—still look low when compared to the world market.

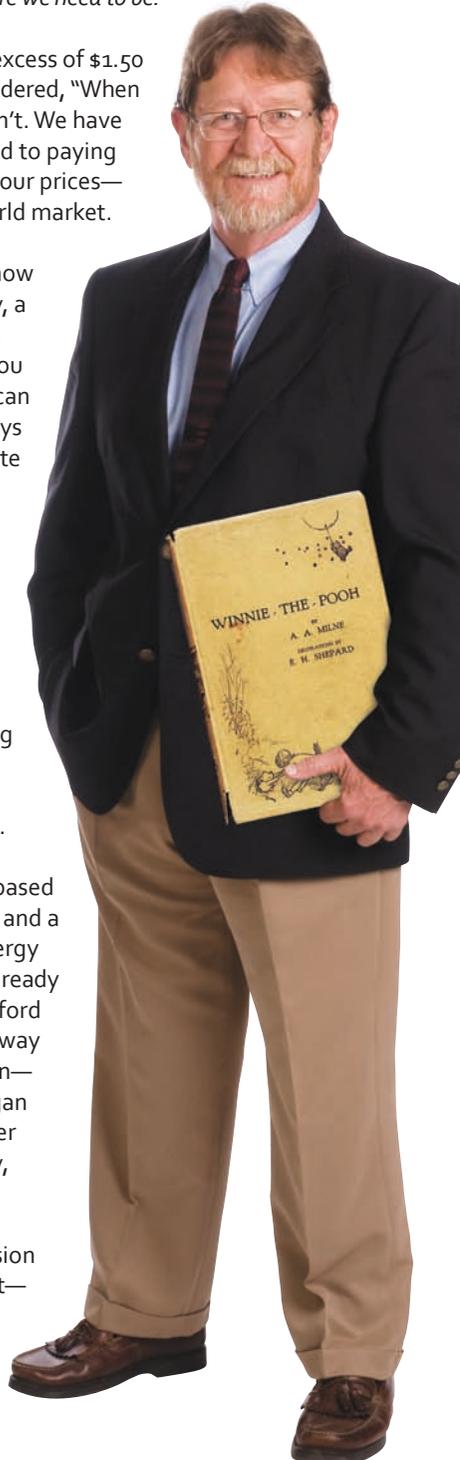
Europe, for example, had \$4-a-gallon gas years ago and now it's paying more than \$8 a gallon in some places. Recently, a survey showed Americans paying 77 cents a liter and Brits paying \$1.92 (world markets use the metric system and you get to figure out the gallons equivalent yourself, but you can see the relative difference). High cost for energy has always been a way of life elsewhere, but the U.S. has been fortunate in its natural resource allocation. We have wasted a great deal of our natural wealth, watched the world population grow and consume far more than expected and simply had bad, or no, energy planning and policy.

In Europe today, there is a strong movement in many major cities to remove cars from the equation. Just 45 percent of the people of Zurich, for example, own cars. Other cities are making it burdensome to drive in cities, saving expensive energy, cleaning the air and creating civilized, much quieter and much more livable spaces. That is not likely to spread to the car-addicted U.S. in the near future.

We are at a point now that we must have a strong policy based upon conservation, alternative fuel development and use and a tax structure that encourages further development of energy sources that are clean and relatively plentiful. Business is already peddling this particular bicycle hard, but it simply can't afford to see a radical change in government policy in the same way the Carter Administration's tax breaks for alternate—clean—energy sources were eliminated immediately by the Reagan Administration. Imagine where we'd be now, 30 years after those industries were infused with confidence and money, if the support had continued.

Carter's efforts were not new. In 1952, the Paley Commission suggested the U.S. begin alternative energy development—with a concentration on solar—in order to diminish the importance of imported oil. The Eisenhower Administration killed the initiative. Harry Truman's

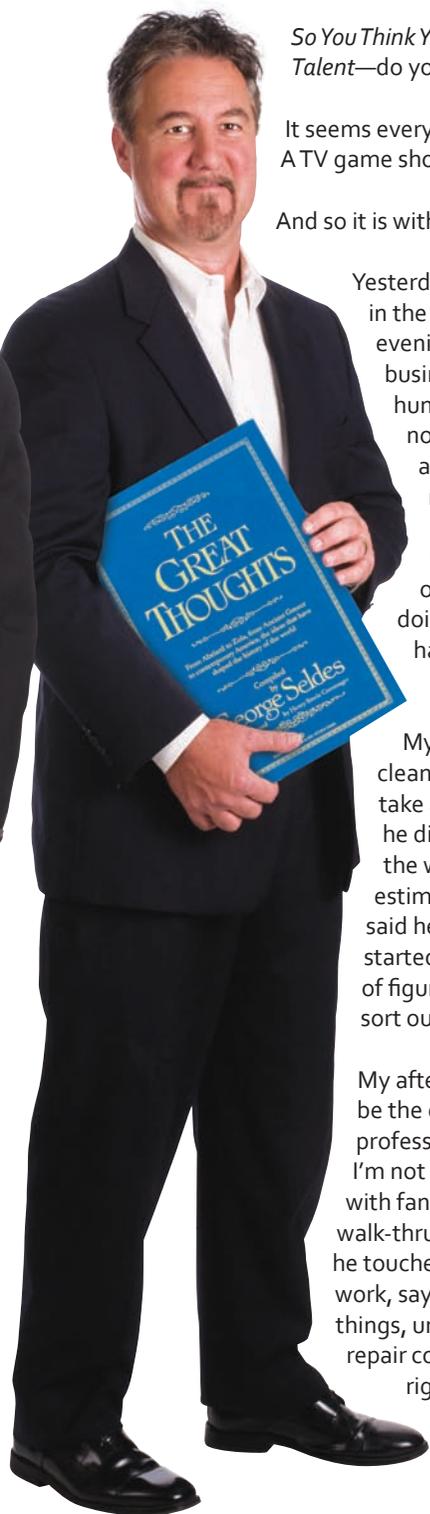
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Tonight on TV >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub



So You Think You Can Dance? Are you an American Idol? America's Got Talent—do you?

It seems everything's a contest these days. A TV game show, where everyone's being judged.

And so it is with business. Every day, I get to be *Judge Judy*.

Yesterday, I called *Two and a Half Men*. One contractor to come by in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one just by phone. This evening I now have *Three's Company*... all the estimates from the businesses. Surprisingly, the quotes were very close—within a hundred dollars of each other. Without the paper in front of me now, I don't even remember which one was the lowest. As far as game shows go, they all played *The Price is Right* on the money end.

My guy on the phone was happy he didn't have to drive out and spend the time reviewing the project when all I was doing right now was collecting estimates anyway. He didn't have to spin the *Wheel of Fortune* to see if he came up with the winning number.

My morning guy was fine. Showing up in his brown pickup, clean, professional, polite. I was a little afraid he was going to take a full *60 Minutes* on our walk-thru for my simple project, but he did seem knowledgeable. To his credit, he did try to schedule the work, but I had told him several times I was just collecting estimates. Maybe he thought his chances were in *Jeopardy*. He said he would get the estimate back to me by the next day. I started to ask if he just needed a pen. I couldn't imagine what kind of figuring and calculations needed to be done. Maybe he had to sort out the *Truth or Consequences*.

My afternoon guy pulls up in the exact same spot. His truck would be the envy of the *Home Improvement* "Tool Time" guy. A serious, professional contractor with a company behind him. But of course, I'm not stupid enough to fall for a business because of a shiny truck with fancy graphics. In his uniform, tool belt and all, afternoon guy's walk-thru was different than morning guy's. He didn't look at things; he touched things. He didn't scratch his head about the scope of work, saying he would only know better after he got into it; he moved things, unscrewed things, identified the problem, and quoted the repair cost. He didn't try to schedule work; he offered to do the work right then and there if I wanted to knock it out. Lastly, he pulled out his pen with company logo, binder with all the service descriptions and prices, quickly flipped to the right

continued on Page 52

Smith / My View

from Page 50

people had talked seriously about solar energy development, but it went nowhere. None of our administrations since Carter—including the Clinton and Obama administrations—has made a strong effort to diminish our dependence on fossil fuels, even though they have recognized the environmental and national security implications. The fossil fuel lobbies are like the tobacco lobby of old: stronger than our government.

We need consistency of policy and some good sense in its application. Leadership on energy is desperately needed from the nation's highest office and from federal, state and local governments. Business is beginning to get it, partly because the bottom line is so dramatically affected by high prices.

None of this will be accomplished as long as we continue to waste energy in our homes, cars, businesses and transportation systems at an astonishingly thoughtless rate. We idle for hours a year at traffic lights, heat unoccupied buildings, leave lights on in rooms where nobody is present, drive unnecessarily large and inefficient vehicles, travel long distances one to a car, fail to use alternative transportation (including feet and bicycles), continue to use coal to produce electricity, and on and on and on ...

We can still work ourselves out of this mess, but if you're looking for cheap energy, you're not likely to find it. If you're looking for solutions, they are readily available, relatively easy to institute, inexpensive in the long run, and much cleaner than what we have. I don't quite understand how anybody can argue against any of that. 

Field / On Tap

from Page 51

pages, and wrote out his estimate on the company form. Afternoon guy took 20 minutes total.

Guess who's going to get the job?

Even if my choice turns out to be *The Apprentice* rather than the experienced professional, one business clearly performed better than the other two. And that was just in convincing me to make my selection. Right now, this evening, the other two... *Lost*.

At this point, who knows if one of the other two would actually do a better job? Does it matter?

TV shows have to entertain to survive. To be a *Survivor*, our businesses have to put on a good show.

Which all reminds me of that episode of *Seinfeld*... (No other point here, I just wanted to end with another memorable TV show.) 

“ ”
It's a wonder
we're not up
to our nuggets

— Page 32

fromtheeditr.blogspot.com

More
Dan Smith
than most can stand...



Letters

Valuable work

Understanding addiction ala Warren Bickel (Dan Smith's "My View," July FRONT): Wouldn't that be something!

Those of us who are addicted or love those who are addicted or who do clean up in the wake of those who are addicted welcome all comers who are passionate about this disease/condition/lifestyle/choice.

I do question if our addict brains are different because we use them differently or we use them differently because our brains were different to begin with. I know there are biological and environmental predictors for those who are addicted. I also know there are spiritual reasons why we become obsessed with "things" or "substances."

So glad to have this research happening in our back yard. May God bless their work.

Joy Sylvester-Johnson
 CEO, The Rescue Mission
 Roanoke

Expensive sports

(In reference to the June cover story "The Impact of Recreation Sports") it would be nice to have a "Christiansburg [sports style] facility" in Roanoke with long course pool facilities. Two weeks ago we took our daughter (with the Marlins swim team) to the Coomis Center in Abingdon for a two-day summer meet and the 100-plus families, all from Roanoke, probably spent on average \$400 each for the weekend in Abingdon. That same weekend, the Gator club was in Greensboro.

The amount of money swimming families spend can be insane. I wish Roanoke could figure out a way to pull money back with hosting, instead of traveling.

Whitney (Fletcher) Smith
 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

“”
 Teaching proper manners
 should not be a passive activity

— Page 18

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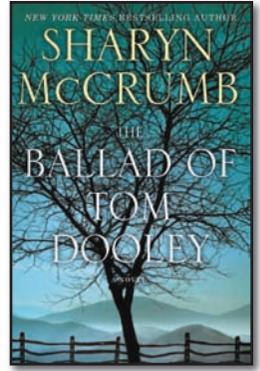
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Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our publishers and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit 150-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



A return of the ballad

Appalachian writer Sharyn McCrumb (who lives in Roanoke County) returns to her ballad series of historical novels with *The Ballad of Tom Dooley* (Thomas Dunne, \$24.99). Set in 1866 with flashbacks to episodes during the War, McCrumb gives the reader a look at the hardscrabble life of mountainfolk in North Carolina.

Using two narrators, one an illiterate mountain woman with a streak of vengefulness and the other an educated former governor and attorney who represents Tom Dooley in his murder trial, McCrumb opens the door to the difficulty of survival in the post-war North Carolina. The cadence of each narrator captures the rhythm of the mountains. Well researched, the book pokes holes in the common acceptance of what led Tom Dooley to murder his lover.

If you think you know the story of Tom Dooley from the Kingston Trio song, you don't. If you want to know what the real story was read this book. Available in September.

—Betsy Ashton

Watching Nazis grow

Erik Larsen's *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin* (\$26, Crown) is a fascinating look at the devolution of Germany in the 1930s. Following the story of U.S. Ambassador William Dodd and his family, the book winds from his appointment by President Roosevelt in 1933 (amid reports of increasing violence against citizens and tourists) through Dodd's departure

in 1937, less than a year before Kristallnacht.

Idealistic Dodd, an academic historian, was ill at ease as a diplomat and was challenged throughout his tenure by professionals in the State Department. His recently divorced young daughter partied late into the night with Nazis and Communists, troubling Dodd. The family moved to a street bordering Tiergarten, Berlin's Central Park and literally the "garden of the beasts."

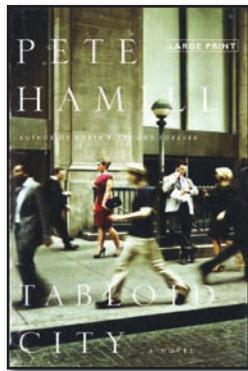
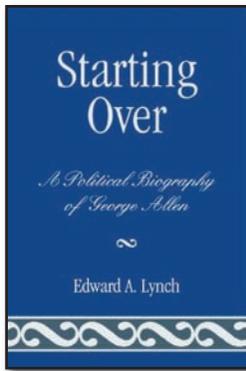
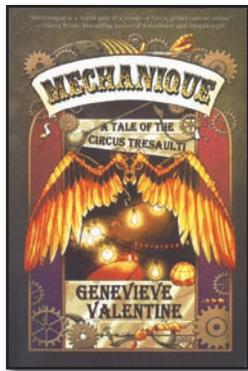
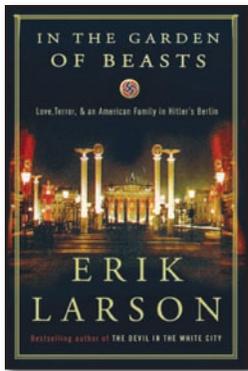
Larsen weaves many threads as his daughter's affairs multiply, the parties with the likes of Hermann Göring and Joseph Goebbels and the intensifying violence. For the 64-year-old Dodd, a North Carolinian and Virginia Tech grad (when it was still Virginia A&M College), diplomacy strained him.

As the months pass, the Dodd family affairs, the affairs of state, and the historical events marking the growing horror of the Hitler regime all come together in a marvelous story of romance, intrigue, and fear.

—Kurt Navratil

Circus, circus

Jules Verne is rolling over in his grave. Not because he's upset about Genevieve Valentine's *Mechanique: A Tale of the Circus Tresaulti* (Prime Books; \$15); he just wants to hear more. Take a bolt or screw or two out of whatever makes this novel a fantasy and you're left with a power studded little allegory—on so many levels. The dystopian steampunk genre may be trendy (you don't have to be a "YA" reader to know that), but



Valentine's is a synthetic sweetheart of a read.

Visual. Visual. Visual. *Mechanique* paints a brassy picture that remains. You see the workings. Hear the gears. Click and clack your way past mechanical surfaces to meet characters that only belong under a big canvas tent. A literal circus, but a trapeze high wire act of mere survival as natural figures and their artificial belongings escape from town to town. The circus is in town. You won't be disappointed.

—Tom Field

Allen redux?

If you thought George Allen's political career died with "macaca," think again. In Edward Lynch's biography, *Starting Over* (\$36.95, Hamilton), conservative Republican George Allen is drawn as a strong, determined, visionary who repeatedly defies the odds and rises to office despite what the preliminary polls—and often his own party—suggest.

Lynch, political science professor and director of the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program at Hollins University, has penned a well-researched and rich narrative of one of Virginia's best known and most charismatic politicians. From Allen's first foray into politics, to his term as governor, to his rise as senator and presidential hopeful, Lynch unabashedly details the failures and triumphs that got Allen there.

To help the reader better understand the impact of Allen's unprecedented career, Lynch opens the book with a brisk but comprehensive history of Virginia's politics,

everything from George Washington to Massive Resistance. *Starting Over* is a must read for anyone interested in Virginia politics.

—Jennifer Bowman

The city beat

Pete Hamill's *Tabloid City* (Little Brown, \$29) annoyed me at first. Choppy, staccato, bounce scenes, texting-like dialogue. Particularly annoying was the author's use of the word "thinking" followed by a colon, to let us know, well ... what the character is thinking. The style seemed lazy to me; as if Hamill was merely supplying scripting notes to a television show.

I knew within a few pages the author was mimicking the city; but after a taxi lineup of plenty more pages, I decided to accept it. If you heard it out loud, *Tabloid* reads just like a poetry slam. A collection of headlines and subheads. *Tabloid* does put you on the sidewalk. Hamill's crusty editor protagonist sees NYC as "the city of people who are not like you." If you like watching busy little people, with an occasional nut case thrown in, the book scuttles along fine. It covers a night, a day, a night: just enough.

—Tom Field

(The reviewers: Betsy Ashton is a Smith Mountain Lake-based writer. Kurt Navratil is in IT with Advance Auto in Roanoke. Jennifer Bowman is a project manager with Cox Communications. Tom Field is publisher of FRONT.)

FRONT 'N ABOUT



photos: Tom Field

Jazzy Summer Evening >

Longwood Park in Salem served as venue to the 2011 **Jazz in July** on July 16; featuring the bands Coda, The Sway Cats, Lenny Marcus and the Big Easy. Salem native jazz vocalist **Jane Powell** (pictured) wrapped up the summer evening concert, saying it's always "good to be home" (especially after touring with 21 cruise ship performances).



Smart riding >

Mayor **David Bowers** kicked off the new **SmartWay Connector** from Roanoke to Lynchburg's train station July 17 in Roanoke. The bus will make periodic runs between the cities, giving both commuters and those wishing to catch a train to New York City, Washington, Baltimore or Philadelphia a convenient access.



photos: Tom Field



Chamber of Chamber >

The conference center of The Inn at Virginia Tech provided the perfect chamber (left) for the **Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Business Expo** on July 21, where nearly 90 companies and organizations exhibited. The Chamber's executive director **Catherine Sutton** (left) and events coordinator **Diana Lyons** hand at awards as the sponsoring Inn's GM **Tom Shaver** calls out winners.

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

CONTRIBUTORS

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Pete Krull

JULY 2011 > Contributor of the Month

Pete Krull, has been with us since those halcyon days before the FRONT even began, when we were pumping out another publication every other week. He was good then and he's good now. Pete is an investment counselor and president of Krull & Company. Pete lives in South Georgia, but has a lot of clients in this area because he lived here for several years. His interest is and has been in investing with conscience and that's a lot of what he writes about for us. His columns have offered invaluable information from a point of view often neglected, but necessary for an overall view of what to do with your money. He's been a valuable resource for you and for us for these years.

“Do you want to go on with serial flooding?”

— Page 43

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Forbes | 2011
BEST BANKS
IN AMERICA

“One of the Top 5 Banks in the Country”



**First Citizens
Bank**



Forbes named First Citizens BancShares, Inc. the fourth-best bank in America in its December 2010 “Best and Worst Banks” ranking. First Citizens Bank is a subsidiary of First Citizens BancShares, Inc. Member FDIC

The national media continues its drum beat of bad economic news, but locally, the numbers are starting to tell a different story.

EMPLOYED

	Q4 2009	Q3 2010	Q4 2010
Total	208,803	203,198	208,026
Mfg.	23,987	23,248	23,674

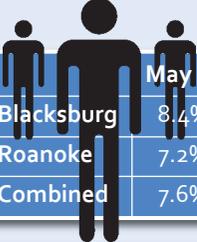
Unemployment/Employment

Unemployment nudged up from April to May in the region and in Virginia – a common occurrence as college students and graduates enter the workforce. Unemployment rates in May were much lower than a year ago — the Roanoke and New River Valley region's unemployment rate fell 14.5 percent, a sharper drop than the state's 11.7 percent.

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Real Estate

The average home price, was at its highest level of the year and up 11.1 percent from April. Nationally, home prices rose just 1.2 percent from April to May. The number of homes sold locally hit its highest rate this year, up 26.1 percent from April. Nationally, sales dropped 3.8 percent.



UNEMPLOYMENT

	May 10	Apr. 11	May 11
Blacksburg	8.4%	6.4%	7.0%
Roanoke	7.2%	6.2%	6.3%
Combined	7.6%	6.3%	6.5%

HOME PRICES

	Apr. 2011	May 2011
May 2010	\$168,123	\$186,821

The recent release of the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages for the fourth quarter of 2010 also shows an improving employment picture for the region. The total number of people employed within the Blacksburg and Roanoke MSAs rose 2.4 percent and was down just 0.4 percent from the fourth quarter of 2009. Employment in the manufacturing sector was up 1.7 percent from the third quarter.

HOMES SOLD

	Apr. 2011	May 2011
May 2010	284	358

Source: Roanoke Valley Association of REALTORS, National Association of REALTORS

—By Anne Piedmont,
Piedmont Research Associates



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Not the marrying kind >

Executive Summary:

Surprise—marriage in this region is not the majority status.

By Anne Piedmont

Married? You're in the minority.

Imagine my surprise.

When I took a look into how the Roanoke and Blacksburg Metropolitan Statistical Areas compare to the national figures for percentage of married households, I expected different results. Turns out, the region is less married than both Virginia and the nation. But, as usual, that's only part of the story.

According to data released by the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009 American Community Survey, slightly less than half (49.1 percent) of the households in the United States are married couple households. In Virginia, married couples account for 50.8 percent of households.

The percentages are even lower than the national average in the Roanoke and New River Valley region: 45.1 percent in the Blacksburg MSA and 47.6 percent in the Roanoke MSA. In the combined region, 46.7 percent of the households are married.

It is not surprising then, that the average household size in the two local MSAs is smaller than the state and nation averages.

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE

U.S.	2.63
Virginia	2.57
Blacksburg MSA	2.30
Roanoke MSA	2.33

It's also not surprising that the percentage of never-married males and females over 15 years old in Blacksburg MSA— home to a large student population— is much higher than the state and national averages. In the

Roanoke MSA, the numbers are closer to the Virginia's and the U.S.'s.

NEVER MARRIED

	Males	Females
U.S.	35.2%	28.6%
Virginia	34.3%	28.2%
Blacksburg MSA	48.4%	39.3%
Roanoke MSA	30.3%	24.8%
Combined Region	37.2%	29.8%

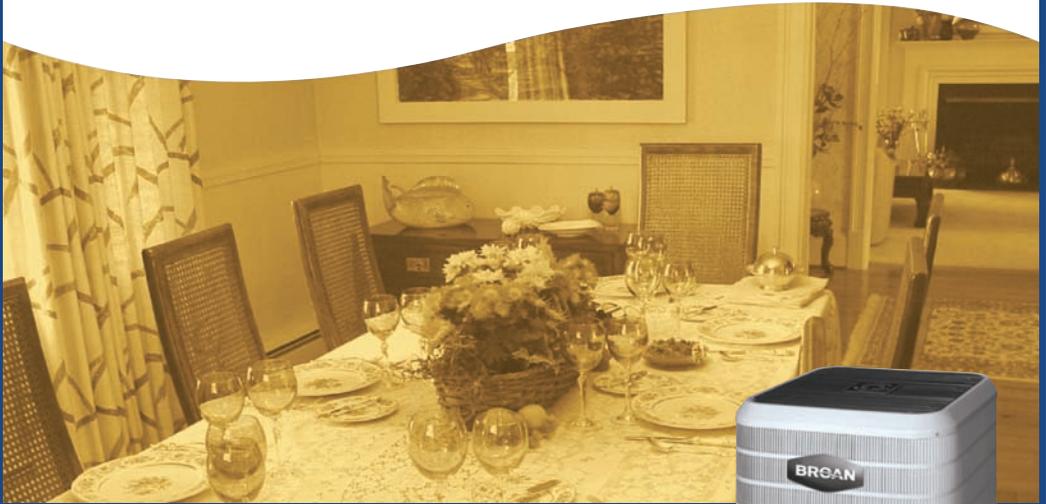
The region, however, is not a monolithic block. And that's one of the advantages of the Roanoke and New River Valleys. Individuals, families and companies looking to move here can find the situation that suits them best. The highest percentages of non-married people can be found in the college areas of Montgomery County, Radford and Salem. More married families live in the suburban and rural communities. The City of Roanoke also offers a higher non-married population.

Because the one-year American Community Survey (2009) only breaks out cities and counties with populations larger than 65,000, the following chart reflects data from a five-year period. Roanoke sits at a startling one third of households where marriage is the rule while Roanoke bedroom Botetourt County is the only regional locality over 60 percent.

PERCENT OF MARRIED HOUSEHOLDS

U.S.	49.7%
Virginia	51.0%
Blacksburg MSA	46.0%
Giles County	53.1%
Montgomery County	44.8%
Pulaski County	50.5%
Radford City	32.3%
Roanoke MSA	48.6%
Botetourt County	63.3%
Craig County	51.2%
Franklin County	57.6%
Roanoke County	55.8%
Roanoke City	33.7%
Salem City	46.8%
Combined Region	47.7%

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Grace and Rodney Taylor

all photos: Julie Snowman

Key link in a downtown comeback >

Executive Summary:

Rodney Taylor's Market at Main in downtown Lynchburg could be an important element in the comeback of a promising downtown.

By Julie Snowman

Rodney Taylor has always worked. At thirteen, he was cleaning the community pool during summer vacation school and other summer jobs included cleaning up at Piedmont Mills and generally do whatever jobs he could find.

Running a restaurant is new to Rodney, now 51. He co-owned High Peak Sportswear with his brother in law, Ralph Smith. He says he saw downtown growing and needing a business that would appeal to people who live and work there. It would need to fit into the look and feel of the historic 125 year old building he chose.

A downtown business owner since 1993, Rodney knows first-hand that revitalization efforts have brought vitality back to an area that had lost its luster. Eric Spain began efforts to renovate and revitalize Lynchburg's downtown district in the early 1990s, and Rodney says all the hard work and planning over the years has worked. In the last three years downtown Lynchburg has reached a tipping point; investment in real estate has

paid off. "The significant investment the city of Lynchburg has made has attracted the private investment needed to make downtown work," Rodney says.

Private investment exceed \$150 million and "the residential component is a large part of the success of downtown with the new loft apartments that give the opportunity for more people to live down here," Rodney says. "There are now many more activities to enjoy downtown: trails by the river, shopping, the community market, renovated and historic buildings. The new Amtrak service has brought in more out of town sightseers who shop and eat downtown.

In previous years the Market at Main building had been home to a clothiers company, a liquor store, a department store and two pharmacies. For Taylor, it was crying out to be an old style family diner.

With faith that his idea would work, Taylor sold his half of High Peak Sportswear to Smith and took off on a venture into the unknown. It required a large capital investment for the cost of renovations and equipment to update the old building. "The restoration involved a lot of predictions and forecasts," says Rodney.

"Ralph Wilson, owner of the building, restored it inside and out, and built 10 loft apartments above the retail space with more apartments added to the building next door. Since then, the result has far exceeded our expectations."

Rodney's wife, Anne, played an important

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

role in planning the menu and the design of the restaurant. Market at Main is not your run of the mill diner. Once through the front door, patrons are welcomed into a large, open and airy space. To the right is a convenience store in which customers can buy everyday items, wines and crafts made in Virginia and other places. To the left is the diner filled with tables, booths and a long lunch counter. Patrons can sit alone or converse with the wait staff (could be Grace, Taylor's 17 year old daughter, who helps out when she's not in school).

They can dine on a Lynchburger, house-made chicken salad or a plate of fried green tomatoes (some customer favorites, according to Taylor).

Customers can't help but notice the unusual sideways paddle fans that gently circulate above the counter. "I got this idea from a 1940s style diner in Philadelphia," Taylor says. "We were able to find similar fans and recreate the look with the help of architectural firm Dominion Seven who made them for us."

Taylor says the fans look good and send air over the kitchen area without blowing cold air onto the customers.

Rodney says he can count only 10 days he has been absent from the diner and all for family excursions that include college tours and maybe a day or so of vacation. "This is a seven day a week job and I really enjoy



it—we get a lot of regulars in here and there are a lot of characters that add to the atmosphere."

Grace says, "I love seeing familiar faces and getting to know out-of-towners too. Because of the closeness of the atmosphere I get to know them instantly."

Says Rodney, "We have leased the building for five years with the hope to stay longer," Taylor says. Lynchburg will eat to that. 

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Wingfield



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Investing

Brown, Edwards & Company, L.L.P., which has offices in Christiansburg and Roanoke, has admitted **Chris Wingfield**, **Norman Yoder**, **Jeff Smith** and **Ryan McEntire** to the partnership.

Organizations

The Roanoke Chapter of the Virginia Society

of CPAs has named the following to its board of directors: president, **Ann Shawver**, City of Roanoke; vice president, **Amanda Johnson**, Anderson and Reed; secretary, **Jennifer Duff**, MPAY Inc.; treasurer, **Deana Sentman**, Cherry, Bekaert and Holland; and board members **Elizabeth Hammond** of Brown Edwards and **Drew Arney** of Cherry Bekaert and Holland.

WELLNESS FRONT



McCray

Dental

Dawn McCray of Delta Dental of Virginia in Roanoke has earned the Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) credential from the American Society for Training & Development Certification Institute.

Organizations

Roz Nelson, director of administration and dental operations for the Free Clinic of the New River Valley in Blacksburg has earned certification as a Professional in Human Resources.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Parker



Lucas



Teruneh

Technology

UXB International of Blacksburg has made the following changes: **Celeste Parker** is the new assistant to the CEO; **Katie Lucas** is HR manager; **Selam Teruneh** has been named HR generalist.



Ayers

HVAC

David Ayers, maintenance technician for CMG Leasing in

Blacksburg, has received his HVAC Technician certification.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Snider

Apartments

Randy Snider, maintenance technician for CMG Leasing, has received his Certified Apartment Maintenance Technician certification from the National Apartment Association.



Traylor



Williams

Courtney Traylor and **Laura Williams**, leasing consultant for Knollwood Condominiums and Chasewood Downs Apartments (both CMG Leasing) in Blacksburg, have received National Apartment

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.

Leasing Professional certifications.



Van Hying

Architects/Engineers

Cassandra Van Hying, a civil engineer and associate with Spectrum Design, a Roanoke-based architecture and engineering firm, has been named the 2010-2011 Woman

in Construction of the Year by the Roanoke Valley Chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction.



Cramer

Draper Aden Associates in Blacksburg has hired **Scott V. Cramer** in site planning and engineering.

Real Estate

Dana Montgomery, associate broker with Prudential Waterfront Properties at Smith Mountain Lake, has been awarded the Certified Residential Specialist (CRS) designation by the

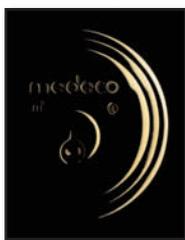


Montgomery

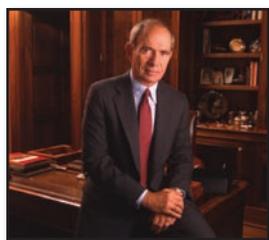
Council of Residential Specialists, of the National Association of Realtors.



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Career FRONT



Lynch

Prudential Waterfront Properties' **Adam Lynch** of Smith Mountain Lake has earned the professional designation, Fine Homes Specialist, conferred by Prudential Real Estate and Relocation Services.

RETAIL FRONT



Powell

Auto Parts

Sarah Powell, senior VP/general counsel/corporate secretary for Roanoke-based Advance Auto Parts has been named to the Class of 2011 of "Influential Women of Virginia," by Virginia Lawyers Media, publishers of Virginia Lawyers Weekly and the Virginia Medical Law Report. Advance Auto Parts has named **Jim Durkin** Autopart International president.

SENIOR FRONT

Facilities

Physiatrist **Dr. Murray Joiner Jr.** has established a clinic at Friendship Retirement Community in Roanoke—the only retirement community in the region with a full-time physiatrist on campus.

EDUCATION FRONT

Awards

Lorraine Lange, superintendent of Roanoke County Public Schools and a 1969 graduate of Roanoke College, has been named winner of the Margaret Sue Copenhaver Contribution to Education Award. It is Roanoke College's top alumni honor.



Carmack

Colleges

Connie Carmack has been named vice president for resource development at Roanoke College.

Tomalei Vess has been named the director of the newly created

Office of Undergraduate Research at Virginia Tech.

CULTURE FRONT



Blount

Recreation

Doug Blount has been named associate director of Roanoke County's Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department, succeeding director Pete Haislip, who will retire next year.

OTHER FRONTS



Sutton

Chambers

Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce director **Catherine Sutton** has been named the 2011 Virginia Chamber Executive Director of the Year by the Virginia Association of



Sutherland

Chamber of Commerce Executives.

Kristi Sutherland has joined the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce as manager of administration and public policy.

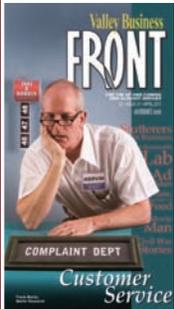
Non-Profits

Jane Henderson, president of Roanoke's Community Housing Partners board of directors president and president of Virginia Community Capital, has been recognized by Virginia Housing Coalition with a Housing Leadership Award for commitment to community development.

Advertising/PR

Access Advertising & Public Relations has named **Chris Henson** creative director. In this position, Henson will be responsible for creative development, design and client relations.

Kelsey Goodson has joined Neathawk Dubuque and Packett in Roanoke as an assistant account executive.



Coming Up...

September 2011

Microbreweries

Have you noticed the increasing brands and availability of microbrew beers from our own region? Here's what's on tap in September.

October 2011

Labor Unions

We talked to people on both sides of the labor union issue. In October read our fascinating report on whether unions are still relevant.

November 2011

FRONTList

Yes! It's our annual "Best-Of" recognitions edition, featuring... well, you'll just have to wait and see!

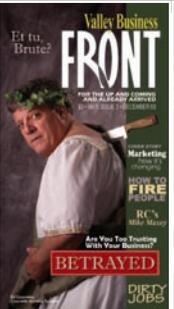
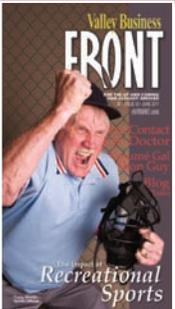
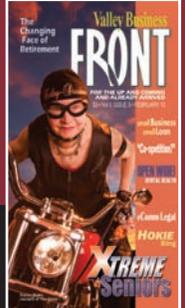
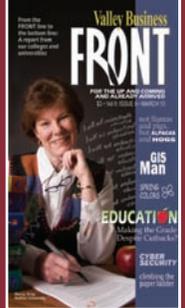
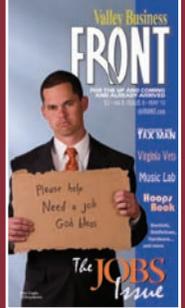
FRONTguide

People are buzzing about FRONTguide! It's now available at vbFRONT.com. Not just a book-of-lists or directory, in classic and progressive FRONTstyle, we're presenting the businesses, products and services you need most at your fingertips. Compact and easy to use. It's like having your own little black book! An evergreen 24/7/365 directory, we continue to build lists and add sponsors. To be a part, contact Kathy or Judi below.

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Christine Ward paddles kayak at Carvins Cove.

Dan Smith

Roanoke Region strong outdoors

A new study of some of the nation's most prominent centers for outdoor activities puts Roanoke among the elite nationally. The study found that the region ranked high in concentration of greenway trails, public recreational land, square footage of lakes and other assets, setting the stage for growth in outdoor businesses looking to grow around hiking, biking, paddling and other activities. The benchmarking study includes Asheville, N.C., Greenville, S.C., Boulder, Colo., Chattanooga, Tenn., and Portland, Maine. The results show Roanoke on par with Asheville, Boulder and Chattanooga, with Portland ranking the highest. While the Roanoke Region's outdoor amenities ranked high, the study found opportunities for entrepreneurs and existing outdoor businesses looking to capitalize on its growing outdoor brand. Some other findings in the study:

- The Roanoke Region's cost of

living is 8.5 percent below the national average and the lowest of the communities in the analysis.

- Roanoke was tops in running events.
- Roanoke ranks third in total outdoor-related events.
- Roanoke was second only to Asheville when it comes to public recreational land within 50 miles on a per-capita basis.
- Roanoke is third in per-capita cycling events.
- Roanoke was ranked second next to Boulder in per-capita mileage of greenway trails.
- Roanoke Region has fewer fishing tournaments, coming in next to last in the study.
- The Roanoke Region has relatively fewer companies engaged in the outdoor industry.

Rockydale expands

Roanoke-based **Rockydale Quarries Corporation** has announced the acquisition of two quarry locations from C.S. Mundy Quarries Inc. The ownership change was effective July 1. The new locations will operate as the Rockydale-Flatrock Quarry located in Shenandoah County and the Rockydale-Broadway Quarry outside of Harrisonburg in Rockingham County.

The purchase came 10 months after Rockydale opened a new quarry site outside Charlottesville. With these two new sites, Rockydale has a total of seven quarry locations and an additional lime processing facility. Integrating the two new sites will be very strategic and also create additional synergies between other current locations. Rockydale will maintain the current workforce with plans to add other positions in the near future.

Cox cell service

Cox Communications plans to begin offering

cellular telephone service in the region later this year, its second foray into a Virginia market. Cox, which has a large cable television franchise and offers telephone landline and computer service, is established in the Hampton Roads area with its cell service.

Arkay to expand

Arkay Packaging Corporation plans to expand its Botetourt County facility, creating 25 jobs and investing \$7.5 million. This is the third expansion for Arkay since it located in Botetourt County's EastPark Commerce Center in 1996.

The 25 new jobs will be in press operations, quality control, finishing and gluing. The investment includes a state-of-the-art Heidelberg XL105 printing press, as well as a new Bobst die-cutting press. These new hires will bring the number of full-time employees in Arkay's Roanoke Region facility to 175.

*Have an announcement
about your business?*

Send announcements to
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A contact / source must
be provided. Inclusions
are not guaranteed and
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Long & Foster move

The Daleville office of Chantilly-based **Long & Foster Realtors** will be merged into the company's offices in Roanoke County, moving 49 employees with the 90 who already work out of that building on Electric Road. Executives say the move has to do with efficiency, not the state of the real estate market.

J. Alden English is an attorney who concentrates in the areas of real estate transactions, finance, corporate formation and governance, and mergers and acquisitions. Paralegal Thayer Reback has 15 years of experience as a real estate paralegal.

Bank layoffs

Roanoke's **Wells Fargo** back office has laid off 59 people because customers are paying their bills. The employees were working with those who were not making payments and their numbers have shrunk in recent months, leading to the elimination default operations team on Plantation Road.

Best for business

For the third time in the four years of its existence, **CNBC's Top State for Business Poll** has put Virginia at the top. The survey was initiated in 2007 and Virginia ranked first in 2007 and 2009, but second to Texas in 2008 and 2010. The poll includes grades for the cost of doing business, work force, quality of life, education, and infrastructure and transportation.

ATG expansion

Chesapeake Rehab Equipment Incorporated has been bought by ATG Rehab. Chesapeake has an office in Roanoke, whose employees will remain in place. Chesapeake has 13 locations, serving a number of hospitals and rehab centers with power wheelchairs, bath aids and portable ramps.

Lab purchased

The company that bought Carilion Clinic's lab recently, **Solstas Lab Partners**, has purchased Select Diagnostics of Greensboro, N.C. Solstas has 3,700 employees and \$350 million in revenue.

SmartWay expands

Smart Way Connector, the much-anticipated shuttle-bus service between Roanoke and Lynchburg, debuted July 19, giving more options in southwest and central Virginia while providing a means to catch Amtrak trains out of Lynchburg. The 16-seat Smart Way Connector shuttle operates twice daily from Roanoke to Lynchburg, with a stop in Bedford, timed to connect with Amtrak service. The shuttle bus also connects the New River Valley with stops in Salem, Christiansburg and Blacksburg on Fridays and weekends.

Dynax fined

A computer failure on a production line has led to a fine of \$14,000 for Botetourt County's **Dynax America Corporation** for an emissions violation from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Testing, not emission of dangerous materials, was the issue here. The company is required to monitor 90 percent of its emissions, but during one period, was monitoring just 68 percent because of the glitch.

Tech wins gas mileage

A team of students from **Virginia Tech** has won the EcoCAR: The NeXt Challenge automobile gas mileage event, sponsored by General Motors and the Department of Energy. Tech's engineering students built a car that gets 82 mpg.

Access wins awards

Roanoke-based **Access Advertising & Public Relations** has won three awards in the 28th Annual Healthcare Advertising Awards, sponsored by Healthcare Marketing Report. Access was recognized for work with Reston Hospital Center in Northern Virginia, and HCA Capital Division in Richmond.

Woods Rogers expands

Roanoke-based law firm **Woods Rogers** has expanded its Charlottesville office with the addition of an attorney and paralegal.

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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She trained as a methamphetamine lab technician

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This fall Roanoke County's Mason Cove Elementary School will debut as the County's first **energy-efficient school**.

The project is seeking LEED Gold and some of its most prominent "green" features include **geothermal heating and cooling, extensive daylighting** and **permeable parking** areas.



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