

Valley Business FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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Wind Farmers
and Tree Climbers

Biz History 101

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Weathering the Storm Success In Spite of Hard Times

Joel Shepherd,
Virginia Furniture Market

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WELCOME to the FRONT

Simply surviving in the American economy of 2010 was an accomplishment for many area businesses. A lot of businesses didn't make it and the ones that did often limped into 2011 in some level of diminished capacity. But there are exceptions. A lot of them, as it turns out, and Susan Ayers found enough of them for a cover story that will lift your spirits.

What she found is what you know: good business practices and good management are often enough to sustain companies through tough times and when they come out on the other side, the calluses they've built up give them strength to plow forward at an even more brisk pace.

The methods are as different as the companies employing them, as Susan's story demonstrates, but one thing all these companies share is a belief in themselves and a determination to make it work. That's a good lesson for any economy.



Tom Field



Dan Smith



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Valley Business FRONT

JANUARY



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Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 58.

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."

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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.

“ If you’re willing to move, the money... is insane

— Page 31

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Weathering the Storm



Success In Spite of Hard Times



Ship Ahoy, Cap'n! Joel Shepherd plays our salty dog captain as our FRONTcover model, steering his business amidst an unforgiving economy. By the way, he does NOT promote smoking. The pipe is a prop—unloaded.

Against the odds >

Executive Summary:
In one of the most difficult economies in generations, some businesses are thriving. Here's how they're doing it.

**Story and photos
by Susan Ayers**

Modea's 1,335 percent growth rate between 2006 and 2009, as related in the recent Inc. Magazine 500, is only the most startling example that thriving in the current economy is not impossible. The Blacksburg marketing firm saw revenue jump from about a quarter of a million dollars to more than \$3.5 million and employment grow to 60 people in that period, but it is hardly alone in succeeding.

Advance Auto has been the talk of job fairs for more than a year because of surges in hiring; energy companies, looking at a new emphasis on alternative fuels, are booming. Some small businesses with no specific artificial reason to succeed are growing because of smart management and good work habits. Following is a look at a number of the region's businesses that are flourishing and the reasons for that.

Virginia Furniture Market

Home Furnishings, Rocky Mount
Growth: 10 percent since 2008.

When Joel Shepherd opened the doors of Virginia Furniture Market in 1997, the primary focus was a particular product line, solid wood furniture with custom options. The selection was expanded to a full line.

Says Shepherd, "We think the formula is pretty simple: maintain and improve our position as the low cost provider of home furnishings in the markets we serve (about a 100-mile circle around Roanoke). By maintaining a low cost structure and offering products that are used in every home we believe we can continue to grow our market share."

Plans include a second showroom located less than a mile from the current showroom by the third quarter of 2012. The new showroom will be almost four times as large as the existing store, which will remain open.

"It makes perfect sense to have the two stores in close proximity," says Shepherd. "If customers can't find what they're looking for in one store, they only have to drive a short distance down the road to look in the second store."



Cindy Shelor

John T. Morgan Roofing & Sheet Metal

Roofing/Sheet Metal Work, Roanoke

Growth: 10 percent for 2010

Three-quarters of a century old John T. Morgan Roofing & Sheet Metal's sustainability is due in large part to its versatility, says President Cindy Shelor, whose grandfather was the founder. The company provides maintenance contracts, repair services, re-roofs existing and new construction, garden roofs residential and commercial. If new construction is off, the business shifts gears to where the demand is.

"Weather is a key factor in the business," says Shelor. "If it's not raining, the condition of what's over your head isn't always considered. The winter of 2009 was harsh on roofs. It also delayed a lot of work we needed to get done. 2009 was not a large growth year. The year-end snows had a lot to do with that. 2010 YTD is well over a 10 percent increase."

Blue Ridge Beverage Company Inc.

Beverage Distributor, Salem

Growth: 18 percent last year.

Blue Ridge distributes beer and wine throughout the region and in the process maintains some complex relationships.

Blue Ridge Beverage knows the drill: attract and retain skilled workers, plan and market its products aggressively, seek innovative products, invest in technology, focus on brand building for its suppliers.

"It is that relationship with our suppliers and our retail customers that is critical to the long-term success of the products we are responsible for," says President/CEO Bob Archer, one of the



“ ”

Our service is one that isn't totally economy related. If you have a leaky roof, you need it repaired/replaced.

—Cindy Shelor,
John T. Morgan Roofing & Sheet Metal, Inc.

“ ”

We have several mottos. The one that means the most to me is to "under promise and over deliver."

—Joel Shepherd,
Virginia Furniture Market



Bob Archer in his office.

“

Over the years, no matter how large we were we have been blessed with good people who have shared in our vision and worked very, very hard to make it a reality. Many of those valued employees have been with us for over 20 to 25 years.

—*Bob Archer, Blue Ridge Beverage Company, Inc.*



few bosses around with a full bar in his office. "We maintain state-of-the-art facilities, technology, and delivery equipment in support of this mission." Above all, he says, solid employees "make Blue Ridge Beverage what it is today,"

Magnets USA

Custom and Promotional Magnets, Roanoke

Growth: 33 percent first half of 2010

Magnets USA was founded in 1990 by Dale Turner, who convinced his brother, Alan, to join him. Alan became president and CEO, while Dale serves as VP of sales and marketing.

Since 1992, the company has had the top selling magnetic calendar line in the real estate industry and well over \$100 million in sales. Soon after the magnetic calendars came magnetic sports schedules, more than two million units annually.

Real estate sank in 2006, and since agents were huge customers, Magnets USA suffered. Sales at Magnets USA continued to decline until 2008 and competitors began importing calendars from China.

Magnets USA worked at becoming more efficient and started a heavier marketing focus on personalized and customer products. The company invested in new equipment and upgraded its software. It expanded to other markets, such as food and hospitality, religious, educational fundraising, wedding and medical industries.

Sales stabilized in 2009, then began to climb. Through June of this 2010, sales were up 33 percent the best first half of the year in the company's 20-year history.

Says Dale Turner, "Alan had the technical expertise, ingenuity and drive essential to lead the company into the high tech world. I knew the marketing side of the business but from working for IBM Alan had the valuable knowledge in the operational facets of business. We were fortunate to hire



Dale and Alan Turner of Magnets USA.

other highly talented employees and managers. We have overcome numerous challenges in order to grow and prosper."

East West DyeCom, Inc.

Aluminum Anodizing, Roanoke

Growth: 100 percent in 2010.

East West DyeCom started in 1987 and "when ITT came to me in the mid 1990s and wanted a special coating, that resulted in my business taking a different direction. Before that, I had no employees," recalls founder Tamea Woodward. The company doesn't manufacture anything. It helps manufacturers with their finishing needs.

“ ”

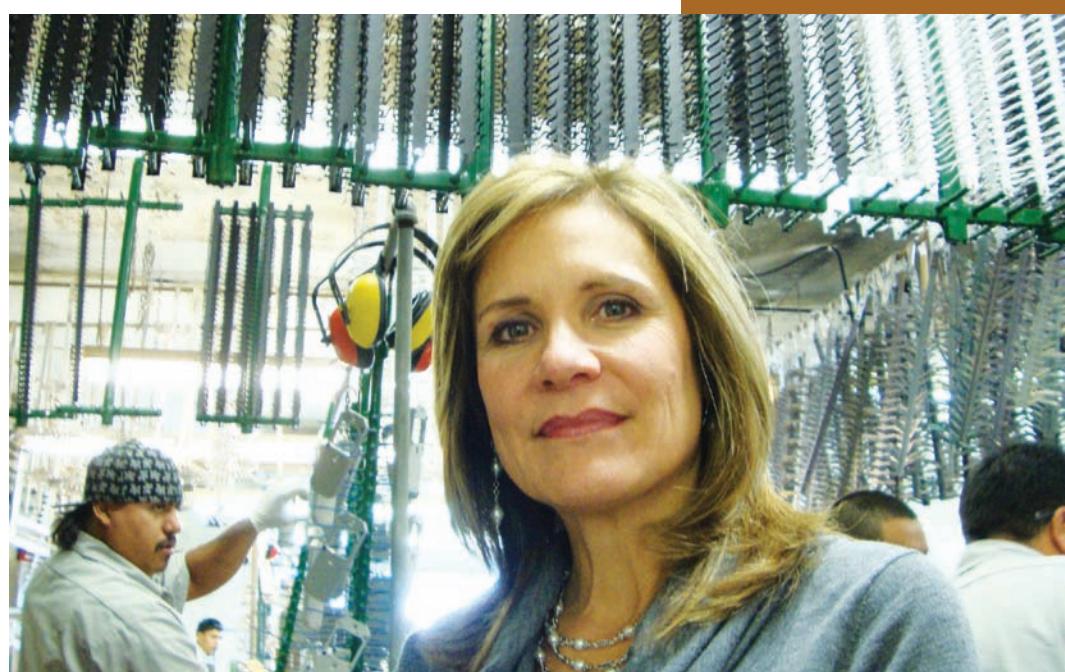
We aren't afraid to change or modify our strategies, and as a small family owned company, we have the flexibility to do it quickly.

—*Alan Turner,
Magnets USA.*

“ ”

What sets us apart is our rapid response to our customers.

—*Tamea Franco Woodward,
East West DyeCom, Inc.*



Tamea Franco Woodward



Linda Balentine

“ ”

Our company has really thrived and this is a testimony to the diversification we have.

—Linda Balentine,
Crowning Touch Senior
Moving Services

Woodward says she hired a salesman in 2008 and a marketing group to help in 2009. Her revenue doubled in 2010 and reached \$1 million in September.

A second company, Global Metal finishing, is to be launched this month. Half of her operation will be at the new location on Aerial Way Drive and she will be running two shifts. The new business will focus strictly on the manufacturing segment.

“We’re taking an old brand, a product line that we sold to metal artists and then a service that we offered to commercial industries,” says Woodward. “Our former brand could be confusing to the customer. The new brand more clearly defines the market we’re serving. What we do is in our name. We’ll always be two different businesses.”

Crowning Touch Senior Moving Services

Moving, Consignment, Auction House, Roanoke

Growth: Auction house up 100 percent; consignment up 30 percent since 2008.

Diversification has helped Crowning Touch Senior Moving Services keep busy. It has three divisions (auction house, consignment shop, senior moving) and “our diversification is seasonally balanced,” says owner Linda Balentine. “In the summer, moving is strong and consignment sales are slow. The auction house accelerates in the winter as does the consignment shop because of Christmas giving, tax refunds and people are thinking more about decorating and shopping.



Timothy Fitzgerald

"Our business model is recession resistant ... We seem to have the inherent qualities that resist the effects of even a severe recession."

All of the merchandise comes from the moving company line that serves senior citizens who are downsizing or moving to assisted living or elsewhere. "We used to move people out of houses that had sold," she says. "Now we're moving people out whose homes haven't sold. With the economy the way it is, instead of giving stuff away, they sell. With consignment, it's a 50/50 split."

Says Balentine, "We're in a growth stage and in a position to thrive. We want to franchise and are now looking for strategic partners and selling stocks."

Safety & Compliance Services Inc.

Regulatory Consulting, Roanoke

Growth: 15 percent per year since 2008.

Safety & Compliance Services Inc. (SCS), founded in 1990 by Timothy Fitzgerald, shares expertise of OSHA, EPA, DEQ and DOT regulations with clients to help simplify managing a number of complex issues. SCS performs in a variety of important consulting areas, helping simplify, explain and navigate governmental regulation. SCS assists with loss

“ ”

With 10,000 pages of environmental regulations and 20,000 plus OSHA regulations at all times, even the very best operations have difficulty maintaining compliance.

*—Timothy Fitzgerald,
Safety & Compliance
Services Inc.*





Waynette Anderson and Elliot Broyles

“ ”

We are an amazing team and people are always surprised to learn that there are just two people that work at Sponsor Hounds.

—Waynette Anderson,
Sponsor Hounds

prevention due to accidents and regulatory non-compliance and can develop a safety program tailored to a company's needs.

"With the downturned economy, that's normally the first place to cut and that's where we come in," says Fitzgerald. "Clients don't have to pay for learning curves and with us, they don't have just one employee. They have a team. Most people don't know we're here until they have a problem and need someone to help them."

Sponsor Hounds

Advertising, Marketing and Event Planning, Roanoke

Growth: 187 percent since 2008.

"I attribute our growth to our ability—through experience—to better examine what works and what doesn't work," says Owner/President Waynette Anderson. "We have established a great reputation for excellent client service." Vice President Elliot Broyles joined the company in 2007, a year after it started.

Anderson says that after every event, the duo evaluates the results and determines if it is an event that has the potential for revenue and attendance growth. "If we don't see that growth potential, we eliminate the event and create a new one. By growing the business model to include conference and convention planning, it's enabled us to expand our market and work with businesses across the country."

Anderson says, "We take events to the next level."

Luna Innovations

Sensing, Instrumentation and Nanotechnology, Roanoke

Growth: Down two percent through three quarters of 2010.

There was a good chance Luna wouldn't make it out of 2010. But a legal settlement and emerging from Chapter 11 bankruptcy because of the court battle has left it in a relatively healthy state for one nearly dead.





Dale Messick

COO Dale Messick says, "Our expenses were greatly skewed the past few years with our legal costs, but if we exclude those, our Adjusted Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA) has improved from approximately \$700,000 for the first nine months of 2008 to \$2.1 million for the first nine months of 2010." Add in legal costs and you have a wash.

Luna Innovations is involved in complex technology development for a number of clients, including the federal government and has been one of the region's more celebrated companies in recent years.

The bankruptcy obviously was problematic. Messick says, "Other than that potential claim from the verdict, Luna was not having any difficulty in serving its customers and meeting its financial obligations. Once we filed [the court, trustee's office] and even our significant creditors supported the key requests we made of the court to minimize the disruption to our customers and the continuing value of the company to our shareholders ..."

The bankruptcy slowed technology development, but had a quite different impact on the product and license revenues. Luna was allowed to maintain supplier relationships and it focused on customer service. Luna maintained a positive outlook and as it emerged from Chapter 11 in early 2010, the plaintiff in its litigation became one of Luna's largest customers, providing a new long-term relationship for the future of fiber optic sensing.

“ ”

With Chapter 11 now well behind us, we have recently started to see new awards picking up again, and so we are hopeful that we will start to see growth returning in this area in 2011.

—Dale Messick,
Luna Innovations



Gilda Garraton

“ ”

The multilevel marketing industry has grown over 90 percent in the last 10 years and in a bad economy is the fastest growing industry because people are looking for ways to earn extra income from home and part time.

—Dr. Gilda Garraton,
SendOutCards

“ ”

Our business model is collaborating with other local businesses

—Shawn Hash,
Tangent Outfitters

SendOutCards

Independent Distributor, Roanoke

Growth: 90 percent since 2009.

Dr. Gilda Garraton became a distributor with SendOutCards a year ago in order to have the opportunity to spend more time at home with her children as well as to stay in touch with patients, friends and family in Puerto Rico.

With cutting edge technology, the Web site SendOutCards.com allows you to go online, choose a card, type a message and click "Send." The company prints it, stuffs it, stamps it and mails it for you. You can even create your very own cards for less than a greeting card at the store costs.

"People need to feel appreciated to give you business," says Garraton. "The multilevel marketing industry has grown more than 90 percent in the last 10 years and in a bad economy, it's the fastest growing industry because people are looking for ways to earn extra income from home and part time."

Tangent Outfitters

Outfitter and Guide Service, Giles County

Growth: 7 percent in 2009, 10 percent in 2010

Shawn Hash and his brother Tyrell started Tangent Outfitters in the summer of 1992, the year they finished college. They bought two canoes and four mountain bikes. A few years later, they started doing tubing trips out of Radford in Bisset Park. Terrell left the business but it has continued to grow.

Tangent Outfitters with locations in Pembroke and Radford is

**Bonz Hart**

Dan Smith

a canoeing, kayaking, rafting, mountain biking and guided hunting/fishing business. It does customized New River trips and has a store and café.

Shawn says, "We are in an area where a lot of little businesses are growing. The scenery is beautiful and we and other small businesses, including a bed and breakfast and restaurants, provide good service and as businesses, we work together ... It's a huge business. I had 32 people on the payroll last year. We went in as a small business and added these jobs. We've started bringing in people that end up staying overnight. We don't have a tourism coordinator. What we have is a company that is pro business. We have a 97 percent client retention rate."

Many people are choosing to go somewhere closer for 3-4 days. "They have a great experience here. We offered what they liked rather than going to boundary waters. We've capitalized on the downturned economy. Visitors can go to the mountains, eat at a restaurant, take guided tours and rent a cabin, all for \$700. Going to the beach can costs \$4,000-\$5,000. Visitors feel refreshed after their vacation here."

Meridium

Software Products, Roanoke

Growth: 15 percent since 2008.

President Bonz Hart says, "Most asset intensive companies have been under cost pressure in the down economy, and

“

Roanoke was chosen as the location for Meridium's global headquarters back in 1993 because the vision for the organization included for its employees to be able to enjoy a certain quality of life unique to small cities like Roanoke, yet still have the infrastructure and resources required to grow a global company.

—Bonz Hart, Meridium



Cat White

Meridium software and work processes provides them a way to reduce cost without elevating their risk profile ... Even in difficult times, we continue to hire globally when we find talent that can add value to our products and services, and find other ways to cut costs and manage expenses."

Meridium was founded in 1993 by Hart with the vision of helping the world's largest companies keep their production equipment running safely and effectively. Regrettable incidents can be avoided when equipment information is constantly reviewed, analyzed and evaluated.

As Meridium expanded its international offices in Dubai, India and Brazil, it needed to add infrastructure to the Roanoke headquarters to provide the core services needed to support its global operations.

Meridium has moved into a renovated building in downtown Roanoke which will open fully in January.

RA Home Builders

Construction, Pembroke

Growth: 35 percent since 2008

Owner Cat White says: "2011 will be my company's best year from a sales and profit standpoint, even looking at pre real-estate bubble years. This was accomplished by maintaining standards on homes that are considered upgrades by other builders, a sometimes unique approach to customer service; grass roots marketing (I have become adept at designing and optimizing Web sites; Web site business represents over 60 percent of my sales); and lowering prices."

The core of the business is single family construction with a typical house 2,000 square feet, costing \$90-\$110 per square



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Trish White

foot. The majority of clients have been couples, married less than five years, moving into their first or second home, says White. "Over the past three years I have diversified taking on some remodeling jobs including building a seven-car garage."

A lot of work and planning has gone into finding ways to not only survive the economic and building slowdown, but to grow in it. White says, "Builders that are making it are those that made adjustments early and can see the big picture. I gain word of mouth advertising by going beyond what clients expect from a builder."

Clip & Dip

Pet Grooming, Roanoke

Recent Growth: 25 percent in three years.

Owner Trish White says the idea for her business originated when she was living in Tampa, Fla., where there were several mobile dog-grooming units. White liked the concept so well that when she returned to Roanoke in 1984, she decided to open her own business.

Her business grew so rapidly that she added two more units and groomers within the first one and one half years. The following year, a base grooming salon was added and then the kennels.

Clip & Dip is a full service grooming salon and boarding kennel. White says 90 percent of her business is repeat and "our consistency in service and longevity as a business give our clients confidence they can count on."

A change in the business model took place over a three-year period, increasing growth by 25 percent. ■

“ ”

There are certain things people will spend money on no matter what, and one of them is their dogs.

—Trish White, Clip & Dip



If you're new, start here >

It's often been said that the first 90 days for a new hire are the most important. Successfully interviewing and getting the position is just the starting point. Having a clear understanding of basic rules of business etiquette will help define the reputation of newly hired.

While under scrutiny in the beginning, it is important to pay attention to the organization's culture. Business etiquette is based upon rank rather than gender. Even when the organization's atmosphere may seem casual, it is best to err on the side of formality rather than familiarity when communicating and interacting with those in authority. Using the courtesy title of Mr., Ms. or Dr. shows respect and deference to those in higher positions. It is also considerate to ask colleagues and associates also how they prefer to be addressed in the first days on the job.

Becoming too friendly with co-workers is a mistake that the newly hired often make. There are many differing opinions about this topic but the consensus is to avoid forming strong personal relationships with workplace associates. Once a personal friendship is forged, the professional relationship is changed. If one of the two friendly workers is promoted to a position of authority, a conflict of interest may arise. Animosity also develops when other employees think that preferential treatment is being given to a friend.

While forging close personal relationships with co-workers should be avoided, there are a host of opportunities where socializing outside of regular hours occurs. Offsite meetings, tradeshows and business dinners all have their own set of guidelines. These events are settings in which alcohol is typically served. While the temptation may exist to drink to excess on the company or sponsor's dime, it is best to use discretion in these settings. Moderation is a key word to remember in these settings. A newly hired employee cannot afford to have his work suffer due to alcohol abuse (nor can a seasoned employee).

When stepping into a new position, following a few simple rules of basic business etiquette will help to put others at ease and provide a successful beginning in a career.

(Email questions relating to business protocol or customer service to donna.dilley@gmail.com.)

Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

Executive Summary:

A few guidelines for the newly-hired worker.

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Getting at the truth >

Dear Getting a Grip: One of our company's new hires is really stirring things up by questioning policies we've had in place for years. He asks about sick leave days counting as vacation days and about insurance deductions for single employees and married employees being the same—stuff we just don't want to bring up for fear we'll lose the few benefits we have. I question his motivations. Is he trying to do the right thing or is he just a troublemaker?



Dear Stirring: Some employees will stir up conflict so that the truth rises to the top toward a greater good. The means used by those employees may be assertive, aggressive, even sensational at times, but not cruel. The intent is to reveal the truth. Occasionally, in their passion for the truth, employees may overstep a boundary. Upon becoming aware of it, well-intentioned employees will make amends. Apologizing isn't a loss of face because the face was turned to a higher purpose in the first place.

Some employees will stir up conflict for the sense of power it gives them. The means used are many because the end is for personal power, not for the moral or ethical high ground. If an employee's means are called into question, she may change those means in the short-term, but will blame the person who questioned her behavior. The questioner will be accused of small-mindedness, of just not getting it, of over-sensitivity. Apologizing would be a loss of face, an acknowledgement of humility, a recognition of limited power. That employee can be predicted to seek the next pot to stir to attempt to satisfy the need for power.

Wondering if our co-workers will cause us concern—whether by actively generating too much conflict, or passively not generating enough—isn't the question to ask. The question is how we're going to handle it when they do. Co-workers who generate conflict in the name of justice can be exciting and inspiring. Co-workers who stir the pot for power can be dangerous because they will betray co-workers and the company alike if a sense of perceived power is the end sought.

Getting a Grip: If your goal is to master what you do and to get paid for what you do, spending time with pot stirrers takes time and doesn't advance your plans, so the less contact the better. If justice-seekers are in positions of leadership in your company, that could produce better conditions for all. If power-seekers are in positions of leadership, watch out. Their "ends justify the means" strategies could be the end of your career, either by a choice to let you go to better position their power, or by the consequences their choices stir up—or bring down upon—your company. ■

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

Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:

Dealing with employees who stir things up can be exhilarating ... or dangerous. So watch it.



Here's a fresh start for you >

With a new year ahead, our thoughts naturally turn to making a fresh start, both physically and mentally. We set goals to get in shape, lose extra weight, clean out clutter—or any number of other self-improvements. We can use this urge to start fresh to make improvements in our workplace image.

By trimming excess weight and getting in shape we can project a younger, fitter image. We look and feel more prepared for work and productivity, which in turn enhances the company's image, makes us a valuable employee, and increases our job security.

Cleaning out clutter from our wardrobe, as well as from our desk and work area, helps us pare down to the essentials we need to look more professional and perform better at work. Purging clutter allows us to think more clearly and accomplish more throughout the day. We can dress efficiently for work in the morning and be more prompt. We can set new goals and use our wardrobe as a tool to convey a new professional attitude.

Try these practical tips to purge a closet:

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

Begin by losing weight (good luck with that), then go to your closet and ...

- Replace wire hangers with more substantial wooden or plastic hangers to help your clothing retain its shape better. Garments will last longer and look better when worn. The closet will look more inviting, too.
- Your grandmother was right: spring-cleaning is a must. Take everything out of the closet each spring and fall season. Make sure all garments are spot-free and still fit. Look for worn spots and moth holes. Recycle garments that aren't in good shape.
- Objectively critique your appearance in your clothes to see if you have changed and need to go up or down a size—or if you should adjust the colors of your wardrobe to complement a change in hair color or skin tone. Toss out anything that doesn't make you look and feel great.
- Arrange the clothing you keep by categories (shirts, pants, jackets, etc.) and color. You will easily see what you have clean and ready to wear, making it a breeze to choose an outfit each day.

So embrace the natural inclination you may be feeling to start anew. Clean out that closet, re-examine your appearance, and type up those goals. 

Lemmings and the falling sky >

Executive Summary:
"Government guaranteed"
doesn't mean what you think it means with TIPS products.

By Andrew Hudick

Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities (TIPS) are often promoted by those in the financial media as a sure thing. Indeed, many financial advisors even suggest you buy these bonds as part of your asset allocation program. In recent months this seems to be the default

suggestion by financial advice columnists and magazines that offer investment suggestions for the do-it-yourselfer.

These bonds are the United States government's version of an inflation hedge and can be purchased at TreasuryDirect.gov. As stated on the Web site, "TIPS provide protection against inflation." The bonds pay a nominal interest rate twice a year with a recent auction showing interest rates of 0.50 percent on a two and/or a three year bond and 2.25 percent on a 7-year bond. In addition, the principal payment (bond value) is indexed to the rate of inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The value of the bond will rise or fall according to this Department of Labor calculated inflation factor.

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Inflation rates (as measured by this government Index) have been in the 2-3 percent range for the past 10 years. However, the index calculated a minus 0.4 percent return for 2009. This would be considered a deflationary result and your TIPS value would have declined in value during a portion of the 2009 calendar year ending the year with a value lower than when the year began. Recent months have shown a calculated 1 percent inflation rate for the 2010 second half of the year.

Does this seem to be a dichotomy to you? A government guarantee for your retirement investment using an Index calculated by the government. This is a guarantee to keep up with inflation, though the inflation Index is a manufactured result (changes to the CPI components are slated for this month). The items used to measure or calculate the CPI index have changed over the years.

The things you and I spend money on differ. Your personal inflation rate differs from my rate and they both differ from the CPI posted rate. In the past year, home prices have declined along with flat screen televisions while groceries and health insurance premiums increased. These items all "make up" the Consumer Price Index and the CPI has shown an increase every year for the

past 10 years except for 2009. Did you feel like items declined in price during 2009? Do you think buying a government bond tied to this government index is going to protect your purchasing power in the future?

The idea behind the TIPS is that you will invest in this bond and earn a small income payment while the value of the bond will rise with inflation. As the years pass, the bond value will rise and the income component will grow so that one day you will retire and the bond will provide a portion of your retirement income.

It is a sound theory. The application is the difficult part. As you approach retirement the items you will spend money on will change. Travel expenses and medical costs are a more likely budget item for you than a new home. I suggest that your personal inflation rate will differ greatly from the CPI.

The value in the TIPS may be the government guarantee ("at least I will get my money back") but the idea that this investment instrument will somehow assist you in covering the costs of inflation during retirement seems to be a stretch. If your purchasing power is to be eroded due to inflation, then this investment asset is not likely to help you replace the lost value. ■

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Susan Proctor of BRLS: "You're either eligible or you're not eligible."

Dan Smith

Free legal help: There's a difference >

Executive Summary:

Blue Ridge Legal Services and Legal Aid, the agencies offering representation for the poor, are not the same thing.

By Gene Marrano

Blue Ridge Legal Services (BRLS) and its close kin, the Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley, may share the same downtown office building and even some administrative tasks, but there are subtle differences in the way each agency helps low-income clients with legal issues.

Attorneys in the Roanoke Valley that work with BRLS offer "pro bono" hours to the agency, where they will consult with clients on legal issues at no charge and may even represent them in court. The agency also operates a phone bank once a week, when lawyers come to the BRLS offices on

Campbell Avenue to field legal questions from callers.

Qualifying for free legal aid is "based on your household size, income and resources," says Susan Proctor, who joined the Legal Aid Society in 1998 after she had been in private practice for 14 years. There's no sliding scale based on income: "you're either eligible or you're not eligible," notes Proctor.

The University of Richmond law school graduate and one-time clerk for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in the Western District of Virginia became managing director of Roanoke BRLS in 2002. The office opened in 2000; Blue Ridge Legal Services has also been in the Shenandoah Valley (Winchester, Harrisonburg, Lexington) for many years. Sometimes, "people really just need some basic direction and advice, they don't actually need an attorney to represent them," says Proctor.

Blue Ridge Legal Services (see www.brls.org) performs all of the intake functions for its clients and for the Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley (LASRV), before referring them to its own cadre of pro bono attorneys

or sending them over to the Legal Aid staff.

What's the difference between the two agencies? "Basically it's funding," says Proctor; because BRLS receives the lion's share of its financial support from federal agencies, it had been prevented until very recently from filing for attorney fees in court cases where it successfully defends a client. Proctor admits that some attorneys are confused by the split between the two agencies, since many go back to the days before BRLS opened an office in Roanoke.

There are still some restrictions that prevent BRLS from doing things like filing class action suits and lobbying politicians for law changes. LASRV has always been able to ask the court for attorney's fees, which are based on state and federal statutes.

Proctor concentrates on bankruptcy, adoption and no-fault divorce work as the only staff attorney for BRLS. She refers many other low-income clients to the Legal Aid Society.

Ross Hart is one of the 60 or so attorneys that will take on clients from BRLS on a pro bono basis. He has a natural soft spot for aiding low-income clients: his father James T. Hart helped found the Roanoke Legal Aid Society office.

"Generally [the cases] I get I wind up in court with," says Hart, a member of the board for LASRV. He focuses on estate and adult guardianship issues.

Says Proctor, "We try to make this a seamless collaboration." □

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Kara Bui (left) of LewisGale with client Christina Greenway

Genetics, medicine and the law >

Executive Summary:

Getting the most out of genetics testing without the threat of privacy invasion.

By Gene Marrano

Genetics testing is not only on the front edge of 21st Century medicine, it is giving lawyers something to think about, as well. The curative and preventive potential is almost unlimited and—as the lawyers will tell you—so is the potential threat to individual privacy.

Kara Bui of LewisGale Medical Center in Salem is one of the new professionals in genetics whose focus is on testing and counseling of those from high-risk backgrounds where

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cancer has been an issue. She studied genetics at the University of Michigan and earned a master's in genetics counseling at the University of South Carolina. After a stint at Carilion she is now head of the Department of Clinical Genetics at LewisGale.

Bui (Boo-ee, the name reflects her Vietnamese roots) administers a simple "spit test" in her office—clients leave saliva samples behind in a vial after swishing mouthwash in their mouths. That sample is then analyzed for signs of cancers that may be hereditary.

Bui also counsels women on prenatal genetics, dealing with issues like sickle cell anemia and Down Syndrome. Her department's services are offered at each of the four LewisGale hospitals in the region (Salem, Alleghany Regional, Montgomery

Regional and Pulaski Community.)

She makes the rounds at each facility, educating physicians and potential clients on the benefits of genetics testing. "It's pretty rare to need genetic counseling services, so most people when they meet with me, it's their very first experience with it," says Bui. "They don't really know what to expect."

That uncertainty extends to many physicians who have had little or no contact with the field in the past. Detailed family medical history is vital, says Bui. Medical documents can help unlock important secrets.

Insurance companies cover genetic testing, with costs running about \$1,200 for each gene tested. Tests for a predisposition to breast, ovarian, melanoma, colon,

A close-up photograph of an elephant's face, focusing on its large, wrinkled trunk and the side of its head. The skin texture is highly detailed and appears dry.

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pancreatic and uterine cancers are among the most common.

Bui says she considers costs when ordering tests: "If I think it's hereditary I choose which genes make the most sense [to test]. With current technology we don't have a cheap, efficient way ... where from one sample we can test all genes associated with hereditary cancers."

For those worried that genetic test results showing a possible predisposition to cancer and other diseases can be used against them in workplace, there have been regulations enacted to offer protection. The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) became law in 2008; it strictly limits the disclosure of genetic information.

Todd A. Leeson, an attorney with Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke who specializes in workplace issues, says, "It's

something that employers will need to pay attention to," although "it's not something we've seen a lot of."

An employer who learns about a candidate's family medical history and decides not to hire that person—perhaps cancer has been an issue—is "what [the law] is designed to prohibit," says Leeson. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission recently issued guidelines on enforcement of the law, which "prohibits the use of genetic information in making decisions related to any terms, conditions, or privileges of employment," per GINA's Title II provisions.

Take heart, says Bui: "It is very, very rare to be a carrier for hereditary cancer." For those with a family history of cancer, however, genetic testing provides a jump start on preventive measures. Notes Bui: "Early detection can save your life and give you better treatment options." ■

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



Mark Hansen demonstrates the wind turbine to a class at Dabney Lancaster Community College.

Preparing workers for wind >

Executive Summary:

Wind energy as a national force is in its infancy, but the rush to get workers prepared is underway. Dabney Lancaster Community College is far out front on this one.

By Tim Watson

The Department of Labor and Dabney S. Lancaster Community College near Clifton Forge are combining resources to develop a technically advanced Virginia workforce capable of maintaining sustainable wind energy operations.

The Commonwealth allocated funds recently for the college to provide a wind turbine service technology certification course. The course aims to prepare Virginians for careers specializing in the advanced technological applications of manufacturing and wind energy technologies through a combination of hands-on lab work and lectures.

Students such as Michael Lotts of Buena Vista have responded well to the focus on "green collar" jobs. "I like travelling and there aren't any jobs around here," he says. "I know if I pass all my classes I can find work."

Lead instructor Chuck Bartocci agrees that labor conditions are a significant draw to the course. "If you're willing to move, the money I'm hearing about is insane," he says. "For a young man, if you're waiving \$60,000 to \$100,000 in front of his nose and you're seeing [him] at \$10 an hour jobs." The choice is easy.

The choice could be even easier were Virginia to have wind energy infrastructure in place. Although adjunct professor and Synchrony senior design engineer Mark Hanson reports the course is the only one of its kind in the mid-Atlantic, he only knows of one wind farm in the Commonwealth. This is the case as energy firms look to the large east coast consumer base to grow their renewable energy operations. There are plans for wind farms in Highland and Roanoke Counties, both of which face opposition. The Roanoke County farm has had a number of endorsements



Chuck Bartocci in the manufacturing lab.

Tim Watson

from governments and environmental and business groups.

Several notable obstacles have helped prevent wide-scale wind power generation from taking root. First, the professors expect land wind farming to only be reasonably viable on mountaintops west of Interstate 81 towards Appalachia. The cost and mechanics of installing a cable network to distribute power from rural parts of the state through a central nexus center are taxing.

Bartocci says a small group of citizens wants "to be disconnected from the grid" and focus on small-scale energy production in rural areas. Another contingent views wind mills as unsightly and is concerned

about the noise they produce.

The lack of movement on creating the system is dampening potential economic activity in Virginia. Installation of the line would necessitate service and construction hiring while permanent infrastructure would require stable service providers to move to the area. Bartocci says this would create hundreds of jobs in several sparsely populated regions of the state. Students would further have local work to compete with jobs in other states, keeping more economic benefits of the program in Virginia.

An April Virginia Coastal Energy Research Consortium report estimates that a proposed

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offshore wind mill system in Hampton Roads could support between 9,700 and 11,600 jobs over 20 years if firms manufactured the turbines and submarine power cables in Virginia.

Boding well for Virginia is the fact that energy companies are already here. The Virginia Economic Development Partnership says the energy industry employs more than 30,000 workers. Areva and Northrop Grumman, large firms with international reach, have reinforced operations in Virginia within the past two years. In 2009, Areva announced it is interested in pursuing wind power generation in Virginia.

The governor's office supports such systems as well. Gov. Tim Kaine's 2007 Virginia Energy Plan calls for the Commonwealth to reduce

the rate of energy growth by 40 percent by 2017 and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2025.

Bartocci believes the state government should motivate the private sector to bring a wind turbine system on line by using construction tax incentives. "My research indicates that a large government role is counterproductive," he says.

Some hope that the private sector will be spurred on when it has more available labor as graduates capable of operating and maintaining both onshore and offshore turbine systems multiply in the coming years. In only its first year, high demand for the course prompted the college to double class offerings and close to 25 students are enrolled. □



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Janeson Keeley

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PC maintenance for small businesses >

Executive Summary:

Keeping your business's computer system free of bugs is a matter of paying attention and taking a few defensive steps.

By Janeson Keeley

If your business is dependent on your computer functioning well, frequent system crashes, a virus infection, or a hardware crash can cost you significant time and money.

Here are some tips for keeping your computer functioning smoothly.

Keep your system updated. Celie Holmes, Roanoke area director for Fast-teks On-Site Computer Services, says, "First and foremost, make sure that your operating system is up to date." Set your computer to download and install updates automatically.

Use protective software. Both Holmes and Alecia Nash, owner and president of Renaissance Computers, report that virus infection is the most common cause of computer problems. They recommend AVG anti-virus software (www.avg.com). Nash also suggests using Advanced System Care (www.iobit.com) to clean up your system, and Malware Bytes (www.malwarebytes.org) to protect your computer from malicious software. All are available as free downloads, but Nash cautions, "Most free anti-virus software is for home and non-profit use only. If you're a business, you need to purchase the software." Keep this software updated, as well.

Keep hardware clean. Holmes suggests keeping a can of compressed air handy. "Use it to blow across openings," she advises. "Do not use a vacuum cleaner. It may cause a static shock, which can damage your computer."

Protect your data. Nash recommends that businesses have both on-site and off-site back-up systems and procedures in place so that important data can be restored in the event of a system crash.

Follow reasonable security policies.

- "Don't let your children use your business computer. They will cause

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problems," warns Nash.

- Don't use your business e-mail address for personal correspondence. Web-based e-mail sites such as GMail (www.google.com/mail) offer a layer of protection between your computer and potential e-mail viruses.
- Be aware of any data protection and confidentiality laws that apply to your industry, and follow them strictly.

Know when to call a professional. Following the guidelines above will help reduce the chance of developing computer problems, but there are two big warning signs you should heed in order to prevent a system crash:

- Your computer takes longer to start up than it used to. This can indicate a virus infection.

• Your computer's fan is running a lot. Holmes notes, "Dirt and dust can degrade a computer to the point that it overheats severely, causing burnout of expensive parts."

It is also a good idea to call in a professional when you get a new computer or wireless router. "Find someone who will take the time to understand your business and customize preventive methodology. There is no cookie cutter formula," explains Nash.

If you're a business owner who relies on your computer on a daily basis, you want to minimize your downtime and maximize your productivity. Use a combination of do-it-yourself practices and professional services to keep your information secure and your computer running optimally. 

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Roll-up garage door.

all photos: David Perry



First floor (old showroom) with mezzanine above.

Work Spaces

Preserving history with modern use >

Executive Summary:

A little old, a little new and Voila! Interactive Achievement in Roanoke has a home.

By David Perry

It's fitting that Interactive Achievement's newly renovated downtown Roanoke office is a history lesson. This is a company that helps Virginia's students improve their standardized testing scores.

Located across the street from the Jefferson Center on Campbell Avenue, the two-story brick building is the former home of Whaley's Motorcycle Shop, Butterfield Cycle (a Harley-Davidson dealership) and Delmar Photography. Interactive Achievement bought the property, built in 1936, in May of 2009 from Robert Zimmerman. He was using it for storage for a custom kitchen business.

It was a big step up for the company, which

was formerly located in a strip mall on Peter's Creek Road. The building sits in the heart of the newly minted Downtown West district, a designation approved by the Roanoke City Council in October. Taking advantage of state, local and federal assistance and guidance from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), Interactive Achievement renovated the space to meet the needs of a high-tech startup, while at the same time preserving the historic character of the building.

Upon entering the building, guests are met by a black roll-up garage door left in place to preserve the character of the former motorcycle shops. Visitors look through a glass wall into a long conference room, a design feature that DHR wanted in order to preserve the illusion of a working garage bay.

"We actually had a very contemporary fireplace that was going into our conference room there, but DHR didn't want that," says Mary Dykstra Hagmaier, director of corporate relations for the company and a co-founder.

The entry foyer leads into what was once the cycle showroom. The airy space features a second-floor mezzanine with a wood railing that provides a 360-degree view of the front office. Hagmaier says workers uncovered the mezzanine and the second-story windows during the renovation. They had been blocked in to accommodate the former photography business.



Conference room-garage bay.

A component of Interactive Achievement's renovation plan was to pair modern uses of the workspace with historic uses.

Hagmaier says she assumes the motorcycle sales staff was downstairs, with managers on the mezzanine level and mechanics in the back, "so part of our concept was to replicate it for today. Downstairs is the front end team, upstairs is support and administration, and the programmers are in back."

The rear of the building maintains the rustic look of a motorcycle garage, with exposed ductwork, barred windows and block walls painted gray. One rear office features a hardwood floor made from crates that once held motorcycles. The floorboards are stamped, "FROM HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR CO, MILWAUKEE, WIS." "It was a cool way to use it and have a nod back to the way it was," Hagmaier says.

Other historic components were brought in from other nearby buildings. Translucent glass blocks that carve a kitchen area out of the showroom floor came from the renovated Cotton Mill nearby.

Future plans for the building include more windows across the back and a spiral staircase. "I'm convinced you're going to see more and more of [renovation] down on this end" of Roanoke, she says. "There are so many cool buildings, and when people get wind of the tax credits and what you can do, it's a no-brainer." □



Programmer's space - mechanic's area.



Blocks from the cotton mill.



Max and Whitney Schuetz at World Market.

all photos: Rachael Garrity

Where on earth—better yet, where in the region—is it possible to find fresh, local eggs for dinner and then wander a couple of aisles over to pick up chicken feet ready for preparation?

Try the “Oasis World Market” on South Main Street in Blacksburg. Just beyond a tantalizing display of Asian vegetables grown by local research forester Bob Freyman is a cold case full of all kinds of dumplings—Chinese, Russian, you name it, the magnet for a Floyd customer who buys as many as

The world on a plate in Blacksburg >

Executive Summary:
The Oasis World Market is the real deal. Your palate will verify that.

By Rachael Garrity

20 packages each time he shops. Beyond that is a shelf featuring a variety of Halal foods, a freezer case full of Red Fork All Natural Frozen pizzas, and a small—but growing—dairy case with milk products from the Jersey cows on Jim Huffard’s farm in Rural Retreat.

If the word menagerie were ever applied to food instead of animals, this would be the place. Except that it is as organized as it is

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Jimmie Blanchard, owner

varied, and refreshingly devoid of the aroma so often found in small markets without the drainage and storage infrastructure of supermarkets.

Everything, in fact, is the product of careful design and assiduous planning. When they took over the store in 2009, Max and Whitney Schuetz dug a massive trench to handle the appropriate irrigation of fresh produce. The young couple brings to the venture rich, complementary skills and experience.

Max, who grew up in Blacksburg, has an engineering degree, but began his professional career in investment banking. He was working in San Francisco when he met Whitney, the member of a large Chinese American family, who has a strong retail background and a degree in hospitality management. The couple decided to try their hand in the restaurant business, specifically a 250-seat site offering fine dining in the Chinese tradition. When they lost their lease, and Max decided to pursue his MBA degree, Virginia Tech beckoned.

The parents of two young sons, Whitney and Max admit that the demands on their time are significant, but remain steadfastly unwilling to sacrifice any part of their plan to serve not only customers who prefer international cuisine of one variety or another, but those who want high quality, fresh local fare.

Whitney deals with local provisioners,



World Market chocolate.



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Jim Huffard checks the milk from his Jersey cows.

gathering produce from farmer Ron Holdren, the Amish farmers in Giles County and Ayers Orchard in Fancy Gap. She also coordinates the purchase of packaged food—Chinese, Mediterranean, Indian, Cuban, Japanese, European, British. The couple sends a 26,000-pound refrigerator truck to Washington and Baltimore each week to scour fresh markets there for ethnic foods.

In addition to concentrating on marketing

and the financial operation, Max is in charge of—and he grins when he says it—“beer and chocolate.” The selection of beer gets a workout at a tasting each Saturday. Then there is a shelf—shelf, mind you—of different choices of sake. “Truthfully, most people don’t really know sake,” Max insists. “What you are served in some restaurants is more like truck fuel.”

On the chocolate front, exotic is the order of the day. One brand, for example, is Vosges, sold in proprietary boutiques in New York, Chicago and Las Vegas, and offering such unusual flavors as black salt and bacon.

At a re-opening celebration in late September, the store bustled with customers from a wide variety of cultures and enthusiastic local vendors, including caterer and restaurateur Mikie Mossler, dishing out barbecue and exuberance. One father bounced an infant on his arm, proclaiming: “Yes, it’s always fun and busy, isn’t it? Not quite like Fresh Friday, today, but close.”

Fresh Virginia seafood, international produce, tofu, kimchi and Korean side dishes, Halal an Asian specialty meat every Friday, beer tastings on Saturday, first-name customer relationships and a succinct mission—“Eat global, eat local, eat well”—all spring from the Schuetz’s ability to engage the community, customer and vendor alike, in a paradigm of American entrepreneurship. □

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Bob Wray: "That I don't have to draw from my personal savings to keep the business going helps keep it fun."

Laura Purcell

Up a tree in retirement >

Executive Summary:

Bob Wray of Blue Ridge Tree Climbing climbs trees for fun and (a very little) profit and he's living his retirement the way he wants.

By Laura Purcell

Bob Wray didn't intend to start a business when he retired as a roof inspector in 2002. But when this outdoors enthusiast—an Eagle Scout who also enjoys scuba diving, kayaking, target shooting and rock climbing—began climbing trees, he was driven to share his newfound passion with others. "When I'm teaching, I'm in my element," says Wray.

This desire led Wray to found Blue Ridge Tree Climbing in 2005. He says that he was never

comfortable on the edge of roofs, but climbing trees allows him to tap into childhood and commune with nature in a way he hadn't experienced with other sports. He has developed his own way of climbing, that others refer to as Wray's Way, as well as what he calls a hand-to-hand method of repelling. "People recognize my students when they see them," he says.

Although the 64-year-old and youthful looking Wray claims he's not a good businessman, BRTC has been in the black every year except the first, when he needed to invest in equipment and had other start-up costs. "I don't have lofty goals," says Wray. "My insurance costs are outrageous, and most of the time I have enough at the end of the year to pay the next year's insurance. That I don't have to draw from my personal savings to keep the business going helps keep it fun."

Keeping it fun is Wray's main goal. He will only teach two students at a time, because it



anything else. You're working for your family."

BRTC is a one-man show. Wray has an accountant and someone to print up business cards and souvenir bandannas, but everything else falls to him. While bringing on employees might help expand business, it would also create other

makes instruction less stressful, and allows a quicker learning curve for students. "[Teaching] two people is not physically or mentally demanding for me. And they're getting their money's worth," says Wray.

Wray teaches students on his property, just off the Blue Ridge Parkway in Meadows of Dan. He doesn't mind that he's discovered his passion later in life. Pursuing this kind of business earlier would have been much less enjoyable. "Younger people have demands I don't have," says Wray. "I don't have a mortgage and car payments to bog me down. As a 30-year-old, you don't think about your job being a whole lot of fun. You're dedicated more to the job than

complications. "If I don't work for a month, it doesn't bother me. It isn't my goal to teach every weekend. If I have an employee, it will bother him. I'm training a helper, but she has a full-time job, too," says Wray.

Wray encourages other retirees to pursue business after retirement, but with a caveat: "Find something that you really, really love to do, that's fun whether you're making money or not. It is so great depositing a check for something you had fun doing. For me, that's the greatest thing ever. If you do it from a money standpoint, there's just not the fun there. My goals are small. I'd rather have more fun." 

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JCHS President Nathaniel Bishop.

Susan Ayers

Finally making a statement at Jefferson College >

Executive Summary:

The small, quiet school with a nearly 100-year history has moved into the 21st Century with a clang.

By Susan Ayers

The history of Jefferson College of Health Sciences (JCHS) in Roanoke goes back almost a century to 1914 when Dr. Hugh Trout Sr. created the Jefferson Hospital School of Nursing to avoid a shortage of adequately trained nurses in the area. Since that time, it has evolved to Community Hospital of the Roanoke Valley School of Nursing, to the College of Health Sciences and finally into JCHS. And the evolution didn't stop there.

Until 1995, JCHS offered associate degrees and certificate programs. That year, the college began offering baccalaureate degrees and 10 years later, master's degrees were offered.

In recent years, the college's curriculum has expanded considerably. A wide variety of distance courses and evening/weekend study opportunities have made the curriculum more accessible. The cost for taking a distance learning class and traditional classroom is the same.

There has been a significant growth in student population with total enrollment for fall 2010 at 1,032, double its enrollment from 10 years ago.

Today JCHS offers 14 academic programs including three master's, six bachelor's programs, four associate's programs and one certificate. Three graduate programs and four bachelor's programs have been added since 2005.



Students in the new computer lab.

Susan Ayers

In fall 2010, JCHS enrolled its 75th Licensed Practical Nursing class. Seventy-five percent of graduates continue their educations. At JCHS, nurses can move from LPN to a master's in nursing. Two LPN grads are working on their doctorate degrees.

Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital consolidated its services under one roof at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital in 2007. The consolidation left many spaces at Community empty and JCHS was given space to ease congestion in the Reid Center.

Among the changes: the bookstore moved

in; the board room became a physician's assistant classroom; the JCHS bookstore moved in and the former board room became a physician assistant classroom. The respiratory therapy and the physical therapist labs moved in. A new fitness center was opened on the fourth floor and additional moves followed as renovations were completed.

Amenities for resident students have increased as JCHS began expanding its campus to include portions of the Community building. Community still operates a physical therapy in-patient wing and an acute care center at

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the former full service hospital location, providing students hands-on learning.

The new facility is contemporary in design with many of the walls painted bright, warm colors. In November, the LPN program relocated from the Reid Building to 933 South Jefferson Street.

With the opening of the new Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine in Fall 2010 came the opportunity for students in other healthcare professions to work with the medical students. This curriculum known as inter-professionalism teaches teamwork, roles of the health professions, public health and public safety.

"The patient experience is to be enhanced with students learning how to interact with other healthcare professionals at mid-level and doctor level," says JCHS

President Nathaniel Bishop.

JCHS, Carilion Clinic and Radford University announced in September collaboration to bring a doctorate in physical therapy (DPT) program to Community. The DPT program is expected to begin training the first cohort of students in June 2011. The three-year program will share resources with JCHS, including library services, computer labs, classrooms, student lounges and other commonly used areas.

"Our collaboration with Radford University is another step as Roanoke transforms into the future where healthcare and education are increasingly becoming an economic engine," says Bishop.

"There are a lot of people who don't realize that we're here. We're a hidden gem," says JCHS Coordinator Communications Coordinator Mark Lambert. □

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Jeanne Bollendorf (left) and Linda Steele of the Historical Society.

Dan Smith

Preserving your business's history >

Executive Summary:

At the Historical Society in Roanoke, there is an effort underway to collect the history of the region's business community—one business at a time.

By Dan Smith

The history of business in this region—whether individual businesses or massive business trends—gives us about as good a picture of who we are and why we're that way as anything else anybody could study in depth. That history could include the closing of American Viscose, the merger of the railroad and eventually

moving Norfolk Southern's headquarters to Norfolk, the constantly-changing bank landscape, the opening of GE in Salem or of the Corporate Research Center in Blacksburg, or simply the preservation of four generations of one family's business history. It's all important to the Historical Society of Western Virginia, which has a new initiative to preserve as much of that history as possible.

Executive Director Jeanne Bollendorf and Registrar Linda Steele head the initiative and Bollendorf says, "We focus our archives on regional businesses that have been in business for 30 years or more and our Virtual Museum is where we share that information with the public. We have been working with several area businesses and former businesses ... preserving their company archives at the Historical Society and are developing virtual exhibitions that highlight the history of these businesses and their achievement."

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"Along with this, we have started a fellowship program with local colleges to help process these archives."

Most recently, the Society has worked with Hotel Roanoke, Boxley Quarries, American Viscose, Frank L. Moose Jewelers, Roanoke City Mills "and some others," says Bollendorf. The family-owned businesses are of special interest because "we have found that there are many businesses that have closed or are closing and the younger family members are not so interested in running the company or in the history of the company, yet these company archives have important information that can be shared with the public and with researchers."

The museum officials encourage businesses with historical significance (and don't underestimate the significance of your business, they advise) to talk with them about how to organize, catalogue and preserve that history. Steele is available to advise on the best ways to put together those histories or displays and can help pare them down. Even the businesses with a great deal of information that could never be a display because of sheer size, can create a virtual, on-line display that actually has a much larger potential audience (the world) than would be a displayed in the 6,000-square-foot physical museum.

In some cases, the museum can hire a student (with a stipend of up to \$2,500) to help create an archive. On occasion, businesses have funded the preservation and archive activities for their own businesses, then given money

to the museum in general, says Bollendorf.

The museum is involved right now in a survey of locally-produced products, artifacts, furniture "and homemade items," says Steele. It is also interested in local art "especially if it portrays local history."

As with all non-profits, volunteers are needed, but more than that "we need to get the word out that this is available," says Bollendorf. "We spend almost all of the money we bring in on our mission (building a museum) and not much on marketing, I'm afraid."

So what do they want? "Depends on what you have," says Steele, smiling. "We're not so much interested in corporate minutes books, but rather things that tell a story; photos, human interest items and written materials. We especially want personal stories. We have collections of beautiful letterhead from businesses, letters, advertising—we love old ads. The original art, especially, is a favorite."

And what the Society offers is that "we are an objective third party. We can tell you what to keep and what to put away." When there is a lot to deal with, that's as important as anything. □

If you have an interest in getting help with your company's history, visit www.history-museum.org or call the museum, which is at Center in the Square in Roanoke.

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A niche created by a problem ignored >

My View

By Dan Smith
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

It has become increasingly obvious to me that much of the restaurant industry is either oblivious to or has simply ignored that simple and monumentally important fact that the largest generation in the history of the world—the Baby Boom—is turning 65 years old and has all the challenges that go with aging.

I'm on the front edge of that boom and I'm about as good an example as I know of a guy who has a lot of trouble finding something to eat in a restaurant. Diabetes limits my choices and puts foods with white flour and sugar off the table, so to speak. A diabetic's diet, my physician once said, "is just a good, common-sense diet that everybody should eat," but try to find those foods at some of the best restaurants in town if you're in my pants on that day.

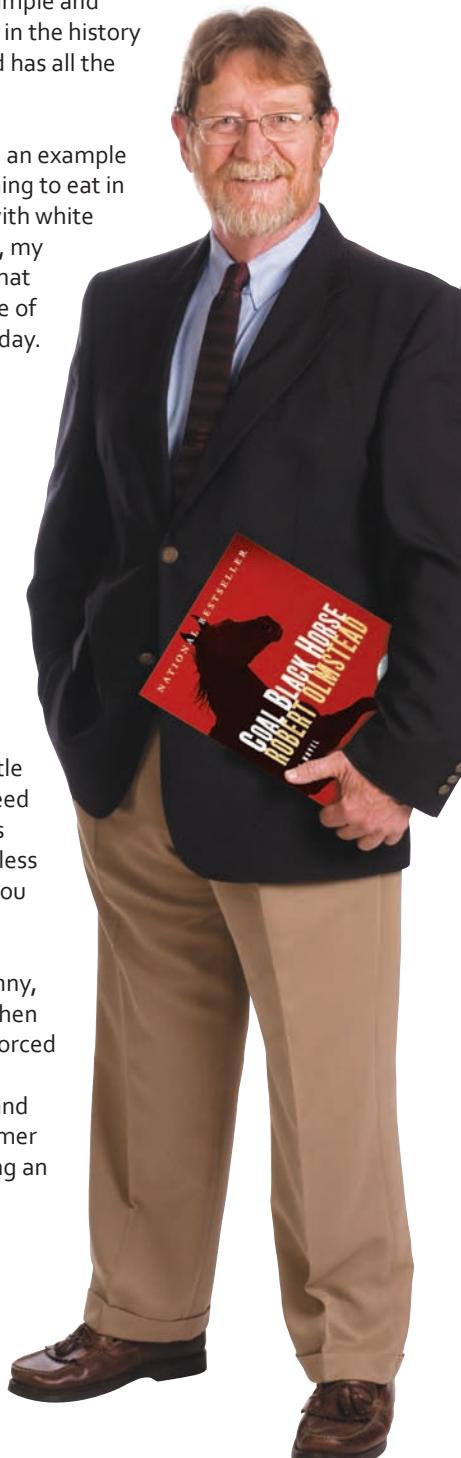
You'll find an occasional national chain like Olive Garden that features whole grain pasta (bless your heart, OG) and there are specialty local restaurants like The Isaacs that buck the trend, but there aren't many. Now comes Comfort Cuisine, a caterer in a non-descript strip mall-style building in Garden City—about as far removed from Restaurant Row as it can get—that is turning the healthy foods card over and offering up healthy, tasty foods delivered to your door for prices that are pretty dang reasonable.

You can order (by 10 a.m. for same-day service) a variety of chicken, pork and lasagna dishes and desserts for as little as \$9.99 each or \$11.99 with dessert. Family meals that feed four are \$24.99. A lasagna deal that feeds six to nine costs \$34.99. Delivery in much of Roanoke is free and for areas less convenient to the shop, there are drop-off points where you can pick up your meals.

Comfort Cuisine was the idea of 38-year-old Jonathan Kenny, a guy whose life interfered with his restaurant business when the life got complicated and his most valuable worker divorced him. He left the restaurant business and started Comfort Cuisine, but found it cumbersome to operate by himself and hired Arlene Fields, a 53-year, with a background in customer service, school bus supervision and who "dreamed of being an entrepreneur since I was a kid." Her father ran his own business and she knew the basics. Kenny hired her and they have charged ahead ever since.

"The business was born of my own necessity," says Kenny. "I was working 60 hours a week in the restaurant business and I wanted my life back." At the end of many long

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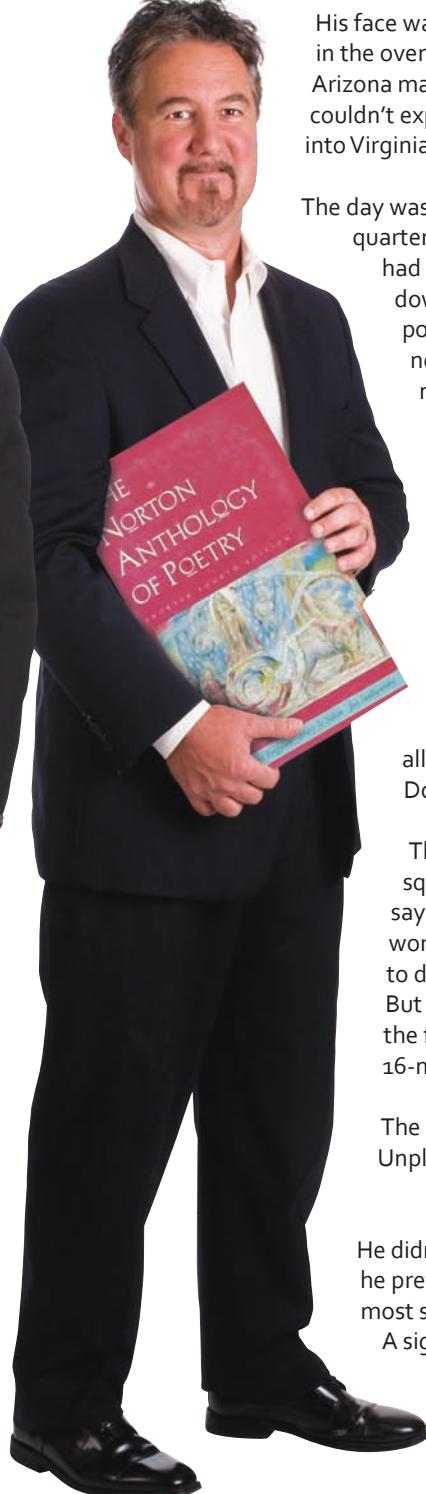


Hey, whattaya think...>

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

BLOG: [ontapfrompub.blogspot.com]



His face was swollen, puffy like a Betty Crocker instant rising cake in the oven, expanding artificially at the point just before cracking. Arizona may be arid, but it has its blooming season, too. Yet he couldn't explain the ferocity of an allergy attack every time he flew into Virginia. It's so *green* here, he would say.

The day was ordinary. One of his four customary and obligatory quarterly trips to Virginia to meet with marketing. The company had been acquired by a giant. Good news, really, though deep down everyone at the previously smaller company knew his power had been summarily diminished, even with the handsome new salaries and more prestigious projects. Along with the new and improved company—came uncertainty.

Something about the uncertainty had been scuttling about, dragging along the bottomside of my mind. I had written nothing down, planned nothing specific, considered only the very uncertainty in the atmosphere. And in the very midst of meeting, I randomly blurted out an outlandish notion. It erupted out of my gut, almost serendipitously. A statement even my own ears weren't prepared to hear. The timing was all off.

"Hey, whattaya think about me splitting off and managing all of the marketing and communications as a contractor? Do you think corporate would even listen to such an idea?"

The room fell silent. The swollen Arizonian, after a long pause, squeaked out an unexpected but surprisingly lucid response, saying that I would have to prove how such an approach would work. And thus, a great business deal was launched. Yes, I had to draft and plan and propose and persuade and convince. But within a few weeks I had corporate's attention. And by the following quarter, I had secured the entire budget and a 16-month contract with multi-year renewal options.

The catalyst for the big contract—was an idea blurted out. Unplanned.

* * *

He didn't turn around at first. Sitting at his desk, facing the window, he preferred to leave his back facing you, signifying that only the most significant matters warranted a swivel from his chair.

A sign on his door read "NO." The ballcap of the day (he switched them out the way other people change underwear), slung down low this afternoon, its bill—cupped and creased as if only the high noon sun

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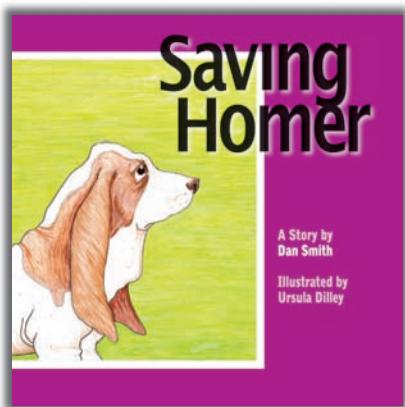
Smith / My View

from Page 48

days, he plopped down in a chair and wondered "what is there to eat." There wasn't much that fit his health and nutrition-conscious lifestyle. "What a great business idea, I thought," he says. "Small business is most often about doing what you love and this is what I love."

He had taken note that "people don't cook at home on a daily basis and if they do, they don't have time for much else. You have to shop, cook, clean and do something with leftovers." So he created a short, simple menu that "is engineered for you to reheat" and can be picked up at one of two Nature's Outlets, Wine Gourmet or Mr. Bill's Wine Gourmet or he can deliver it to certain spots in town. "We're serving the individual and the community here," he says. "We're building a regular customer base," which is intended to stabilize the business and eventually make the menu more extensive. He's looking for a place to have a physical presence downtown.

And all because most restaurants don't have any idea that there is a Baby Boom that no longer eats Whoppers and Big Macs. 



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Field / On Tap

from Page 49

needed to be blocked—bobbed only slightly as he continued to type, muttering his trademark greeting, "wuzzup?"

"Hey, whattaya think about me starting my own publication? This sudden encroachment by management is impossible, and they are going to destroy our product. I'm resigning—and though I can do something else, I just don't feel like giving up on all this progress. The product is finally profitable, and after this sacrifice to achieve the impossible on our own, they're going to ruin it all."

The tapping of the keys stopped. In less than a minute, the 20-year veteran editor of the publication declared that he too, would resign and offered to be a partner in the new venture. A rather casual conversation. Before I had shown him the first concept or strategy. The timing was all off.

The catalyst for the exciting new business venture—was an idea blurred out. Unplanned.

* * *

I'm convinced our best achievements in life are the ones we don't really plan for. Our best achievements are responses. Reactions to objects and ideas and people who cross our paths at any given moment. Our planning and preparation and activities surely contribute to any successes we experience, but they follow the unplanned. As a salesperson, a manager, a business owner, an entrepreneur... a *human*... we must be observant. Ever vigilant in our appreciation and respect of the here and now. The moment. When the timing is off—because there really isn't any timing.

The very best things happen this way.

* * *

For a moment, her deep brown eyes didn't dance around quite the same. They stopped, settled and locked in on me. The air stopped and the whole world fell silent. A hush on movement and a stillness over senses. She didn't reach out, but her lips, full and purposefully, parted as quiet words slipped out like droplets of dew on cool mountain laurel...

"Hey, whattaya think about having a baby? I'm pregnant." 

Letters

Ahead of the times

You are always ahead of the times—not often appreciated at the time—but time marches on. I have been thinking about the Blue Ridge Business Journal, which I give you credit for starting, but arithmetic took over. That doesn't change the vision. Now, you again had the vision for things we "need to know" and you have done it. The lack of vision put the Business Journal out of business. So, the FRONT is more important—and again ahead of its time. Congratulations and I hope you take advantage of it.

Cabell Brand
Salem

Note: Though FRONT owners Tom Field and Dan Smith had a long association with the Blue Ridge Business Journal, it was actually started by Roanoke entrepreneurs Andrew Horn and Russ Hawkins in 1988. FRONT publisher Tom Field helped with the startup and was general manager from 2005 to 2008, until The Roanoke Times absorbed the publication; and FRONT editor Dan Smith served as editor for 20 years, almost the entire lifespan of the business.

Ignoring alternatives

Thanks for covering alternative medicine (December FRONT cover). It's amazing how that topic wasn't even addressed in the discourse on national health care last year and yet it is so much cheaper than many traditional treatments and prescription drugs.

Dr. Linda Ferguson
New Paradigm Alliance
Roanoke

Oversight

Some of the photos for December's story "Fresh foods for the poorest Roanokers" were shot by Stephanie Koehler. We regret the oversight of omitting that credit.

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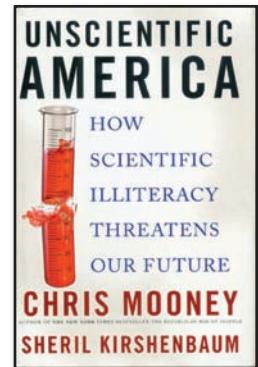
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Books @ the FRONT >

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 125-word reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to Editor Dan Smith at dsmith@vfront.com



Serious about science

When I was a high school student in the 1960s, I was a member of the Science Club—which was about ten percent of the student body. I know of one of those 150 students who became a career scientist.

Chris Mooney and Sheril Kirschbaum, in *Unscientific America: How Scientific Illiteracy Threatens Our Future* (Basic, \$15), present a case for making the study of science more relevant to our society. They look at how this can happen in grades K-12 and what must happen at the university level and in business.

Critical thinking, study beneficial to journalists, manufacturers, political leaders and the electorate, is a major by-product of scientific. Basic scientific education could help boost our economy. What Mooney and Kirschbaum envision is a broad-based foundation for the study of science, one that bridges the gap between the science experts and everybody else. Unscientific America is a clarion call to mobilize ourselves to save our economy from being left behind.

—Mike Ramsey

Washington's religion

What place did George Washington's faith have in his world view and the "sacred fire of liberty" in our nation's formation? In *George Washington's Sacred Fire* (Providence Forum Press, \$24.95) author and seminary president Peter Lillback gives us the definitive answer as to whether Washington was a Christian, the subject of debate since the Declaration of Independence and the adoption of the Constitution. Fifteen years of research based

on extensive evidence unequivocally concludes that Washington was a Christian, and that his faith had a pronounced and purposeful effect on the birth of America.

Lillback writes, "Establishing that George Washington was a Christian helps to substantiate the critical role that Christians and Christian principles played in the founding of our nation. This, in turn, encourages a careful reappraisal of our history and founding documents. A nation that forgets its past does not know where it is or where it is headed. We believe such a study would also empower, enable, and defend the presence of a strong Judeo-Christian world view in the ongoing development of our state and national governments and courts."

This book will likely be viewed as the definitive work on George Washington as a young man, a soldier and patriot, a statesman, first president of the United States. And a Christian.

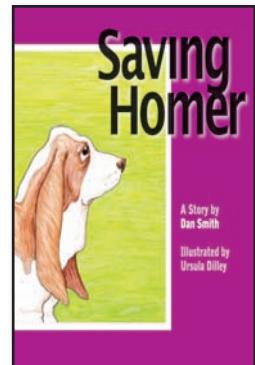
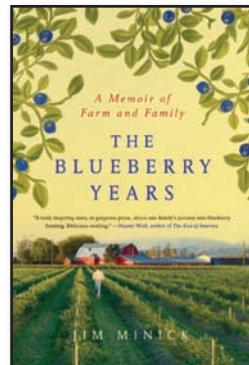
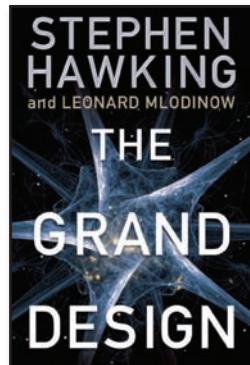
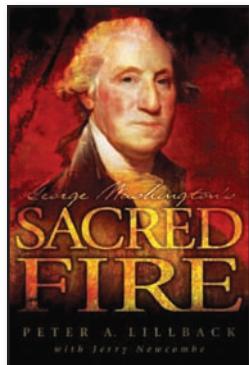
—G. Michael Pace Jr.

Hawking's big vision

In his new book *The Grand Design* (Bantam, \$28), Stephen Hawking, the cosmologist with muscular dystrophy who holds Isaac Newton's former professorship at Cambridge, presents his "M-theory." It is actually a collection of overlapping theories, but he presents it as the one "theory of everything" that will unite Newtonian physics with quantum mechanics.

The result is fascinating: it's impossible to know both the position and speed of a particle (you can know one or the other, but not both), and things don't travel in a straight line from point A to point B (they take every possible

REVIEWS & OPINION



path from A to B, all at once).

He presents a compelling argument for his view of the universe until he tries to explain why there is something instead of nothing, when he resorts to mumbo-jumbo and leaves us with, "The universe exists because it can." If you enjoyed *A Brief History of Time* and Hawking's other books, you'll enjoy this one as well.

—David Perry

Lyrical farm

For more than a decade, the author and his wife in Jim Minick's *The Blueberry Years: A Memoir of Farm and Family* (Thomas Dunne, \$27.99) live a dream of running an organic blueberry farm in the New River Valley. The story weaves tales of hard work of planting and pruning more than a thousand blueberry plants, of communal harvest time when they opened their fields to pick-your-own people and of the problems of achieving organic certification.

Minick, a well-known poet and teacher at Radford University, exposes his poetic roots with his lyrical prose. Even though life on the farm was difficult, he includes uplifting stories told by the pickers, tales of religion, of running blueberry-flavored moonshine, of farmers markets and the problems caused by industrial agriculture.

More than the standard "I followed my dream" memoir, Minick's is both cautionary and rewarding. Readers will learn as much about the fruit as they will about the people who raised, picked and ate it.

—Betsy Ashton

The good old days

Saving Homer (\$15, AuthorHouse), by FRONT editor Dan Smith with illustrations by Ursula Dilley (daughter of FRONT columnist Donna Dilley), is a nostalgic look at life in a Roanoke neighborhood during the 1970s, when kids still played outdoors, dogs were free to roam, and the animal control person was still known as the dog-catcher.

In *Saving Homer*, the Summit Hills kids all love Homer, the smelly basset hound who makes daily rounds to visit each of them, because "Homer calmed the kids when they were afraid, cheered them when they were down, became their friend when they felt lonely, made them laugh when they were blue." When the dog catcher comes after Homer, the kids leap into action. Hilarity ensues.

If you grew up reading about Henry Huggins and Beezus and Ramona, odds are good you'll like *Saving Homer*. It's perfect for grandparents to read to their grandkids—right before they tell the kids about life in the good old days.

—Becky Mushko

(The reviewers: Mike Ramsey is president of the Roanoke Public Library Foundation. Michael Pace is a partner with Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke. David Perry is with the Western Virginia Land Trust and is a freelance writer. Betsy Ashton is a Smith Mountain Lake-based writer. Retired teacher Becky Mushko lives on a farm in Franklin County and writes children's books.)



photo: Jane Dalier

Blacksburg holiday retail gig >

Small businesses in **Clay Court on Main Street / Blacksburg** joined together to hold an Open House before the Winter Lights Festival urging shoppers to buy local. This was the scene at South Main Chiropractic where independent business people met shoppers representing Silpada Jewelry, True Essential health and nutrition, and Thacker Photography. Facing the camera are Charity Hughes and Jessie Critterton of Advanced Health Services.



photos: Dan Smith

Energy talk >

Stacy Hairfield of Natural Awakenings Magazine and **Pete Krull** of Krull & Company Socially Responsible Financial Services (a FRONT columnist) chat, with Stacy doing the disembodied head routine. They were part of the crowd of exhibitors and green energy proponents at the **Energy Expo** at the Roanoke Civic Center Dec. 3. In the other photo, **Sara Huddle** of Invenergy, which wants to build wind turbines on Bent Mountain, talks to an interested customer.

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



Roanoke Chamber annual meeting >

Adrian Cronauer, the inspiration for Robin Williams' character in *Good Morning, Vietnam!*, was the keynote speaker at the 121st Annual Meeting of the **Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce**, held at Hotel Roanoke, Dec. 2.



photo: Tom Field

Startup Stars at VT E >

The **VT E-Club** (an entrepreneurial club at Virginia Tech) awarded \$1,000 to five teams each, competing in a \$5K executive summary contest at a party on campus Dec. 7. The winners (pictured above) included ReviewHounds (software); V-nTech (nano-technology); RippleStory (social media); Diata (medical); and Aerus (energy). The contest was sponsored by 460 Angels, VTKnowledgeWorks, DayOne Ventures, Harmonia, Techulon and FanPage Factory.

FRONT 'N ABOUT



Holiday competition >

2010 Holiday Window Works contest at Smith Mountain Lake, sponsored by the SML Chamber of Commerce, was won by Beyond the Green Indoor Golf and Sportsbar in mid-December. The bar won \$500. The judging team (pictured) consisted of FRONT Editor Dan Smith, Lora Trout of Promote Commotion, Tim Ernandes of Lake Radio WSLK, Jamey Singleton of Channel 12, Lorraine Curry of TPS Displays & Mariners Landing, Ravelle Whitener of Estatic Design, and Lynette Webb of Mulch N More. They're shown here with the Big Green Bus that squired them around.



photo: Jane Dalier

FRONT 2010 Contributors Banquet >

Alison Weaver (shown above, flanked by Publisher Tom Field and Editor Dan Smith) won both the Contributor of the Year and Story of the Year ("Frat Boys of ITT") at the annual Valley Business **FRONT Contributors Banquet** on Dec. 7, held at Hunting Hills Country Club in Roanoke. Sweeping the FRONT awards, Weaver had also won the Contributor of the Month for the January and December editions of 2010. For a complete list of winners, see page 57.

Valley Business
FRONT Hall of Fame

2008

Contributor of the Month

Oct Lori White
Nov Alison Weaver
Dec Don Simmons

First Individual Subscriber

Nancy Agee

First Corporate Subscriber

Access Advertising/PR

First Signed Contract Advertiser

David Rakes,
HomeTown Bank

First Ad Materials In

Russel Lawson, SAMM

First Legal Advertiser

Woods Rogers

First Wellness Advertiser

Carilion

First Tech/Industry Advertiser

IDD

First Development Advertiser

Spectrum Design

First Retail Advertiser

Garrett's Menswear

First Senior Advertiser

Richfield Retirement

First Education Advertiser

Liberty University

2009

Contributor of the Month

Jan Greg Vaughn
Feb Alison Weaver
Mar David Perry
Apr Kathy Surace
May Rob Johnson
Jun Tim Thornton
Jul Anne Clelland
Aug Lori White
Sep Gene Marrano
Oct Pete Krull
Nov Rachael Garrity
Dec Jill Elswick

Most Outstanding Writer

David Perry
Story of the Year
Alison Weaver

Editor's Award
Kathy Surace

Editor's Award
Rachael Garrity

Most Valuable Player
Jane Dalier

Cover of the Year
Food Fight! (Jan)

2010

Contributor of the Month

Jan Alison Weaver
Feb Donna Dilley
Mar Keith Ferrell
Apr Nicholas Vaassen
May Janeson Keeley
Jun Gene Marrano
July Michele Shimchock
Aug Susan Ayers
Sep Rachael Garrity
Oct Michael Miller
Nov Anne Piedmont
Dec Allison Weaver

Most Outstanding Writer

Alison Weaver
Story of the Year
Alison Weaver

Editor's Award
Susan Ayers

Best Photo from Writer
David Perry

Most Outstanding Columnist
Janeson Keeley

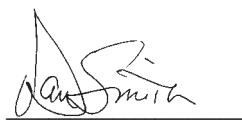
Most Outstanding Support
Emily Field

New Media Marketing
Jane Dalier

Cover of the Year
Senior Biker Babe (Feb)



Tom Field
Publisher / Creative Director



Dan Smith
Editor in Chief



CONTRIBUTORS

Susan M. Ayers is a Roanoke-based freelance writer who has written articles on a wide array of topics that have been published in various media. As a former mortgage banking executive, she has experience in technical writing and business correspondence including white papers, management briefings, systematic analyses, awards programs, performance standards and responses to correspondence of a sensitive and confidential nature.
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Anne Giles Clelland is the founder of business news site Handshake 2.0 (handshake20.com) and the president and CEO of Handshake Media, Inc., a new media PR firm and member company of VT Knowledge-Works in Blacksburg. She has master's degrees in education and in counseling and is part of a team organizing the inaugural New River Valley Triathlon.
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Jane Dalier is an Account Executive for FRONT, with extensive experience in publication sales and small business ownership.
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Donna Dilley is the founding director of the National League of Junior Cotillions in Roanoke Valley, speaker and workshop leader on civility, business etiquette, international protocol and customer service. Her office is in the Jefferson Center.
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Tom Field is a creative director, marketing executive and owner of Berryfield, Inc. in Salem, and Valley Business FRONT magazine. He has written and produced programs and materials for local and international organizations for more than 30 years.
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Rachael Garrity is the owner of Penworthy LLC, a New River Valley-based publications services and consulting firm.
[penworthylc@gmail.com]

Andrew M. Hudick has a Masters in Retirement Planning, is a Certified Financial Planner and is a founding member of Fee-Only Financial Planning, a 27-year-old Roanoke-based financial advisory firm.
[Andy@FeeOnlyRoanoke.com]

Janeson Keeley is the owner of JTKWeb in Roanoke, where she specializes in Web site development and search engine optimization. She is also founder of TweetVA ([@TweetVA](http://www.tweetva.com)), "Virginia's Twitter Directory".
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Gene Marrano, a former sales and marketing executive in various manufacturing fields, is one of the most prolific journalists in the Roanoke Valley. He not only writes for several publications, but he has a television show ("Interview With Gene Marrano" on Cox Channel 9) and a radio show ("Studio Virginia," WVTF Public Radio).
[gmarrano@cox.net]

David Perry, who works for the Western Virginia Land Trust, is an accomplished freelance writer. He is a native of Blacksburg and a James Madison University Graduate. His writing has appeared in Blue Ridge Country and the Roanoker, among other publications.
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Anne Piedmont is the president of Piedmont Research Associates, a marketing communications firm she has started after working for the Roanoke Regional Partnership as director of research for more than 18 years. She's also worked in public relations and journalism. She loves numbers and wants them to make sense for you.
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Laura Purcell is a mother, wife, rat-terrier wrangler and writer living in Blacksburg. Her Web site is urcellink.squarespace.com.
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Jo Lynn Seifert is an Account Executive for FRONT. Her experience in regional market media sales is diverse and strategically applicable.
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Dan Smith is editor and co-owner of Valley Business FRONT. A native of Asheville, N.C., he has been a journalist for more than four decades and has won many journalism awards (writing, photography and design). He was recently named to the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame and was a 2009 recipient of the Perry F. Kendig Literary Award. He was Virginia's Business Journalist of the year in 2005. He is the founder of the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference.
[dsmith@vbfRONT.com]

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

Nicholas Vaassen is a graphic designer with 12 years experience, specializing in publications. His design projects include FRONT, lifestyle, real estate, municipal, classified sales and cultural organization magazines in the Roanoke and southwestern Virginia markets.
[nvaassen@berryfield.com]

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

Tim Watson is a native of D.C. and is a senior business-journalism major at Washington & Lee University. He has worked for USA Today Money and has covered a number of high-profile national business stories. He is the captain of W&L's tennis team.



Alison Weaver

**DECEMBER 2010 >
Contributor of the Month**

Alison Weaver ended 2010 as she began it: as our Contributor of the Month. Alison, who was named the Contributor of the Year for 2010 and also gave us our Story of the Year ("ITT Frat Boys") wrote the December cover story "Alternative Medicine" with the attention to detail and the dogged pursuit of credible sources that has come to be her trademark as a FRONT writer/reporter. Alison thus becomes the first four-time winner of the Contributor of the Month award. She is the only writer to win twice in a year and the only writer to win in each of the three years FRONT has been alive. We appreciate good work here and Alison is our poster babe for good work.

“ “

It is very, very rare to be a carrier for hereditary cancer

— Page 30

“ “

We're a hidden gem

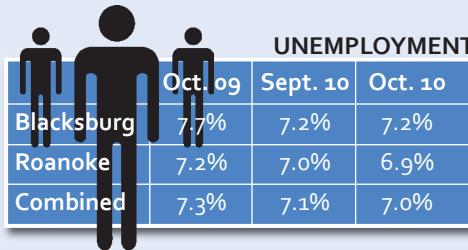
— Page 45

INDICATORS

Unemployment is down, employment is up and so are home prices. More people are flying. One or two months of positive data do not a trend make, but local indicators would seem to foreshadow a slowly improving economy.

Unemployment/Employment

Unemployment has dropped in both the Roanoke and Blacksburg Metropolitan Statistical Areas from October 2009 to October 2010. Blacksburg held steady from September to October, while Roanoke dropped slightly. In fact, Roanoke's 6.9 percent unemployment rate is the lowest since April 2009 (6.8 percent). The region's combined unemployment rate dropped 0.4 percent from a year ago.



Lower unemployment means more people at work. The number of people **employed** in the two MSAs is up slightly from 2009 (0.7 percent) and up 0.8 percent from September to October.

EMPLOYED		
Oct. 2009	Sept. 2010	Oct. 2010
222,018	221,764	223,614

As employment grows, more sectors are seeing positive change from a year ago. The Current Employment Statistics for the combined Roanoke and Blacksburg metro areas show growth in both the service and government broad sectors compared to a year ago. Detailed information available for the Roanoke MSA (but not for the Blacksburg MSA) shows that employment growth of 2 percent in education and health services and 3.7 percent in leisure and hospitality.

	Oct. 2009	Oct. 2010	% Change
Blacksburg MSA	190,600	192,200	+0.8%
Roanoke MSA	47,500	47,800	+0.6%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Real Estate

October home prices in the Roanoke Region, while down from the previous month, are up almost 14 percent from a year ago. Nationally, the average home price rose just 0.7 percent over the same period.

HOME PRICES		
Oct. 2009	Sept. 2010	Oct. 2010
\$179,335	\$208,332	\$204,110

Source: Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors & National Association of Realtors

On the flip side, foreclosure activity in the combined region was down almost 10 percent from September and nearly steady from a year ago. Statewide, foreclosures rose 4.4 percent from October to October. Nationally, the rate held steady.

FORECLOSURES			
	Oct. 2009	Sept. 2010	Oct. 2010
Blacksburg MSA	27	34	21
Roanoke MSA	140	152	147
Combined	167	186	168

Source: Realtytrac

Air Travel

In perhaps another indication of an improving economy, air travel took off in October. Passenger boardings were up more than 10 percent from October 2009 and more than 17 percent from the previous month.

AIR TRAVEL		
Oct. 2009	Sept. 2010	Oct. 2010
27,296	25,847	30,293

Source: Roanoke Regional Airport

—By Anne Piedmont,
Piedmont Research Associates



Janice Davidson: The strategy is to "reach those parents where they are and teach them before abuse occurs."

David Perry

Protecting the children >

Executive Summary:

When Janice Davidson was offered the job as director of Roanoke's child advocacy center, she knew it was the right position at the right time. It is, she says, a job that matters.

By David Perry

Janice Davidson answered a blind help wanted ad nine years ago and soon found herself as the executive director of Prevent Child Abuse Roanoke. During the job interview, the board told her it wanted to start a children's advocacy

center, and she realized she'd found her calling.

"It's kind of like you hear it and you know that's what you want to do," the Lynchburg native says of the magic moment. The child advocacy center (CAC) model is "based on the premise that all the community working together during a child abuse investigation is a better way to do an investigation, and has better outcomes for the child," Janice says.

One of her first tasks was to put together the multidisciplinary teams that would work through the center, drawing from Roanoke City and County and from Salem. These included law enforcement, social services, the Commonwealth's Attorney's office, medical professionals, mental health professionals, victim and family advocates and forensic investigators. The center opened in 2005 and the organization changed its name to the Children's

Advocacy Center of the Roanoke Valley. In 2008, the Roanoke Valley CASA Foundation merged with the CAC and the new organization took on its present name of Children's Trust Roanoke Valley.

Today, CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) is one of four programs offered by Children's Trust. CASA involves court-appointed volunteers who help determine the best living situation for an abused child and serves about 110 children each year. Other programs include the CAC; Children First, a parent education program; and Good Touch/Bad Touch, an in-school education program offered to Roanoke Valley children ages 4-10.

Housed in the Jefferson Center's third floor, one of the goals of the CAC is to make

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

abused children feel safe so they can talk about their abuse with an interviewer. With rooms filled with toys, videos and drawings on the walls, "It looks like a child would want to be here," Janice says. "It might make a child more comfortable than some other place a child might have to tell that story."

Technology enables the information gathered at the CAC to be shared with everyone who is working on the child's case. Says Janice, "The child only has to tell [his] story to one person that one time, and everyone else who is on the investigation is getting what they need through a live camera and microphone feed." Around 120 children are interviewed about child abuse allegations each year.

Children First offers parent education classes to parents with a high risk of committing abuse. Some parents are referred to Children First from social services or the courts, but the Trust also reaches out to parents in high-risk situations: parents in shelters, homeless parents, teens, parents in reentry programs at the jail, and parents in drug and alcohol abuse programs.

Janice says the strategy is to "reach those parents where they are and teach them before abuse occurs." The program reaches about 225 parents each year.

Good Touch/Bad Touch "empowers children to know who to talk to if something happens, and to trust that feeling that tells them this isn't right" when they're abused. As many as 2,500 children receive the education annually.

In Brief

Name:	Janice Dinkins Davidson
Age:	50
Company:	Children's Trust Roanoke Valley
Title:	Executive Director
Type of Business:	Child abuse prevention, intervention and advocacy
Background:	"The thought was always that I was going to do something valuable for the community," says Janice Davidson, who started volunteering at the Trust House in Roanoke in the early 1990s. After a few years, she left her job in the private sector to become that organization's executive director. The private sector came calling again, but she realized that life wasn't for her any longer. "These people are making money, and I'm getting paid, but who's getting helped?" she says of her brief second foray back into the for-profit world. Today, she runs the non-profit Children's Trust and lives with her husband over Davidson's men's clothing store, which he owns, in downtown Roanoke.

"Parents need help, and we're not a culture that allows parents to ask for help," Janice says. "I truly believe that we can better tend to our children if we reach out to parents and help them." 

"The Answer My Friend..."

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



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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT



Nicely

Banks

StellarOne has named **Casey Nicely** financial center manager in Salem.



Ricca

Moore as an associate attorney in the firm's Insurance practice group. **Rob Ricca** has joined the firm as an associate attorney in the firm's General Commercial practice group.

LEGAL FRONT



Irot

Law Firms

Peter G. Irot has joined the Virginia law firm of Gentry Locke Rakes &

Two partners in the Roanoke law firm of Glenn, Feldmann, Darby & Goodlatte have achieved the highest rating through the Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review, the AV Preeminent Rating. They are **Paul Beers** and **Robert Ziegas**. Martindale-Hubbell's is generally considered the industry standard for legal ratings.

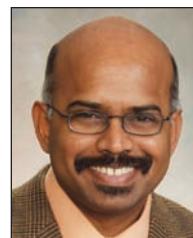
DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Hall

Architects/Engineers

Nicole G. Hall of Clark Nexsen in Roanoke has passed the Architectural Registration exam and is now a Registered Architect in Virginia.



Nathella



Tutle

Cleanup



Turner

Draper Aden Associates in Blacksburg has named **Theresa Turner**, **Srikanth Nathella**, **Charles Kreye II** and **Jeffrey Tyler** associates.

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EDUCATION FRONT



Friedlander

Colleges

Michael J. Friedlander, executive director of the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute, has been appointed to a three year position on the external scientific

advisory board of the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

OTHER FRONTS

Consulting

Paula Wilder of WilderWeber Leadership Group in Blacksburg has been named a

Certified Professional Facilitator by the International Association of Facilitators.

Government

Jane Sullivan Horne of Prudential Waterfront Properties has been appointed to the Board of Directors of the Virginia Recreational Facilities Authority.



Johnson

Organizations

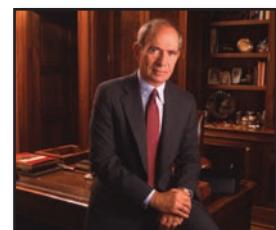
Executive Director **Cal Johnson** of YMCA of Roanoke Valley, has



ADVANCE AUTO



MEDECO



BERTRAM FIRESTONE



BRUCE HORNSBY

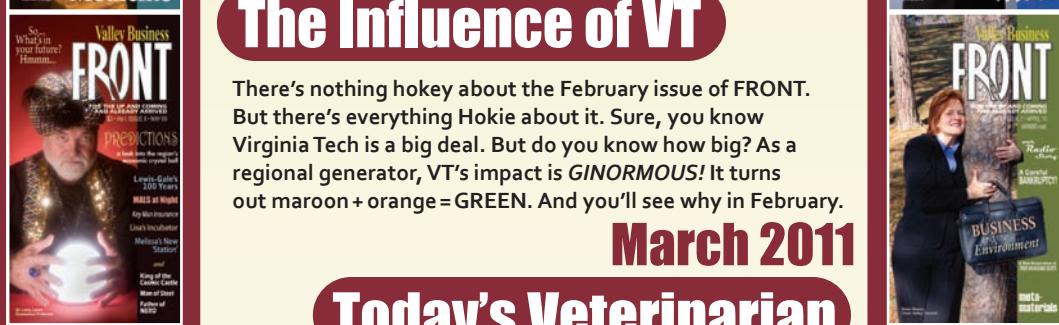


ROANOKE TIMES



ROWE

gregvaughnphotography.com



Coming Up...

February 2011

The Influence of VT

There's nothing hokey about the February issue of FRONT. But there's everything Hokie about it. Sure, you know Virginia Tech is a big deal. But do you know how big? As a regional generator, VT's impact is *GINORMOUS!* It turns out maroon + orange = GREEN. And you'll see why in February.

March 2011

Today's Veterinarian

How's Rover? Your dog, your cat, small and large animals... in a struggling economy, when everyone seems to be prioritizing all expenses, are our animals still being cared for and getting treatment? We grabbed our leashes and talked to area vets. Hear the scooper...er, scoop... right here.

April 2011

Customer Service

Just what exactly is customer service? How do you achieve it? What is its importance to the bottom line? A cover story of utmost importance, we investigate the state of customer service, and then provide examples: the good, the bad, and the really ugly. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll love April FRONT.

Call Your Account Executive for more information...

Jane Dalier: 540-239-2610 540-389-9945
Jo Lynn Seifert: 540-589-1439 vbFRONT.com



FRONTLINES

been named to the board of directors of YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly which serves YMCAs throughout the United States.



Neff-Henderson

The Public Relations Society of America-Blue Ridge 2010 officers are:
President Laura L. Neff-Henderson, APR, Juvenile Diabetes Foundation; President-elect **Nancy Simmons,** National College; Treasurer **Heidi Ketler.**

APR; Secretary Melinda Mayo, City of Roanoke; Immediate Past President
Thomas Becher, APR, the becher agency; Assembly Delegate
Jeff Douglas, APR, Fellow PRSA, Radford University; Directors at Large **Sarah Baumgardner**, Western Virginia Water Authority; **Chuck Lionberger**, Roanoke County Public Schools; **Beth Kolnok**, Vistar Eye Centers; **Rachel Spencer**, Access; Mid-Atlantic District Delegate **Thomas Becher**

Restaurants

Shula's 347 Grill at
the Sheraton Roanoke
Hotel & Conference

Center has named **James Andra** executive chef, **Travis LeMond** head coach and **Katie Camper Porter** as business development manager.



Owen

Staffing

Sara Owens has been named manager of the new Aerotek office in downtown Roanoke. Aerotek works with technical, professional and industrial recruiting and staffing services.

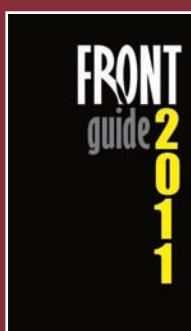
Transportation
Premier Transfer and Storage in Salem, an agent for Mayflower Transit, has hired **John Zeile** as general manager.



Fitzpatrick

Women

The Roanoke Women's Foundation has named **Luann Fitzpatrick** to its board of directors. She is a trustee for the Christian Mission Foundation.



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 24/7/356 directory, we continue to build lists and add sponsors. Call Jane or Jo Lynn (left page ad) to advertise.

fromtheeditr.blogspot.com

More **Dan Smith** than most can stand...

FRONT Notes

Jobs for Franklin

Solution Matrix Inc., a specialist in cold-therapy products for the health care industry, will relocate its headquarters and manufacturing operations from Pennsylvania to Franklin County. The company expects to be in operation by November 2011.

The company will invest \$2.25 million in building and equipment, constructing a 25,000-square-foot facility on a 4.27 acre site in the Franklin County Commerce Center along U.S. Highway 220 south of Rocky Mount. Employment is projected to be 80 within three years.

Positions will range from production workers to managers and the average annual wage for all jobs will be between \$20,800 and \$37,440.

Arts Council hires Hale

The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge has named **Rhonda Hale**, its Art Services and Education Director, as its executive director, replacing Laura Rawlings, who took a job at Roanoke College recently. Hale has been with the AC for four years and has been responsible for a 60 percent growth in artist participation.

Hale says, "I am enthusiastic about working with our board to develop an up-to-date strategic plan to address the current and changing needs of our artist and organizational



Rhonda Hale; New Arts Council Director.

Dan Smith

members and arts community. The arts community has seen a shift in the way it operates and it's important that we stay relevant and are meeting the needs the changing climate offers.

"An increased interest in partnerships and collaborations is key to showing responsibility with the limited monies and resources that are available, which makes our role in convening and facilitating meetings with artists and community groups to discuss topical issues and challenges increasingly important. Equally important is the need for the Arts Council to become an even stronger advocate for the arts in our region through increased presence and participation in legislation."

Patrick Henry residence hall

Roanoke's **Jefferson College of Health Sciences** will house its fall 2011 resident students in the Patrick Henry Hotel

building that is undergoing a total renovation at 617 South Jefferson Street. Developer Ed Walker is creating a multi-use facility at the old hotel, most of its rooms being residential.

The move of resident students to the Patrick Henry will allow JCHS to almost double its number of resident students. Seventy-seven JCHS students live on the eighth floor of Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital. The move also provides housing for JCHS students within walking distance of the college's campus at Community.

In summer 2010, all JCHS services and resources were relocated to CRCH from the Reid Center at 920 South Jefferson Street.

Bureau gets grant

The Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) has awarded the **Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau** (RVCVB) a \$25,000 grant through

the Virginia is for Lovers Marketing Leverage Grant Program. "This is a small but impactful matching grant program that helps our local partners get the most out of their marketing dollars, which is essential to bringing visitors to Virginia," says Alisa Bailey, VTC President and CEO.

Opens practice

The Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) in Blacksburg has opened a new Academic Sports and Osteopathic Medicine practice. It is a community based practice and teaching site for VCOM students and family medicine residents at Montgomery Regional Hospital.

The new Academic Sports and Osteopathic Medicine (ASOM) practice has six exam rooms and a welcoming and inviting medical space for patients. While APCA will continue to see primary care patients, those seeking physician services at

ASOM will primarily seek treatment for sports and other musculoskeletal issues. Physicians at APCA and ASOM will continue to work in conjunction with each other and VCOM students will train in both sites.

especially in Pulaski county and Wytheville. The firm provides staffing for office services, professional fields like engineering, IT, HR, healthcare as well as industrial in temporary positions, direct hire or contract workers.

Have an announcement about your business?

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

New Walkabout

Walkabout Outfitter has opened a new Roanoke location at the District at Valley View Mall. This is the third retailer to open at Valley View in the second half of 2010. The 3,890 square foot store is next door to Twist & Turns, which opened September 15 and adjacent to Cheddar's Casual Café, which opened on October 18. Walkabout Outfitter, based out of Lexington, offers one retail store there and another on the Roanoke City Historic Market (where Twist & Turns was until recently).

Express in Fairlawn

Express Employment Professionals has expanded to serve the New River Valley area with an office in Fairlawn because of the growth potential in the area

Carilion LEED certified

Carilion Riverside Clinic in Roanoke has received Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification. The project earned 36 credits to qualify for the U.S. Green Building Council's Silver rating for New Construction, version 2.2.

Spectrum wins award

Spectrum Design in Roanoke has received the Platinum Design Award from The Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) for its design of the new Eastern Montgomery Elementary School in Elliston (below). The award was presented at the 2010 VSBA Conference in Williamsburg.

Summit Award winners

Neathawk Dubuque &

Packett in Roanoke was awarded eight Summit Awards for its public relations work on behalf of regional and national clients. ND&P received five gold and three silver awards. Gold came for work with Downtown Roanoke Inc., The Catholic Diocese of Richmond, Massachusetts General Hospital and Minds Wide Open. Silver came for Minds Wide Open, Virginia Western Community College and Massachusetts General Hospital.

The Becher Agency in Roanoke won six Summit Award, two gold and a silver. Clients for the gold awards were MedCottage, Eat for Education, Arrow Lock and Feeding America Southwest Virginia and the silvers were for Partnership for a Poop-free Workplace and Feeding America.

Roanoke's **Access** won a gold and three silvers for work with PixelOptics, Alliance for Chesapeake Bay, Carpet Factory Outlet and Roanoke College Children's Choir. Smith Mountain Lake's **GO Agency** won a gold and a silver award with ads for Bridgewater Pointe.

Imaging company bought

nSight Health Services Holdings Corporation, a California company, has bought the Center for Advanced Imaging from **Carilion Clinic**. Carilion was directed to sell the center by courts which ruled its ownership was anti-competitive. This will be nSight's first location in this market, though it has three others in Northern Virginia. No price was revealed.



Eastern Montgomery Elementary School

FRONT Notes

Practices recognized

Three Carilion Clinic Family Medicine practices located in Roanoke were recently recognized by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) as Patient-Centered Medical Homes. Family medicine sites on Brambleton Ave., Colonial Ave. and Peters Creek Road adopted a new model of care premised on the strength of the patient-doctor relationship.

Medical homes are designed to improve health, facilitate an ongoing relationship between the patient and healthcare team, reduce costs and prevent unnecessary hospitalizations. The ultimate focus is on wellness – keeping patients healthy and preventing illness.

Rockydale opens in C'ville

Roanoke-based **Rockydale Quarries** has opened a new location two miles north of Charlottesville on Rio Mills road. Rockydale will invest \$10 million in the

quarry operation and will create up to 10 new jobs for the area market. Rockydale-Charlottesville Quarry became an approved Virginia Department of Transportation source of construction materials in late August and quickly began selling aggregates to local area businesses and contractors.

The Rockydale-Charlottesville Quarry is a 189-acre site that marks the sixth location in operation for Rockydale Quarries. Rockydale Quarries Corporation based in Roanoke, has been serving customers in Virginia and the Carolinas for over 78 years. Rockydale has locations operating in Roanoke, Staunton, Appomattox, Franklin County, and Charlottesville.

McLeod consolidates

Cherry, Bekaert & Holland one of the 30 largest accounting firms in the U.S. and one with a strong Virginia presence, has expanded into the

Roanoke market by merging with **McLeod & Company**, which was formed in 1986. CB&H added seven partners and more than 30 other workers serving the southwestern region of the state. With established offices in Richmond, Tyson's Corner, Hampton Roads and Lynchburg, CB&H is among the largest non-Big 4 accounting firms in Virginia with more than 225 accounting, tax and consulting professionals to serve the needs of our growing client base.

Center near goal

Roanoke's **Center in the Square** has raised \$8,802,776 towards its \$9 million fundraising goal that will help finance the total renovation of the cultural organization's 200,000 square foot facility on the Market Square in downtown Roanoke.

Center in the Square announced the public phase of the capital campaign in late August after it received a

\$500,000 pledge from the Steel Dynamics Foundation and a \$750,000 challenge grant from the Kresge Foundation. At that time, almost \$8 million had been raised.

New psyche unit

LewisGale Regional Health System will soon add a Geriatric Psychiatry Unit at LewisGale Hospital at Alleghany to meet the growing demand for inpatient mental health services specifically designed to meet the unique psychiatric needs of seniors. The 15-bed unit will focus on treating patients 65 and older who are dealing with a mental health challenge that requires immediate intensive therapy to help them return to their previous level of functioning. The average length of stay will be 11 days.

Roanoke College gift

Roanoke College has received a \$2.5 million bequest from the estate

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of the late Mary Ellen Hardin Smith, of Roanoke. The gift is the second largest by an individual in college history and will endow the Shields Johnson Scholarship, to provide financial assistance for students from the Roanoke Valley.

Carilion picked

Carilion Clinic has been selected as one of six regional networks in Virginia to facilitate efforts to ensure that local children with special health care needs have access to optimally effective, community-based medical and support services. Called Care Connection for Children, special services include increased access to medical specialty care as well as assistance with obtaining health insurance, accessing area resources and determining eligibility for outside funds.

New practice group

The regional law firm **Spilman Thomas & Battle**, which has offices in Roanoke, has formed the Community Banking Group to serve the needs of community banks. This new Spilman practice group consists of an insightful and experienced team of more than 20 attorneys from a cross-section of Spilman's current practice groups. Attorneys will advise clients across a broad range of areas of law



Jack and Stan Lanford in the Hall of Fame.

including: mergers and acquisitions, tax, wealth management, labor and employment, regulatory, securities, white collar/compliance, construction, corporate, and bankruptcy and creditors' rights, in addition to traditional banking and finance matters.

Adding jobs here

Southern Finishing Company plans to consolidate operations from other facilities to its factory in Martinsville and add 67 jobs to the 137 already there. Southern manufactures cabinet parts. Virginia will contribute more than \$500,000 in incentives. Southern has a plant in Martinsville, one in Arizona and four in Stoneville, N.C.

Lanfords in Hall of Fame

Brothers **Jack and Stan Lanford**, founders of

family-run highway and bridge contractor Lanford Brothers, have been inducted into the nation's highest place of honor in the transportation design and construction industry.

The Lanfords, who began the employee-owned company 50 years ago in Roanoke, have joined the American Road & Transportation Builders Association Transportation Development Foundation Hall of Fame, which honors individuals or families from the public and private sectors who have made extraordinary contributions to U.S. transportation development during their careers.

The committee of judges included nine construction industry journalists who reviewed the nominees and selected the hall of fame's inaugural class, which included the Lanfords. "The transportation design and construction industry is full of visionaries and game changers like the

Lanford brothers who have demonstrated exceptional leadership over their lifetime and played an important role in helping shape development of America's transportation network," says ARTBA-TDF Chairman Leo Vecellio.

Lender winner

USA Rural Development has named **First Bank and Trust Company**, which serves the New River Valley, Lender of-the-Year for its participation in the Rural Business Loan Program.

Army monitor

The US Army has contracted **Prime Photonics** of Blacksburg to develop a gas turbine blade monitoring sensor system under the Commercialization Pilot Program for 2011.

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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I don't have lofty goals

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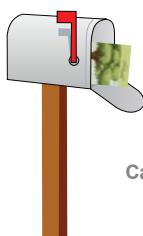
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