

Valley Business FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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Tools for
Tomboys

Greens
To Go

Go To Jail

Shula's
Latest Win

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Bridge

Resolving
Conflict

*Today's
Veterinarian*

Laurie Halkowich,
Red Bone Mobile Veterinary Clinic

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WELCOME to the FRONT

This is the first issue of Valley Business FRONT that you won't read Donna Dilley's thoughts on how we ought to be behaving. Donna, who wrote Business Etiquette for us at the old Blue Ridge Business Journal and came with us when we made the transition to a magazine format with FRONT, has decided to put her energies elsewhere after a long, successful run.

Donna was consistently one of our most popular contributors and she remains a fixture in our community, teaching people's children how to slide from puberty into a more confident adolescence with her cotillions. She gives etiquette advice online at Handshake2.0 and on WSLs TV's noontime talk show "Our Blue Ridge." Her popularity as a Journal and FRONT columnist has led Donna to a number of appearances in venues where her expertise is appreciated.

Though Donna is not replaceable, the column will now be written by Kathleen Harshberger, director of University Advancement at Radford University. She is certified in business etiquette and international protocol. Her husband, Dick, is Radford's vice mayor and they have been active in theater for years.

Kathleen's voice will be decidedly different (she was born in Ireland, raised in England and Scotland; Donna is very much the Appalachian daughter) and her advice will be well researched and knowledgeable. We hope you will welcome Kathleen and appreciate her contribution as you did Donna's.

We wish Donna the very best. She is the definition of quality and elegance.



Tom Field



Dan Smith



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MARCH



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Jane Dalier



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Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 56.

Editorial Advisory Board

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

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

CONTRIBUTORS



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“the good old US of A will turn out to be not so bad of a place to call home

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2010 / 11 Members

- Laura Bradford** Claire V (Retail)
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- Warner Dalhouse** Retired (Seniors)
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- John Garland** Spectrum (Development)
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- Ed Murphy** Carilion (Wellness)
- Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners (Development)
- John Williamson** RGC (Tech/Industry)

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



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Veterinarians

The Challenge Today

Greg Vaughn Photography

You won't catch **Laurie Halkowich** sitting on a couch very often, but yes, that's her. Though the mobile vet doesn't dress like the old country doc of the British Isles, either (like she does as our FRONTcover model this issue, along with her companion "Kermit"), she's certainly more in her element tending to animals on site, in their home environment. You may notice Kermit (her patient-turned-pet) has only three legs. He didn't seem to notice.

A complicated life >

Executive Summary: *Veterinarians these days still have elements of "All Things Great and Small" around them, but they're also dealing with complex modern medical issues and technology in a tough economy.*

by **Laura Purcell**

As you read this, there is a good chance a dog sits at your feet, or a cat is curled up in the warmest spot in your house. About three out of every five people in the United States own pets. A quick visit to PetSmart, with its aisles of food, treats, toys, clothes, and other accoutrements, shows just how important pets are in our lives. In fact, for more than 200 years one of the most respected health professions has devoted itself solely to the care of animals—veterinary science.

Humans and animals have cohabitated for thousands of years. Archeological remains tell us that as long as 12,000 years ago, wolves, seeking food scraps and belly rubs, lived alongside our hunter-gatherer ancestors. As humans developed agricultural skills and became more settled, they domesticated sheep, goats, cattle and horses. It is unclear when cats were domesticated, but their aloof nature has captivated humans since at least 3,000 B.C.

To celebrate their important work, the World Veterinary Association has proclaimed 2011 as the Year of the Veterinarian. The first veterinary school opened in Lyon, France in 1761, to train practitioners to care for horses and cattle. Today, most countries have their own veterinary schools, with 28 in the United States (one at Virginia Tech) that graduate about 2,500 new veterinarians each year. According to the American Veterinary Medicine Association (AVMA), there are about 60,000 doctors of veterinary medicine in the U.S., who treat an estimated 75 million dogs and 85 million cats, as well as other small and exotic animals, horses, and food animals.

Most people who become veterinarians have known they wanted to make a career of caring for animals since they



Beth Kirby of Blacksburg at a microscope: "I want the owner to understand ...the possible solutions to the problem at hand."

Laura Purcell

were young children. They enjoy treating a patient through its entire life cycle, from infancy to elderly. And they are compassionate and caring to both their patients and their patients' families, understanding that the right choice for one family may not be right for another. Veterinarians provide both medical and emotional support to families and patients.

The current economic climate has affected patient care, but in many ways, the decision making process of how to treat ill pets has changed more due to the range of options available to clients.

"I want the owner to understand what is going on, the decision-making tree, and the possible solutions to the problem at hand," says Beth Kirby, a veterinarian at Companion Animal Clinic in Blacksburg. "When I'm presented with the question 'What would you do for your own pet?' I find that difficult at times. I have made decisions on my own pets that, on second thought, I may have changed."

With so many pet owners, it is no surprise that 80 percent of veterinarians in the U.S. work in private medical practices, according to the AVMA. From the outside, most veterinary clinics look like a ranch house or other single-story family dwelling. Inside, however, each clinic is a full-service

“ ”

I do believe that a pet is first and foremost an animal with innate instincts that must be respected. Then it is my baby. I may have a different level of care for each of my animals based on that particular animal's personality, function, and overall health quality.

—Beth Kirby





Vet Steve Karras of Roanoke: “Building bonds with my patients, their families, and the community is the best aspect of being a veterinarian.”

Dan Smith



There are a lot of pet owners that don't really understand that their pets are animals first; they expect them to act like people.

—Beth Kirby



enterprise, with waiting areas, exam rooms, a pharmacy, surgical rooms, and kennels.

Clinics have unique storage, ventilation, lighting, plumbing and electrical needs. Each clinic usually employs several doctors, veterinary technicians, assistants, office staff, kennel staff, and may also provide grooming, emergency, and other special services.

Most of these clinics are owned and operated by the veterinarians themselves, making them both medical practitioners and small business owners. Besides the pressures of patient care, they have many of the same problems other small businesses face—finding reliable employees, providing healthcare and other benefits for those employees, covering business insurance and taxes, meeting OSHA standards, and many other hurdles.

“The huge amount of overhead, employees, technology and ‘smarts’ it takes to keep the doors open and our practice staff at peak performance can be overwhelming,” says Steve Karras, a veterinarian at Cave Spring Animal Clinic in Roanoke. “Veterinarians are also the leading voices for animal welfare and related legislation, and it can be difficult to multi-task to the extent required of us sometimes.”

But it isn't all drudgery. “I don't treat pets, I treat family members,” Karras says. “Building bonds with my patients, their families, and the community is the best aspect of being a veterinarian,” he says.

Adapting to staff needs can affect a clinic in significant ways. “At Companion, we just couldn't handle doing the 24/7 thing



Veterinarian Marjorie Lewter

Laura Purcell

The holistic view >

The December 2010 Valley Business FRONT featured alternative medicines—but these remedies are not limited to human healthcare. While working with dairy cattle in Pennsylvania, veterinarian Marjorie Lewter sought a treatment that wouldn't cause drug residue in their milk. After becoming certified in veterinary acupuncture, "I found I was just peeking through the door into another world of medical opportunity for my patients," Lewter says.

"Holistic just means looking at the whole picture, and offering the whole array of treatment options available," says Lewter, who is also certified in Chinese herbal medicine.

Lewter treats both large and small animals, and finds each species requires unique consideration. Herbivores and carnivores need different vitamin supplements, cats are more sensitive to drugs than dogs, and horses may flick out acupuncture needles with their tails. Lewter says, "I try to choose the path that is most workable for the owner and most palatable for the patient."

Lewter advises pet owners interested in alternative treatment to start researching online, then seek advice from a licensed veterinarian with formal training in holistic medicine. "Holistic care compliments and supports conventional care, and the two can work together in the best interest of the patient."

—Laura Purcell



Economics is the constant challenge facing our profession. Striking a balance between patient needs, client finances and medical advancements is very difficult. The wide varieties of practice styles show the broad spectrums of financial priorities placed on veterinary care. In difficult economic times, the pressure is greatly increased for companion animal care as well as food animal medicine. The costs of care are ever-increasing, the ability to afford care is less, but the emotional needs for appropriate care always remain. It is a very difficult balance to strike.

—Steve Karras



A new veterinary research facility at Virginia Tech will be 46,000 square feet.

Virginia Tech

Tech turns out the vets >

by **Laura Purcell**

One of the greatest resources this region has for animal owners is the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine (VMRCVM). Established in 1978, the college is a collaboration between Virginia Tech and the University of Maryland at College Park. VMRCVM has three campuses, the Avrum Gudelsky Veterinary Center at College Park, the Marion DuPont Scott Equine Medical Center in Leesburg, and the main campus in Blacksburg.

Admission to the college is competitive—it accepts only 95 new students each year, 50 must be Virginia residents and 30 must be Maryland residents. In 2010, VMRCVM received a total of 872 applications, 600 of

which vied for the 15 out-of-state slots. One interesting demographic is that globally, veterinary colleges enroll 80 percent female students, 20 percent male.

Several factors contribute to the increase of women in the profession. Women make up more than 50 percent of all college students, and women in college tend to be more ambitious and high-performing than many of their male counterparts. However, leadership in veterinary science does not yet reflect women's roles in the profession.

"Of the 28 colleges of veterinary medicine in the U.S., I think only five have women deans," Jennie Hodgson, associate dean for professional programs at VMRCVM, says. The college is working to better prepare women for these roles by providing additional courses in leadership, public policy, public health, and business.



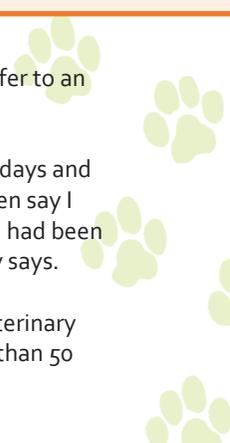
Veterinarians are overachievers that give 110 percent to their job.

—Shelley Spangler

anymore, and three years ago we decided to refer to an emergency facility," Kirby says.

The grueling schedule, which included 10-hour days and being on call overnight, had taken its toll. "I often say I would hate to be my 3 p.m. appointment after I had been up most of the night with an emergency," Kirby says.

Domestic pet care hasn't always dominated veterinary care. For example, Bedford used to have more than 50





Animal health is critical to human health, and both are critical to global health.

—Jennie Hodgson



Jennie Hodgson

The college also provides other unique educational opportunities for its students. It is one of only two veterinary colleges that provides specialization tracks, allowing second-year students to focus on the areas of medicine that most interest them—small animal, equine, food animal, mixed species, and public/corporate. “We monitor our curriculum, and make changes as needed, so we can prepare our students to meet today’s needs and anticipate future challenges,” Hodgson says.

Advancements in veterinary care, and, subsequently, human medicine, have resulted from research efforts at the college. Most recently, VMRCVM joined the Wake Forest Institute for Regenerative Medicine, to form the Center for Veterinary Regenerative Medicine. This partnership will allow researchers at Wake Forest to apply some of their discoveries to patients at Virginia Tech’s Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

“We’re very excited about this,” Hodgson says. “The research advancements that can come from this partnership are astonishing.” Virginia Tech has recently broken ground on two new buildings for VMRCVM—one for research, one for instruction—to help support the expanding work of veterinarians and increase enrollment at the college over the next few years.

Hodgson sees her role as an educator not only to prepare her students, but to champion their important work. “Several years ago, an article called ‘Veterinary Medicine and the Lifeboat Test,’ explored the role of veterinarians in modern society. If the Titanic is sinking, are we, as veterinarians, important enough to make it on to the lifeboat? I feel it is my part of my job as an educator to make sure the important contributions of veterinarians to science are noticed, and to make it on that lifeboat.” 

dairies, and veterinarians were at the mercy of the dairy farmer’s schedule.

“Our day started when they started milking at 5 a.m., if they found a sick cow or a dystocia [difficult birthing]. We finished with the farmers at dark,” says Scott Noe, a veterinarian at Bedford Animal Hospital, a mixed-species practice. “Now, we have only a few dairies and life is easier. Some days the large animal portion can be all day, but often it is just a few hours, and sometimes we do all pet animal care.”





Cattle are a popular sight around the Virginia Tech campus.

“

When you walk away knowing you saved a life, that is the best. Whether pulling a live calf or performing a difficult surgery, I think this is the most rewarding.

—Scott Noe

The shortage of food animal vets has been cause for concern for several years. In 2009, the Virginia General Assembly commissioned the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine (VMRCVM) to study the current and projected shortage of food animal veterinarians.

However, it is not so much a lack of trained veterinarians, but a reluctance to commit to the lifestyle of a rural vet, that dissuades doctors from pursuing the field. Quality of life is an important consideration for veterinary students today, and they are reluctant to compromise salary and lifestyle.

“Solo practitioners in rural areas often work 60 or 70 hour weeks,” says Noe. “Many nights you are called out on an emergency calf pulling in rainy, snowy, dirty conditions. Your weekends are always busy. You have greater odds of being badly injured, and because you are on the road all the time, your risk of an auto accident is higher.”



Bob Black

Dr. Halkowich's mobile clinic.

COVER STORY

Food animal veterinarians provide other critical services, not only treating individual ailments of animals, but also ensuring the health of entire herds. For example, a major breakout of hoof-and-mouth disease among cattle and other cloven-hoofed species, like sheep and pigs, would not spread to humans, but it would be catastrophic to food systems in the United States.

But there are also rewarding challenges to the work. "Large animal veterinarians enjoy the outdoors, and the physical challenges of controlling a 2,000-pound bull," says Noe. "Working with farmers, some of the most resourceful, down-to-earth people in the world, has always been one of the best rewards. And living in a small town, and being an important part of that community, is also a plus."

However, some young veterinarians are still attracted to the lifestyle of a lone practitioner. Laurie Halkowich worked at the "perfect" clinic while living in the metro D.C. area, but the traffic and hectic pace of life grew old quickly. After moving back to the New River Valley, Halkowich noticed that there was a great need for veterinary home visits. So in August 2010, she began Red Bone Mobile Veterinary Clinic, which provides house calls for dogs and cats in the Roanoke and New River Valleys.

Each morning, Halkowich stocks her SUV with equipment for the day's appointments. On a good day, she might see six patients—whereas a veterinarian in a traditional clinic might see that many patients, and more, in two hours.

"I opened my mobile clinic because I saw the need for routine at-home care. It's so important to me that my patients are comfortable and less stressed during an exam. It's also more convenient for the owner—no loading your pets in the car or waiting in a crowded office."



Client education is extremely important. The pet owner and I have to enter a partnership. I don't want to say "Here's what you need to do. You'd better do it." I want to educate the owner as to all of the options that are available and then make a plan that works for both the client and animal together.

—Laurie Halkowich



Laura Purcell



Laura Purcell



Dr. Shelley Spangler (left) performs surgery on cat with 4th year VMRCVM student Kiley Daube.

Tom Field

“”

The patient is my main focus. I'm not doing my job if I don't tailor my recommendations to that particular patient and situation.

—Laurie Halkowich

End of life care, too, has a more gentle touch. "I am able to make a terrible and sad event just a little easier for the patient, and owners," Halkowich says. She admits her husband is usually able to accompany her on these difficult visits. "I never enjoy these calls, but I am glad to make a pet's last moments easier and more comfortable."

As the owner of a start-up, Halkowich has to do it all—paying bills, returning calls, and ordering materials and pharmaceuticals. And she's not yet paying herself a salary. However, she sees value in the services she's providing, and room for expansion. "We will add more vehicles and veterinarians as the demand for our services grows, or we can partner with a stand-alone clinic to offer our clients a full range of services," such as surgery, hospitalization, dental cleanings, and grooming.

Like Halkowich, Shelley Spangler's veterinary work not only treats patients, it provides a unique service to the community. As the medical director at Angels of Assisi shelter in Roanoke, she is just one of hundreds of vets choosing to specialize in shelter medicine.

About five to seven million cats and dogs enter animal shelters each year, according to the ASPCA. Ten to 20 percent of these cats and dogs are adopted; an estimated five out of ten dogs and seven out of ten cats in shelters are euthanized each year. With so many animals coming in and out of shelters, and a desire to assist the community, many shelters hire full-time veterinary staff.

"Both low-intake, low-turnover (no-kill) and high-intake, high-turnover shelters are in need of a veterinary medical professional on staff, and more shelters are hiring veterinarians to perform surgery in-house," Spangler says.





Veterinarian assistant Brittany O'Neal conducts a dental cleaning on a small dog as Dr. Emily Gallagher observes.

Tom Field

Spangler began her career in shelter medicine as a part-time veterinarian for the Roanoke Valley SPCA. The job quickly became full-time, and she found that she enjoyed the combination of individual animal care and population medicine.

"I particularly enjoy providing care and treatment to animals that have been abandoned by society," Shelley says. "I watch them transform emotionally and physically into healthy creatures, and help prepare them for a healthy home."

Angels of Assisi also provides low-cost, routine veterinary care for animals in the Roanoke Valley. "We want to make the option of veterinary care available to many people that otherwise wouldn't seek it," Spangler says.

Although the shelter's main service is spay and neuter services for abandoned cats and dogs, Spangler says "because we are able to provide the same basic medical services over and over all day long, our veterinarians provide great medical care to our clients. I want to provide both owners and adoption center animals with the same care I would want for my own pet."

For years studies have shown that pet ownership is actually good for human health. Pet owners have a better chance of surviving a heart attack, lower cholesterol levels and reduced blood pressure, and make less frequent doctor visits. Veterinary care and training is not only a crucial part of taking care of animals, but also ourselves. It is the immeasurable care and commitment of veterinarians that add years to our lives, and to the lives of the animals so important to us. 

“ ”

In sixth grade, a teacher told me they were making a vaccine against cavities and dentists would no longer have jobs. So I abandoned my interest in dentistry, which made me embrace veterinary medicine.

—Shelley Spangler

Clarifying the international lines of behavior >

Etiquette & Protocol

Kathleen Harshberger

Executive Summary:

On the world stage, a little patience goes a long way. So does homework.

Most of us are familiar with a favorite quote of the Chinese philosopher, Confucius, "All people are the same ...", but might not be familiar with the rest of the quote, "... It's only their habits that are different." Understanding that last part of the quotation is crucial to a successful international experience. The lines between countries and cultures are blurring, and savvy business people should do all they can to learn how to negotiate in the international arena.

Sometimes Americans think we can do business internationally in the same way we do it at home. That sort of thinking can get us into trouble and, without meaning to, we can end up offending the very people we want to impress. Americans are fast; we are linear in our thinking; we like to be on time; we want to get to the bottom line quickly and efficiently; in short, we want to get on with it.

That attitude usually doesn't work in a global setting. Patience is a great virtue when dealing in the international arena. When we are doing business abroad, we would do well to invest some time in increasing our cross cultural awareness. The study of differences between cultures takes years to master, so it stands to reason that Americans studying, working, or doing business abroad should devote substantial time and effort in an attempt to understand their host country, or the international visitor they are hosting here. It is important to learn a little of the subtleties and nuances of working in another culture.

While we Americans delight being more casual in our own country, we need to be aware that the nuance of the social dance, which is the prerequisite to business in other cultures,

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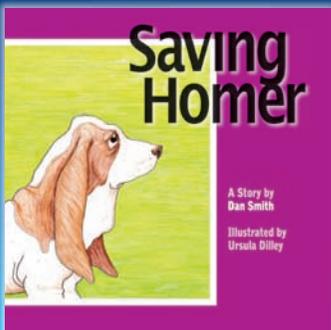


is crucial to doing business successfully abroad. Here are some observations and tips that will help you appear polished and sophisticated:

- Most Americans are friendly and gregarious; we speak to everyone, even strangers.
- Some internationals, while admiring our ability to be informal and outgoing, may not be comfortable with instant friendliness. We can be perceived as brash and insincere.
- They usually know a great deal more about us and our ways than we know about them.
- Learn something of the geography, history and culture of your host country before you travel.
- Do not call your international colleague by her first name unless specifically asked to do so.
- Sometimes what appears to be a first name might be the last name. Do your homework.
- Casual introductions are not appreciated and can be construed as an insult.
- Rank and status are extremely important in other cultures.
- Internationals are often more formal and conservative in their manners and dress.
- Learn proper dining etiquette. You will be judged on your table manners. 



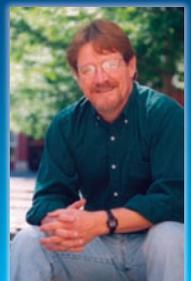
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Developments in dress code >

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Evolution is as relevant in dress codes as in any other potential change in our culture.

Since the advent of business casual and casual dress in the workplace, dress codes have seemed increasingly irrelevant and often non-existent. However, dress codes are not dead and gone. They continue to change and adapt to the needs of businesses and our culture. They are essential tools that help businesses and employees meet the expectations of their customers.

Locally, the Western Virginia Water Authority recently tweaked its dress code to "more clearly define what we look for in business casual dress," according to Ragena Jordan, human resources specialist. "We expanded upon what we already had in place. There's a broad definition of business casual and we wanted our employees to know what we expected."

The policy now defines types of materials that are acceptable or unacceptable, as well as ruling out garments with logos, pictures, holes, tears and stains.

Sarah Baumgardner, the environmental communications coordinator at the Water Authority, further explains that the improvements to the dress code applied only to the authority's main office building and didn't affect employees in the field.

She says, "We stress that you may be the only person that the public has contact with and we want you to represent the company in a professional manner. 'Professional manner' includes what you say, your knowledge of the company, how you carry yourself and your attire. Even for office staff that doesn't have face-to-face interaction with the public, dressing in business attire automatically puts you in 'professional mode'."



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Sometimes dress code changes reflect a new understanding of workplace needs. At Carilion, the appropriateness of the necktie in the clinical setting is being reconsidered. Nancy Agee, chief operating officer of Carilion Clinic, says Carilion is "seeing a gradual change as more clinicians balance professional attire with concerns about patient safety and infection control. For instance, the hospitalists have pretty much abandoned ties. There is some evidence that ties are unclean and studies are in process now."

Agee also says, "Our dress code in the ambulatory areas, specifically the new clinic, requires certain colors, a polished look and a shirt with the Carilion Clinic logo." She believes that many Carilion employees embrace these changes, saying, "The staff is asking for even more direction and seems very 'bought in' to the more polished, professional look."

Dress codes are, indeed, alive and well, providing much-needed guidance in a complex workplace and freeing us to accomplish our business goals. 



 A promotional poster for a symposium. The background is a lush green jungle. In the upper center, a lemur is perched on a bamboo stalk. In the lower left corner, a tiger is looking towards the right. The text is overlaid on a textured, light-colored fabric-like background.

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Losing good employees >

Dear Getting a Grip: I'm the head of an information technology company and one of our first employees and our very best developer was just hired away by another local technology company. That developer learned everything he knows at my company and I considered the head of the hiring company a friend. This will be a real blow to our company's productivity, at least in the short-term, and probably to our standing in the local technology community. I'm furious at both of them. And I feel betrayed by both of them.

Dear Head: No doubt about it, when a valued employee leaves, especially to a competitor's company or, perhaps worse, to an ally's company, it smarts. The lost expertise, the lost productivity, the lost business, the time and cost to find, hire and train a new employee—the mind boggles. And an employee choosing to leave us does feel like a personal loss.

Opportunities at other companies for employees are hard not to view as costs for employers. However, employee turnover is increasingly a cost of doing business. The trend among Baby Boomers—a 2010 study by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics study reports they had already held 11 jobs from ages 18 to 44—will undoubtedly extend to their progeny. Instead of résumés, we'll all need computer databases stored in the cloud to keep track of our job histories.

Getting a Grip: Employers don't own their employees any more than parents own their children. You may "raise" them, but they're going to leave you. Sure, take a look at your corporate culture and see if that might be the catalyst for your loss of this employee—and more to come. If it's bad, make it good. By all means, ask the guy why he left. Civility is in order with the "friend" from the other company. The odds are good you'll take a turn at hiring that company's star employee soon enough. But from here on out, hire your employees knowing you will lose them. And start your own database in the cloud. For every position in your company, keep a queue of 11 people to fill it. 📧

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

Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:

Losing valuable employees is simply a part of doing business. Expect it and prepare for it.

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The impact of the birth rate >

Executive Summary:

While many first world nations are losing population at dangerous levels, the U.S. remains steady.

By Joel Williams

While researching this column, I followed a rabbit trail to something much more important to the future of our economy than pontificating on the current stock market or economy: global demographics.

Can you imagine China getting too old to produce before it becomes rich? What about the fact that the Russian fertility rate is not replacing its population, and by the end of this decade Eastern Europe will be entering the steepest drop in population in the developed world? Who's going to provide for all these old people?

I advise anyone bummed out about the economic crisis, the political situation or the stock market to read *The Graying of the Great Powers: Demography and Geopolitics in the 21st Century* by Neil Howe and Richard Jackson (the source for all my comments here). Howe and Jackson, researchers at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, lend support to my opinion that we as a country will—not may—make it through this

economic crisis because we are founded on democracy, civil liberties and free markets.

The U.S. is predicted to remain third in the world population rank, and the only one of the top 12 developed nations that will not have a population crisis. The reasons are a high comparative fertility rate, net immigration and no birth policies.

Why should young entrepreneurs and students care? Because entrepreneurs are running businesses to last many decades; and students are planning on careers in a global marketplace for which demographics will change the game several times. The hopeful news for the rest of us is that when all the dust settles, the good old US of A will turn out to be not so bad of a place to call home.

My message is that there is hope for our country and investments at the end of all this haranguing, albeit the end may not be in most of our lifetimes. But the decisions we and our government make today will have an impact on the future of our children and grandchildren. You can rest assured that companies in which we invest our retirement funds are looking at demographics.

The good news is that all population trends point to a more dominant role for the U.S. The issue will become not whether the U.S. will be important, but can we depend on the current developed nations to help? Trends suggest they will all be on the respirator. It looks like Lincoln's words about the USA will remain true for some time: "The world's last best hope." 

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Finding common ground >

Executive Summary:

Roanoke's Conflict Resolution Center looks for ways to solve disagreements by empowering both of the warring parties.

By David Perry

The Conflict Resolution Center might be one of the better service providers in the Roanoke Valley that almost no one knows about.

"We've been here 20 years," says Executive Director Eddy Smart. "I tell people I work at the Conflict Resolution Center and they say, 'That sounds great. Is that new?'"

The CRC offers a variety of services to the community designed as an alternative to the legal or criminal justice system.

"Conflict resolution is that whole range of services from going up to your neighbor and saying 'I don't like this or that,' all the way up to litigation where the judge makes the decision," Smart says. "Over here on the one side it's much more informal and you have 100 percent of the decision-making power. On the far end you have litigation, which is much more formalized and you have no decision-making power.

"Mediation falls somewhere in the middle of that spectrum because it's a formalized process," he says. "The parties still retain 100 percent of the decision-making power. You can walk away at any point. You can get as creative as you like. Agreements are detailed if that's more helpful or vague if that's more helpful."

Any agreements reached through the CRC are binding as contracts, and the agreements tend to last longer because the parties were actively involved in crafting them.

Most of the CRC's workload comes from court-ordered family mediations. In a typical year, they'll do 250 family cases and see about 1,500 people a year. However, Smart would like to increase their business exposure. From a marketing standpoint, "we're pretty passive just because of funding," says Smart. Most clients go to CRC.

"One of the areas I think it's important to market to is small businesses, because they don't have an HR department" to handle employee conflicts or staff training, says Smart.

CRC offers workshops on conflict resolution topics once a month, which can also be scheduled for groups of eight or more at the CRC office on Starkey Road in Roanoke County, or in the business itself. The CRC also offers a three-day course in basic mediation skills that attorneys can take for continuing education credit.



David Perry

Another venue into which the CRC has made inroads is the City of Roanoke school system. Through a federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, CRC staff provide

conflict resolution programs to students at Hurt Park, Westside and Morningside Elementary schools.

The center is also venturing into restorative justice, a response to crime that seeks to repair the damage done by the offender. Victims, offenders and community members are brought together with a facilitator to discuss the offense.

"Punishment does nothing for the victim," explains Smart. "Restorative justice is a victim-centered process."

A 501(c)(3) non-profit, the center was founded in 1990 and operates today on a budget of just \$150,000, mostly with part-time staff. About 20 percent of the budget comes from donations, with the rest coming from grants, contracts with courts in Alleghany and Rockbridge counties, and fee-based programs. 

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COO Charlotte Tyson

Seeing through patient's eyes >

Executive Summary:

LewisGale administration gets an on-the-floor look at how the hospital operates.

By Gene Marrano

A program at the LewisGale Regional Health System hospital in Salem, known as "Leadership Rounding," is designed to draw administrators closer to employees on the medical side of the business—and to patients themselves. Sometimes all it takes is asking if a patient is comfortable, if the room is quiet enough, if there's anything else the hospital staff can do.

Leadership Rounding touches every level of management at LewisGale, all the way to president Victor Giovanetti. Chief Operating Officer Charlotte C. Tyson is a member of the

IMPACT (Improving Patient-Centered Treatment) team at LewisGale that has implemented the program over the past year-plus. IMPACT initiatives also include message boards in patient rooms to encourage two-way communication.

Managers and department directors take part in the Leadership Rounding program. Most teams pick patients randomly to visit; Tyson says they are appreciative of the outreach effort. In some cases rounding team participants also forge professional relationships they never had before.

"We try to pair a non-clinical person with a clinical person," says Tyson, who has a nursing background. The clinical person is not a doctor or nurse making the regular rounds, but perhaps the manager of a department. There are almost 30 teams; Tyson says weekly participation is charted and is by no means a passing fancy. "This is so effective we don't want to let it go by the wayside."

Each team [usually two] has an assigned area to round on and see three patients.

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TODD PETERS

Corporate Vice President of Microsoft's Mobile Communications Marketing Group

Mr. Peters oversees outbound marketing, brand, communications, PR and product management for Windows Phone software and services. Previously with Staples, he served as VP of brand management and oversaw all US retail technology marketing. He led the strategic development of the Staples "Easy" brand and "Easy Button" campaign. Peters also spent six years at Intel and was responsible for international marketing and sales development for Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

In today's business arena, it is essential that top echelon leaders in business, government and social enterprise have a forum in which to exchange ideas regarding new developments in geographic/cultural effects and public policy issues, new technologies, energy developments, social sciences, economic trends and environmental concerns. The Forum Series from Ferrum College is a response to that need.

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For more information about how you and representatives from your company, university or institution can register to attend the Ferrum College Forum on Critical Thinking, Innovation & Leadership please contact the Ferrum College Office of Institutional Advancement at:

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Patient Belinda Jones (from left) with LewisGale's Robert Marmorstein, Michael Abbott, Victor Giovanetti.

Gene Marrano

Comments received are noted and any trends are tracked. "It also gives us an opportunity to provide positive feedback to our staff, which is important," says Tyson. Things as minor as turning off a hallway telephone ringer at night were implemented after patient feedback.

On a recent leadership round Giovanetti tagged along with assistant administrator Robert Marmorstein and Michael Abbott, the VP of oncology for HCA Southwest Virginia, which LewisGale is a part of. Marmorstein, perhaps reflecting his background in the resorts business, took the lead.

"Have you been comfortable?" he asked Opaline Reed, a Bedford County resident. Marmorstein also wanted to know if the noise level at night was low enough that she could sleep comfortably, and asked if she had any medication concerns. "Everyone has been wonderful," replied Reed.

Making sure that's the case is important to Marmorstein: "It's one of the things I'm extra passionate about. We take it very seriously."

Giovanetti joined in, telling Reed, "You ought to be treated like family." In another room in the 5 West wing he assured Belinda Jones that "we're all here for you." Feedback from patients also helps "[identify] the nursing superstars," at LewisGale, according to Abbott.

"The patients get a sense that everybody in this organization is committed to the quality of care that we deliver," says Giovanetti. That's what we're here for." Some of the best ideas for process changes have come from patients, he adds.

Tyson makes leadership rounds as well, which gives her personal insight into patient engagement and perception. Participants were trained in what she calls the Caring Model before they started practicing their bedside manner, making sure for instance that they relate properly and personally with the patient.

"It's a great opportunity," says Tyson, "to hear directly from our patients about their perception of care... and an opportunity to address [concerns] immediately." 



Rachael Garrity

Margaret Galecki of Coldwell Banker Townside: "It's about people."

It's been a long time since residential real estate has been buffeted by the kind of pressures it's facing today. Foreclosures, problems with less-than-professional banking practices, and the general economic malaise produced by a dicey job market can be a lethal combination, and forecasters don't see much near-term improvement.

All too aware that "build it and they will come"

The real estate app >

Executive Summary:

In a real estate market that is demanding increasing creativity, a Radford company, Coldwell Banker Townside, has a new phone app.

By Rachael Garrity

is not a winning strategy, savvy real estate professionals are looking for marketing tools that will boost sales, and at the same time reduce the limited funds available to commit to promotional efforts. Enter the Internet.

In a business that has been perennially described as local—industry analysts say the average homeowner moves within 7 to 10 miles of her existing home—it is obvious



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that bandwidth, connection speed and thumbs-up symbols on a Facebook listing just aren't enough. Yes, there are major search sites, but according to a post on the Real Estate Book Blog, of the 5 to 10 million unique users who visit these sites every month, no more than two percent actually investigate a given listing enough to call an agent.

Among local agencies, though, creative thinking and good business practice have melded to make a difference. As Margaret Galecki of Coldwell Banker Townside in Radford explains, "It's important to understand that it's all about connection, which is, of course, another way of saying it's about people." At Townside, that has spelled creating a smart phone app that will make contacting agents and receiving news of real estate happenings as easy as finding the scores on last night's game.

Now available for both Droid and iPhone, the CB Townside app, developed in collaboration with Anne Clelland of Handshake 2.0 in Blacksburg (and a columnist for FRONT), is just one part of the agency's effort to target a tech-savvy market, and at the same time carve out its own brand as an on-the-go organization that is an amalgam of tradition and evolution. "The Townside name has been here 30 years," Galecki points out. "We value that, as we do the backing of a national franchise. The idea is to keep the comfort of mom-and-pop, and enhance it

with quick, easy, reliable connectivity."

Jo Alderman, broker at Giesen Caldwell, where she has worked since the early 1970s concurs with the importance of local contacts. "What has happened is that the most cost-effective way to reach any potential buyers, local or not, has changed," she elaborates. "A good portion of the budget we used to spend for print marketing is now going toward one or another electronic medium. We reach out electronically, and we connect that way. I'm ready to admit that I can be technologically challenged, and that means I make sure that on my staff is someone who can keep us all up to speed."

At the same time, since Giesen Caldwell has not chosen to become part of a national franchise, Alderman also sees a great benefit in the potential for serving from other geographic areas better. "It's not unusual for a client moving into this area to have already been online and identified 8 or 10 properties from their own Internet research, and that streamlines our ability to find what they want," she says.

Clearly, these are two local enterprises that see the strength of plumbing electronic tools and sites for the kind of convenience that will make both the most technology-wary client and the geek ready to do business when the time is right. 



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The ABCs of Web site promotion >

Executive Summary:

Being first on a Google search list is desirable and attainable. Here's how.

By Janeson Keeley

Having your Web site appear on the first page of Google search results may be your virtual Holy Grail if you're a business owner wanting to increase traffic to your Web site. Search engine results pages (SERPs) show two categories of listings: unpaid "organic" rankings and paid ads. Because different techniques are used for each, and the jargon can be confusing, here are some tips for

decoding the acronyms you're likely to hear when you talk with a Web site promotion professional.

Search engine optimization (SEO).

Roanoke SEO specialist Marty Martin describes search engine optimization as "the methodology and modifications made to a Web site's architecture, content, code base and link patterns to improve its organic [unpaid] rankings in search engine results pages (or SERPs)."

- In order to optimize your Web site, changes must be made to your site's files.
- It can take as long as eight weeks for these changes to affect search engine results.
- There is no guarantee that you'll get a first page ranking for your desired terms.
- There are many types of SEO services, so the cost may be a one-time fee or an on-going contract.

Pay-per-click (PPC). Pay-per-click ad campaigns generate ads that are displayed above or to the right of the unpaid results and labeled "Ads" or "Sponsored sites." Your ads are displayed when a search is made on a keyword on which you have bid.

- Ads can be implemented almost immediately and require no changes to your Web site's coding.

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- You are charged only when a visitor clicks on the ad, which takes her to a page on your Web site.
- Zach Thompson, senior partner at RYP Marketing in Daleville notes, "These results are positioned based on two main factors: the price being paid for the clicks and the percentage of people who see that ad that then click on it." In order for an ad to appear on the first page of the search results, your keyword bid must be competitive with others', and the ad receive clicks.
- The cost is ongoing and dependent on the cost-per-click for each term and the number of clicks each ad receives.
- Thompson uses the acronyms SEM and PPC interchangeably to refer to paid ad placement.
- Martin defines SEM as an "umbrella term" that includes SEO, PPC, and other types of paid inclusion.
- Pamela Hall, a Roanoke-area campaign director with AdzZoo, views SEM as including "multiple digital outlets available including Web site search engines, GPS devices, directory service listings, smart phones, [and] social media sites."

All of these techniques can be effective ways to get your site on the first page of Google search results, and they can be used separately or in combination. A knowledgeable Web site promotion professional can help you select the ones that are likely to be most effective for you. 

Search Engine Marketing or Management (SEM). This is relatively new term and does not have a universally accepted definition.

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Western Virginia Regional Jail exterior.

all photos: David Perry



Dental chair

Work Spaces

Working the lockup >

Executive Summary:

The Western Virginia Regional Jail is built for today and tomorrow with more than penning the bad guys in mind.

By David Perry

This is no Mayberry lockup. The Western Virginia Regional Jail, which sits just off the highway by Dixie Caverns in western Roanoke County, is a state-of-the-art facility that leaves nothing to chance when it comes to securing the inmates and making the staff's jobs easier, safer and more efficient, too.

"We designed the building with flow in mind, not only for the inmates as they transition into the building, but for the staff itself," says Deputy Superintendent David Cox.

Opened in March, 2009, the jail was built by Howard Shockey & Sons of Winchester for \$122 million and designed by AECOM. It serves Franklin, Roanoke and Montgomery counties and the City of Salem, and is the first LEED-certified jail in Virginia. It has 265,000 square feet (about six acres under roof) and houses about 700 inmates—but was built with the future in mind.

"Some of our local jails were built during a time when people thought, "Okay, if I build this, it will solve all my problems," says Cox. "And for that period of time, it did. It didn't take into account where we'd be in 20 years. If you have to expand, what do you do? This facility was built with expansion in mind. There are certain areas that are built on a grander scale than what we need right now," such as the food service facilities. The jail also has ample room on its parcel along the Roanoke River for future construction.

The jail, which houses local prisoners (both those awaiting trial and those with sentences of less than 24 months), was also built with safety and convenience in mind. It starts out front, where staff can enter the jail and access the weight room by entering a code into a keypad and using a palm scanner.

The roll call room is big enough to accommodate a full shift of nearly three dozen without officers standing in the hallway and it is a nod to the training needs of the staff.

Inside the secure area of the jail, staff has control of every door and every system from a central control room, making it easier for staff to keep tabs on the operation. The jail is laid out to prevent incidents from turning into riots. Cox says the staff limits the movement of inmates and is careful to segregate the hard cases from the light offenders. "Staff never allows groups of



Multiple security doors



Dialysis unit



Palm scanner

more than about four dozen inmates to gather at any one time," he says.

Centrally-located programming areas such as classrooms, library and recreation areas also limit inmate movement and make it easier for the staff, which spends less time moving inmates from one part of the jail to another.

A video-based visitation system allows inmates to visit remotely with anyone at the smaller, local lockups in the participating municipalities. With the video link-up, the staff doesn't have to worry about things like contraband being passed.

Food service provides another efficiency. Because the jail uses a "quick-chill and reheat" system, meals can be pre-made, refrigerated and quickly heated to serving temperature inside special warmers.

Features such as in-house medical and dental facilities limit staff's time spent on hazardous duties such as transporting inmates into the community for medical care.

The security measures in the wings where the inmates are housed are a closely-guarded secret, but will look familiar to fans of the HBO series "Oz," a drama about prison life. Correctional officers have a commanding view of rows of cells and common areas where inmates gather at tables. 



David Cox



Weight room



Rob Clark: "It seems to me that these days, 'patience' is almost as important as 'location' when it comes to a successful real estate transaction."

Laura Purcell

Triumph of cooperation, creativity >

Executive Summary:

Real estate agents in the Roanoke and New River Valleys make the best of a tough situation

By Laura Purcell

Real estate has had its share of challenges in the last five years, but by creating strong working relationships, real estate agents in our region remain successful.

"I think things were too loose, they got too tight really fast, and are just now starting to normalize," says Bart Castleberry of Bondurant Realty Corporation in Radford.

He sees advantages in the difficult market.

"A slower buyer's market motivates everyone to work together," he says. "I've sold two really nice foreclosure listings recently that probably would not have sold if not for having a great team, all from different companies—buyer's agent, lender, attorney and appraiser. We all knew [one another] and trusted everyone else involved would deliver."

Castleberry loaned one client \$500 to cover repairs on a property. "I later got reimbursed by the bank," he says, "but without that trust, [the deal] never would have happened, and a few years ago, it would have been unheard of. I believe the working relationships and trust I've developed in the industry, especially locally, have suddenly become more valuable than ever, even priceless."

"Representing our clients is paramount," says Rob Clark, a Realtor with MKB in Roanoke. "I think real estate professionals, home buyers, and sellers are exercising a lot more patience and determination to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome. It seems to me that these days, 'patience' is almost as

important as 'location' when it comes to a successful real estate transaction."

Diana Blair, a manager with RE/MAX8 in Blacksburg, says the market has always faced its ups and downs. "When I began my career, interest rates were at an all-time high. The economy in the early 1980s was horrible. Ten years ago, we were in a seller's market. Buyers routinely paid more than the list price for a home, up until 2006."

"The challenges in today's market are centered around the financial concerns of our clients," Blair says. "People are fearful of losing money or making bad decisions," which Blair understands, having recently bought a home herself. "A couple made an offer on my home, which was not for sale. I decided to accept the offer and move. The incredibly low interest rates and attractive sales prices made it impossible

for me to resist buying a home this fall."

These huge financial decisions have strong emotional ties. "A home is, most likely, the largest asset a person will ever own, and [the process] must be treated with professionalism," says Desi Sowers, a Realtor and associate broker with RE/MAX8 in Blacksburg. Sowers says economic factors have hindered transactions, technology has brought the greatest amount of change to the real estate industry. "Today's clients are very tech savvy and somewhat demanding, but that's not necessarily a bad thing," Sowers says.

"At the beginning of the decade, many were predicting the Internet as being the end of the Realtor," Castleberry says. "Now 10 years later, I think the market has made Realtors even more essential, and the Internet our most powerful tool." 

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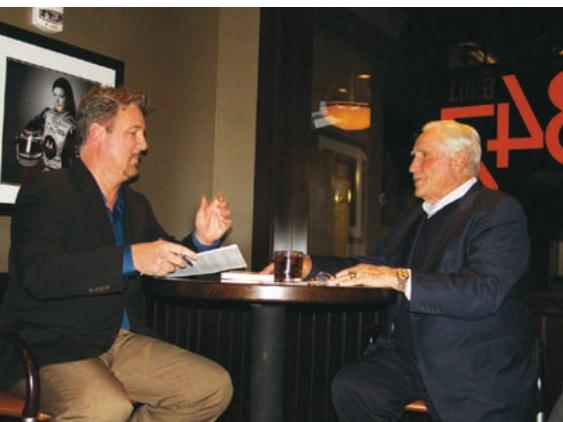
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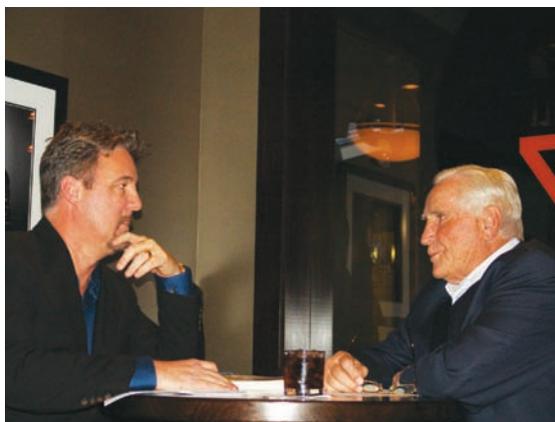
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Tom Field and Don Shula at Shula's 347 Grill



A coach and his business >

Executive Summary:

Shula's 347 Grill has opened in Roanoke. Miami Dolphins coach Don Shula and son, Dave, kick off the grand opening.

By Tom Field

Legendary. The word passed through the air like a perfectly thrown spiral. Better yet, it floated in the night, hovering above, remaining, like a well-placed kick, with record-breaking hang time.

Don Shula, head coach of the Miami Dolphins (1970—1995), entered the room with his entourage to kick off the grand opening of Shula's 347 Grill, a new restaurant in Roanoke, anchored to the Sheraton Roanoke Hotel and Conference Center. We sit at a high table. Private. Tucked away in the corner.

I wanted to toss a coin. Get the game started. Ask a thousand questions.

Instead, I centered on one question. Coach Shula, who's now 81 if you can believe it, accomplished the National Football League's only perfect season in 1972. He's also celebrated as the All-Time Leader in Victories, with 347 wins—hence, the name of the restaurant franchise.

But anyone can talk about the past. For a thousand years, in a thousand sports bars, a

thousand sports jocks will always and forever have plenty of time to talk about the glory days. (And they will.)

What about now? I'm here with an expert. Why waste a valuable opportunity on information, records, stats, and biographies anyone can get in a second from Google, Wikipedia, or his ol' man. I'll take one for the team, I thought. He's a coach after all. Let's see if we can get something we can use. See if he's still got game.

"Coach," I began, wondering if he really even wanted to take the snap, after all the fanfare and the 32nd grand opening of another restaurant, "what if today, the commissioner called you and said beginning this very season, the NFL has decided to change the playing field from 100 yards to 200 yards? There would be six downs to make 20 yards instead of four downs to make ten yards for a first down? Fourteen players on the field instead of eleven? Six periods instead of four quarters? And, in fact, the football itself, the old pigskin, would be changed to a new aerodynamic synthetic silicon object that's only pointed on one end? You're here with a good team. Players who have performed well for you along with promising new recruits. But they all know the game—as it was. Everything is changing. What would you do? How would you prepare?"

My picture is a threat to the very institution of American football. I'm thinking about what I hear, routinely and increasingly, from business owners, entrepreneurs, professionals, managers, and employees. People searching for a way to be competitive or just to remain viable—in a world many of them see as rapidly changing,



and perhaps becoming a bit too complex.

Don Shula does not hesitate a second. His ever-present Florida sunshine smile frames his eyes, bright, as they lock on me. And I imagine him taking off his headset with one hand, holding a clipboard in the other.

"The first thing I would realize," he says, a clear voice, calm, but cutting through the chatter and busyness around us, "is that the commissioner is telling everyone else the same thing." *The lesson is clear. He's in no weaker position than any other coach. He's not disadvantaged. He can deal with it if everyone else has to abide by the same rules.*

"Now it simply becomes an exercise in problem-solving." *He's identified the principle task at hand.*

"We have to figure it out. This is no time for excuses. The key is information—and we have to gather all the information we can." *Preparation involves knowledge. I get it.*

"We want to win." *A most clear objective.*

The last four words of our conversation seem so expected and natural from Don Shula, that you might miss them. But you better not if you're a player. And the words are so appropriate, you begin to wish you heard them more often. From leaders. The leader of your team. The leader of your company. The leader of your country.

And tonight, the four words serve as the

perfect handoff to the director of the Shula restaurant franchise, Don Shula's son, Dave Shula (also a former NFL player and coach and one of Don's five children).

In similar fashion Dave Shula speaks of winning, competition, problem-solving, gathering information, and figuring things out in uncertain markets and changing environments.

Before the evening is over, you quickly realize that Dave Shula is no mere figurehead, simply shuffle-passing the family name to some outsourced enterprise—though he could easily have done that. He's intricately involved in the restaurant business, the expansion, the operations, the management, the strategy—down to the venue setup (hand picking the photos on the wall), and the food selection and preparation.

The Roanoke site selection, for example, he says, came about from market analysis (information gathering) and a strong commitment from the Starwood Hotels group and Stonebridge Companies to conduct an extensive property makeover.

"We've had good successes in our smaller markets," Shula says. Twenty-nine of the thirty-two restaurants are anchored to hotels. And he describes the careful attention to detail given to the environment and experience, which is reflected in the Sheraton Roanoke site.

"We want upscale quality food," he says, "but not presented on a white tablecloth. We want to provide a place that's not intimidating. This [Roanoke] is a good fit for us. I have a friend from Virginia Tech, and I've always liked it here; and I like to come here with the mountains... I want a place where people can come and enjoy the experience." *I want to win. I keep hearing the echo.*

The Shula name is legendary. And like a third down conversion play being called into a huddle, the legend is being passed down. On an exquisite menu, in a low-lighted, clean, modern and comfortable little restaurant grill, attached to an airport-adjacent hotel, in Roanoke, Virginia. 



Ann Swank and her Tomboy drill: "I miss being on roofs."

all photos: Erin Pope

Translating the tomboy >

Executive Summary:

Ann Swank of Tomboy Tools is still teaching, but what the students are learning has a lot to do with the practical.

By Erin Pope

Tomboy Tools representative Ann Swank has always had an interest in mechanics, and has long considered herself equally handy as most men. And when the one-time physics and life science teacher retired from the Roanoke City school system nearly three years ago, she knew that spending her days being idle would be personally impossible.

A woman with a slight frame and high energy, Swank's love for imparting practical, tactile knowledge has led her to a fulfilling career teaching Roanoke area women how to use a unique line of hardware with confidence and proficiency.

Swank grew up in the countryside outside Denver, and was the outdoorsy, tree-scaling middle child of five siblings. "I was an independent, do-it-yourself kind of kid," says Swank. "My father was afraid of heights, but they've never bothered me, so I was the one to change all the light bulbs in our house."

Intrepid and curious, Swank developed an early ease with activities that were once considered primarily masculine and she has never believed that gender expectations should limit a woman's interest in home improvement.

When Swank's husband saw a Tomboy Tools commercial, he instinctively knew his wife would want to be involved with the company. And when Swank met a Tomboy Tools consultant at the Salem Home Show soon

thereafter, she knew conclusively how she could be an enthusiastic asset.

Swank's extroverted and disarming personality has surely helped break down the barriers of self-doubt women often place on themselves and their abilities. "Some women have been taught that working with tools just isn't for them," says Swank. She says the prevalence of more single women—either by choice or circumstance—has prompted more interest in female-driven home repairs.

There's a plan in place to introduce either green or chocolate as potential shades for the tools in the company's line, but right now, they are all a vivid, Barbie pink. Swank jokes that the color "helps keep men from stealing them," but is also quick to point out the motto etched on the company's best-selling hammer: Pink for a Purpose. The company donates a generous part of its proceeds to Avon's Walk for Life and Relay for Life—events which support breast cancer research, and in which Swank has been proud to personally participate.

The Tomboy Tools are distinctive in that they've been designed to accommodate a



Jumper cables in Tomboy Pink.



The Tomboy tool belt that no man would steal.

woman's own ergonomic needs. Swank says most manufactured tools are bulky, and aren't designed with a woman's upper-body musculature in mind. The company's hammer is a sleek, 13-ounce implement with a notched metallic head that can hold a nail. Every tool in the line—from the tape measure, to the utility knife, to the multi-bit ratchet screwdriver—is streamlined to fit a woman's grip.

Swank says the oldest client she's had was in her 70s, and Swank looks forward to working with a local Girl Scout troop in the near future. She enjoys interactively teaching women of all ages how to be handier and more secure in their strengths and skills, and

strives to serve as a dexterous example.

Her church, Greene United Methodist, has long participated in the construction of Habitat for Humanity houses, and Swank has helped erect 17 homes for area families. She hopes for more area volunteerism with these projects, and notes that even small kids can use paintbrushes—and would probably have fun with the experience.

When asked if she has plans to eventually help build an 18th Habitat house, Swank flashes a bold smile and wields her beloved 1 pound, 11 ounce baby pink drill. "Oh, I certainly hope so," she exclaims. "I miss being on roofs!" 

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Darrell Laurent at the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference: “Somewhere in the midst of all that belly-aching, I got the idea of trying to help freelancers make some sense of it all.”

Dan Smith

A bridge for writers >

Executive Summary:

Darrell Laurent put together a consortium of working writers that produces stories for publications all over the country and income for those sometimes struggling scribes.

By Lori White

It could be said that Darrell Laurant has cornered the market on the world of freelance writing opportunities. Laurant, a nearly 40 year veteran of journalism, is no stranger to the freelance world despite a 30 year run as local columnist at Lynchburg’s News and Advance.

The idea for his brainchild, The Writers’ Bridge, was spurred by his experience with a now-defunct Web site called Themestream, which Laurant describes as “an ancestor of current click-for-pay sites. You wrote

stuff—virtually anything—posted it, and got paid according to how many ‘visits’ you received. There was a fair amount of inter-communication between members, and we did a lot of complaining about the randomness of the freelance world. Somewhere in the midst of all that belly-aching, I got the idea of trying to help freelancers make some sense of it all.”

His creation offers its approximate 200 members an efficient means of scouting out ideas and markets. Members receive daily e-mail announcements concerning viable writing and editing jobs from around the world, along with periodic lists of marketable ideas. Members are then encouraged to apply for any of the freelance work that they feel suited for, and follow-through on any of the ideas.

For \$10 a month per member, Laurant works hard in his dual roles of facilitator and mentor, providing steady encouragement and prodding his members with frequent reminders to contact him with questions

or assistance with queries and markets for various pieces. He's clear on the fact that he is "not in this for the money. Were that the case, I would have bailed out years ago." He adds that thus far, the project has actually cost him money, since not all members are organized about paying their monthly dues. "Some day, I hope to see it grow into something quite profitable, but at this point, I'm not going to lose a good writer over a few dollars."

Laurant was motivated to start TWB in part by the economic slump on the freelance industry, which caused many lucrative markets to collapse and created a glut in the number of freelancers when many full-time journalists lost their jobs. "When I think about what's gone down in the freelance writing world the last few years," he says, "I'm reminded of this line from a Neil Young song: 'Don't let it bring you down ... it's only castles burning.'"

Even prior to the economic slump, the freelance industry was a difficult one to break into and be successful with. There was a paucity of publishers, who, inundated with manuscripts, were disinclined to entertain new writers. With the arrival of the Internet, though, the tide of freelancing turned significantly. Where before it was difficult for a writer to get his work out for public consumption, the Internet gave "public" an entirely new spin, and threw open

wide previously closed doors.

Now, it's all about realizing "that you have something to offer that you can make money with," says Laurant. When he was in college, writing term papers for "beer and date money," he learned a valuable fact, and that's that "surprisingly few people in the world are good writers, just as few people are good musicians or good auto mechanics."

Freelancers are now eagerly sought after by innumerable blogs, Web sites, and online magazines seeking content. "Of course," Laurant cautions, "everything has a downside. In the old days, if you made it, you made it big—big advances, dollar-a-word magazines. Not so much anymore. A writer these days has to carefully [navigate] the landscape to avoid being exploited in one way or another."

With TWB, Laurant makes it his business to carefully screen markets and job postings, and either dismiss or provide a word of warning for those he's not sure about.

Laurant has a vision for the future of TWB, including expanding the service to assist magazine and Web site editors as well as bloggers and dramatically increasing membership. He sees the service as becoming "a community in which we help each other with ideas, support, and editing." 

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Christy Gabbard: “Sustainability does not just reside in agriculture and it’s not just engineering and it’s not just natural resources.”

Becky Hepler



Kathy O'Hara

Dan Smith

Finding common markets >

Executive Summary:

The Catawba Sustainability Center continues to evolve and its focus remains on the practical and the probable.

By Becky Hepler

They're cultivating more than just greens at the Catawba Sustainability Center these days and the creative ideas and the interesting projects springing up are just as bright and colorful as Kathy O'Hara's Swiss chard.

The farm that formerly fed the tuberculosis sanitarium in Catawba has been repurposed to be a springboard for researching and

demonstrating the latest businesses that will practice a kinder, gentler agriculture and to foster an interdisciplinary approach to sustainability. Says center director, Christy Gabbard, "If you think about it, sustainability does not just reside in agriculture and it's not just engineering and it's not just natural resources, but it's how all of these intersect to help address green issues."

In terms of researching and demonstrating advanced techniques, the Center is showcasing a Smart Farm project started by the VT Center for Human-Computer Interaction. It works with the Horticulture Department using in-ground soil sensors and computerized delivery systems that transmit current information on soil conditions to land managers, usually via an iPod Touch. With this information, managers can micromanage the nitrogen applications, and that saves money and improves water quality. That's important since Catawba Creek is part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Last year, Gabbard says about 50 students worked with the center on projects that included an architectural study for turning one of the dairy barns into an educational facility. Another was a virtual tour of the property and one group of students took over the compilation and printing of the 2nd edition of the New River Valley Food Directory, a guide to finding locally



Becky Hepler

Ripariani buffer project.

produced food started by the Center.

Student volunteers also helped last spring to plant trees for a riparian buffer project along Catawba Creek and its tributaries on the property. This project will improve water quality by preventing erosion and stabilizing the banks. It can generate cash from the edible or medicinal products of the native plants and those deemed valuable by the floral industry, such as bitterroot or red-twigged dogwood.

This type of agro-forestry project is the essence of Gabbard's work. Her goals include trying to find value within sustainable practices, searching for markets, then bringing consumers and producers together for everyone's benefit. Much of this is done under the aegis of VT Earthworks, an incubator of agro-forestry businesses modeled after VT Knowledgeworks.

Earthworks and the Center offer the Grower's Academy (at the Roanoke Higher Education Center, where CSC has its offices) to people interested in starting such businesses. These sessions provide information not only on the production aspect, but also business issues such as creating a workable business and marketing plans and building the network of consumers and markets.

Kathy O'Hara's greenhouse.

Becky Hepler

People who finish the course and become members of VT Earthworks have other privileges. Those interested in farming but have no land can enter into an agreement to use the land at the Center. "It's not a long-term situation, but people have the opportunity to see the feasibility of the business and what it's like to work in this field. Eventually, they'll transition to their own land," says Gabbard.

This is how Kathy O'Hara, of Greens To Go, got her start last year. Using a plot of land behind a wind break of old hay bales and a hoop house that she built, O'Hara grew a variety of greens she sells to restaurants, at farmer's markets and on Runner-Bean.com, a virtual farmer's market she started.

This year, in concert with Roanoke County, Gabbard hopes to get the kitchen at the Catawba Community Center certified, so that business people selling at the Catawba Farmer's Market (which is moving from the General Store to the Community Center this year) can use it to add value to their products.

"The Center is all about networking, finding common markets and consumers and getting them together," Gabbard says. "It's kind of like we have to reinvent what was successful 50 to 75 years ago, that community based system." 



Retired director Larry Lynch (right) with new director Ali Nazimi of The Management Institute at Roanoke College

Dan Smith

Schooling the execs >

Executive Summary:

The Management Institute at Roanoke College takes the practical approach in preparing up-and-coming executives in the region.

By Dan Smith

Ali Nazimi noticed it almost from the first day of class. “These people fact check you as you speak,” he says.

“These people” are most often middle managers with a few upper-level executives thrown in and they are the students who populate Roanoke College’s popular Management Institute. It’s a two-decades-old program that recently got a new director who’s not all that new, Nazimi.

The Roanoke College business administration and economics professor has been with the program virtually from its beginning and he

has slid into the chair occupied by Larry Lynch for more than 20 years. Lynch has retired from the Management Institute’s director’s chair, but remains active in the classroom. He’s the guy primarily responsible for the direction MI has taken over the course of its history.

TMI was the brainchild of Melinda Cox—now with Roanoke County—the former director of the Center for Community Education & Special Events at Roanoke College, who started in October of 1986. Virtually her first duty was to respond to a letter from Sam Lionberger Jr. of Lionberger Construction in Roanoke, who wanted to “develop a course of study over a semester that would not be intrusive to an employee’s family life and also allow [the employee] the opportunity to stay on top of [his] job and implement new information and methods.” Cox became the first director of TMI and is a graduate.

“The program runs itself,” says Nazimi. “It is simply a matter of making connections with the business community and involving companies in the Roanoke Valley.”

"Initially we determined that something was missing in leadership training for middle and upper management in the Roanoke Valley," says Lynch. "These were people who didn't have time to devote to schooling at Virginia Tech, UVa or Washington & Lee and we believed we could help with their development without disrupting their jobs." Ten classes were set up over a period of 12 weeks with an introduction reception and a graduation at the front and back.

Jess Newbern of Newbern Trane in Roanoke was a member of the first class and has remained active in TMI. He says, "I attended the first class because I wanted to experience first-hand what I would eventually ask others in my organization to do."

Classes are developed based upon what is topical and what the students want to learn. Nazimi says, "Human resources always

seems to be a key issue in all companies. Motivation and labor relations keep coming up, as well."

TMI candidates must be recommended by their supervisors and present resume, application, and the documentation you'd use in getting a job. Lynch says classes often include "information we can't discuss in our regular [undergraduate] classes because [students don't have enough] background."

Results are difficult to track specifically, says Lynch, but there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that graduates of the Institute climb the company ladder quickly. The majority of students are middle-aged, mid-career professionals, but a few promising younger employees slip in occasionally.

Nazimi says there is discussion about expanding the program to a fall course. 



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Arts Council's Rhonda Morgan: "We want to stay relevant and truly benefit the entire arts community."

Dan Smith

New energy at the Arts Council >

Executive Summary:

Rhonda Morgan, who is steeped in the arts in this region and who has been a tireless advocate for artists, takes over the reins.

By Erin Pope

When Rhonda Morgan accepted the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge's offer to take on the role of executive director in January, she knew the position would be uniquely challenging.

At a time when arts organizations are financially squeezed as they rarely have been in the past and cooperation among them is at a premium, Morgan's basic philosophy revolves around teamwork and mutual support among the organizations.

Morgan says she is excited to foster the diverse aspirations of the artists in the Roanoke region and beyond. Operating under the philosophy that "art is for everyone," she insists she is eager to illustrate how the region's art scene is already thriving—and

growing more robust every day."

That philosophy is especially germane as the shadow of the Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke spreads over all the arts. The Taubman for several years has absorbed a considerable portion of the money spent on arts organizations, leading to resentment from those who feel even more pinched than usual. Taubman executives recently announced their intent to work more collaboratively in the future.

"My approach to the Taubman is a cooperative one," explains Morgan. "We want to serve [it] through partnerships, collaborations, advocacy, etc. And I think it would make sense that the Taubman would become a significant part of a team that provides these opportunities to our regional artists and community at large. The rich cultural experiences that will be gained from these interactions are immense."

The precarious economy has redefined how people prioritize their leisure activities, and Morgan believes that making art affordable and accessible is imperative to maintaining public interest in the patronization of galleries and museums.

A good-humored, vivacious, woman with an unpretentious demeanor, Morgan (who is 49, but looks 15 years younger) was born

in Salem, graduated from Mary Baldwin College with a bachelor's in arts education, and has experience working with both children and adults. She still participates frequently in what she deems "community-minded collaboration," engaging in supportive dialogue with students, teachers, artists, and donors with an equally-distributed amount of respect and camaraderie. Morgan loves engaging local artists who dabble in all mediums, and takes her role as an advocate of the arts seriously. "We want to stay relevant and truly benefit the entire arts community," she says.

Morgan's desire to build a dynamic network of artists has led her to visit smaller communities like Bedford, Christiansburg, Blacksburg, Fincastle, and Clifton Forge where, she says, there are throngs of incredibly talented and perhaps unsung people who could use the exposure of having their work displayed or advertised in a larger market. Morgan is eager to promote exhibitions, workshops, and other opportunities not only in Roanoke, but also wants to publicize events happening in our neighboring towns and on local college campuses.

Perhaps Morgan's past experiences homeschooling her now-grown children have led her to appreciate what she calls "a lifestyle of learning." She recalls how a

tactile relationship with the world gave her kids an insatiable curiosity and sense of unfettered creative freedom. Morgan cites the Roanoke Youth Arts Connection—a program devised by the Arts Council in which a student has the chance to work with a professional artist—as a way for a young person to learn how to successfully embark upon a profession in the arts under the tutelage of a more experienced mentor.

Morgan is enthusiastic about working with and learning from her peers at the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge, and is confident in their plans for 2011, after a shaky 2010. "I'm excited to have the support of the board, and that they're fully engaged," she says. "We're working with everyone to build a strong and healthy artistic community." 



Rhonda Morgan with Emily Sibitzky of the Arts Council staff.

Dan Smith



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A little help with the business >

My View

By Dan Smith
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

Excutive Summary: *Writing, like all businesses, sometimes requires expert help we hadn't counted on needing.*

I suppose it's not surprising that business and marketing work their way into the smallest corners of our lives and take them over, sometimes to the point of dominating.

That occurred to me recently at the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference, which I founded four years ago as an event centered on building a writers community in this region. It was a modest goal, one that had been attempted on different scales in the past without much success. Writing is often a lonely, solitary profession, both by necessity and choice. Writers tend to watch and study, rather than jump in the middle and stir things up. But, I thought and later proved, writers like each others' company, even if they don't say it often.

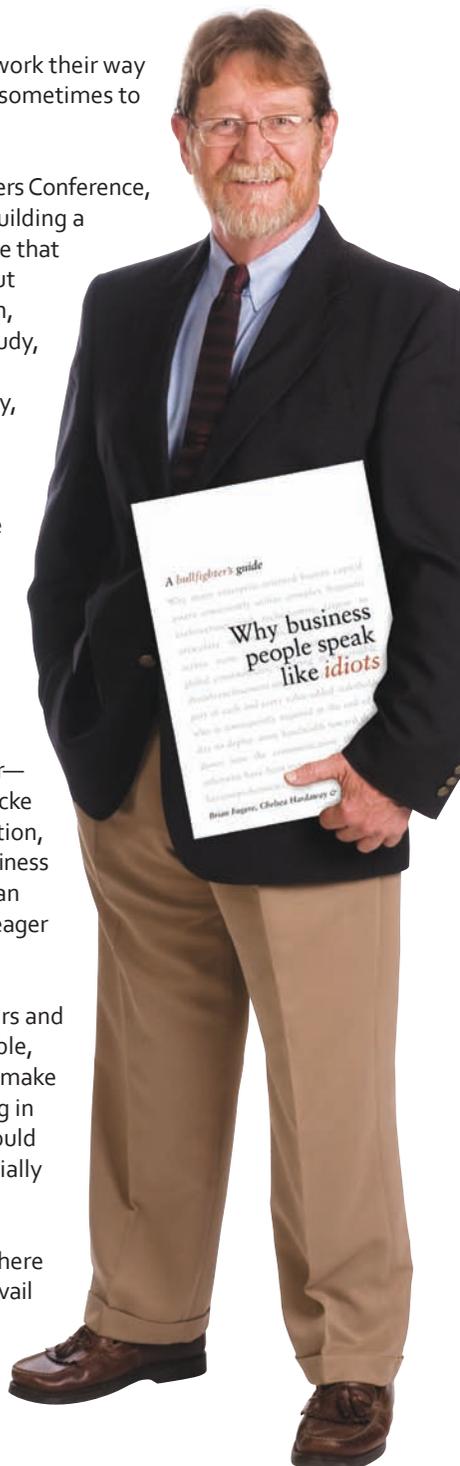
The conference has evolved over four years, retaining its core of writing instruction, but taking on the reality of the market and what that means to the writer and his work. Sometimes it means the protection of the law; other times it means help with marketing the product; still others, it's tax advice. All of that is small business, basic and essential, something we can't escape no matter how pure we believe our work to be at its essence.

It was a revelation to me a year ago when the most popular—and best graded—speaker at the conference was Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore attorney David Cohan, who talked protection, story ownership, pricing, contracts and the very stuff of business to a group of writers who often undervalue their work to an absurd extent. But it was a teachable moment for a crowd eager for guidance in this part of its craft.

This year, there was more of the same. We had two lawyers and a couple of literary agents, those often critical, disagreeable, unreasonable souls who tell us our work is crap, but if we'll make a few adjustments, they may be able to sell it. After sitting in on this class, I thought, "This kind of blunt assessment would be truly marvelous for anybody starting a business, especially when we consider that 80 percent of them fail."

The good advice for the would-be business owner is out there and it's often free, but not many beginning entrepreneurs avail themselves of the opportunity. I'm not unsophisticated in the business end of writing, since I own half of a magazine, but most of what I write outside the magazine is for

continued to Page 52

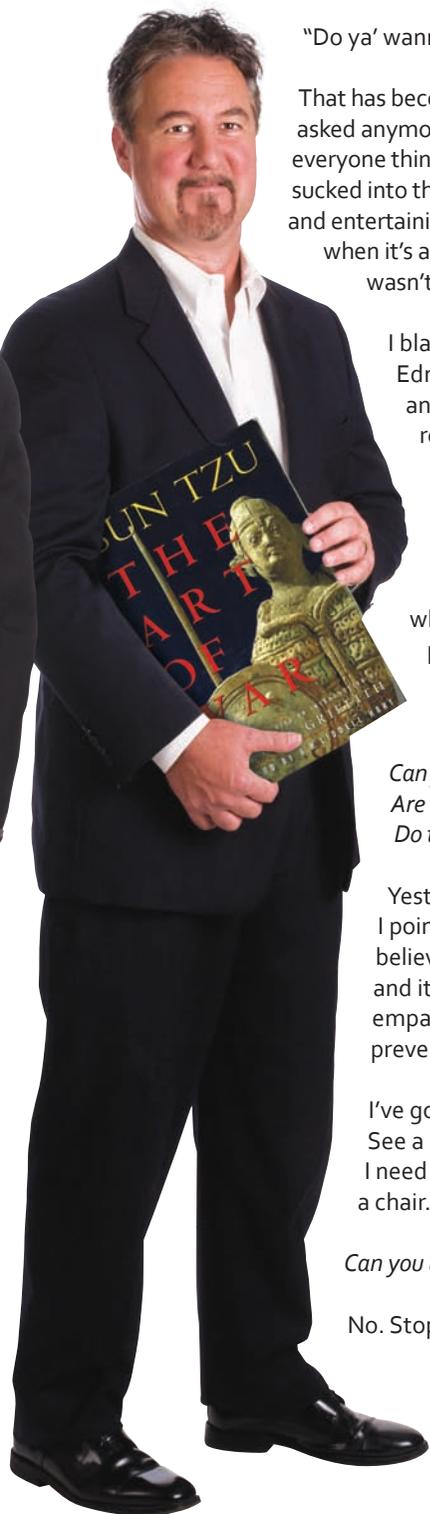


Critical thinking >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

BLOG: [ontapfrompub.blogspot.com]



"Do ya' wanna know what I think?"

That has become the rhetorical question of our times. You never hear it asked anymore. That's because there's no need to ask it. We all hear what everyone thinks. All the time. And I recently noticed how much I've been sucked into the game. There's no more sitting in the corner, quietly. Smiling and entertaining stimulating conversation and only sharing your opinion when it's asked. When's the last time you heard someone say, "Well, I wasn't going to say anything, but since you asked my opinion...?"

I blame blogs. I blame TV reality shows. I blame Amazon and Edmunds and Hotels.com and CNET and Consumer Reports and talk shows and the thousands upon thousands of review sources, with their cute little stars and circles and charts and thumb-ups, thumb-downs.

Now, I have to blame myself.

My critical eye has been injected with steroids to the point where I am constantly in review mode. Part of it is my professional demand—but the great sucking has resulted in a lack of discernment. Forget the quest for world peace.

Our opinions are required on far more relevant matters:

*Can you believe she flubbed that word, singing the National Anthem?
Are they seriously putting religious material in a public school?
Do they think we're going to let them put toys in fast-food kid meals?*

Yesterday, I ran into the room where my wife was sitting, and I pointed at the open book in my hand, screaming, "Can you believe this? This is one of the most popular novelists of our day... and it's written like it's for a 12 year-old!" She shakes her head empathetically, but now I've come to realize she's doing that to prevent further discussion so I'll move on.

I've got to chill. I've got to read a book without taking notes. See a play without writing a review. Take a drive to nowhere. I need a crisp beer on a hot beach and gentle breeze. Not even a chair. I'm beginning to think a lot of us need this.

Can you believe that tacky beach towel those idiots are using over there?

No. Stop it. Breathe deeply.

We do need to know what each of us is thinking. We just don't need to know it on every subject at every second of the day. But that's just my opinion. Ya' wanna know what I think. Right? 

Smith / My View

from Page 50

sale, too, whether it's freelance articles for magazines (not my own), books or contract work for classroom teaching aids.

The conference had several classes on using the Internet in areas as disparate as book publishing, blogging and promotions. It was the latter that I needed immediately for a new children's book I had just published and wanted to market. That's where one of our columnists, Janeson Keeley, came to the rescue. Janeson, who writes the NetFRONT column for us, met me in her office (Panera Bread) for three hours and in that time, we set up a Web site (savings Homer), a Facebook page, and Twitter and gmail accounts, all with the specific purpose of promoting *Saving Homer*.

When the sites were up and the first messages went out, Janeson issued what might have been her most important advice of the entire session, "Don't forget that these tools exist. Just having the Web site doesn't mean anybody

will go to it. You have to promote it. And that means an investment of time." And how.

I am not unaware in the ways of the 'net, having operated three blogs for more than a year and contributed to our own vbfront.com Web site frequently. But that is part of my day job and it is built into that day. Marketing *Saving Homer* is much closer to an avocation requiring vocational time.

Janeson is proficient in using Twitter and Facebook to maximum benefit, and I thought I was pretty good at it. But I wasn't in her league. Interconnectivity with that community takes time and effort to build and my guess is that's why businesses like Janeson's JTKWeb are springing up all over the place. I know three different people (all women) who have gone into business for themselves in this area recently.

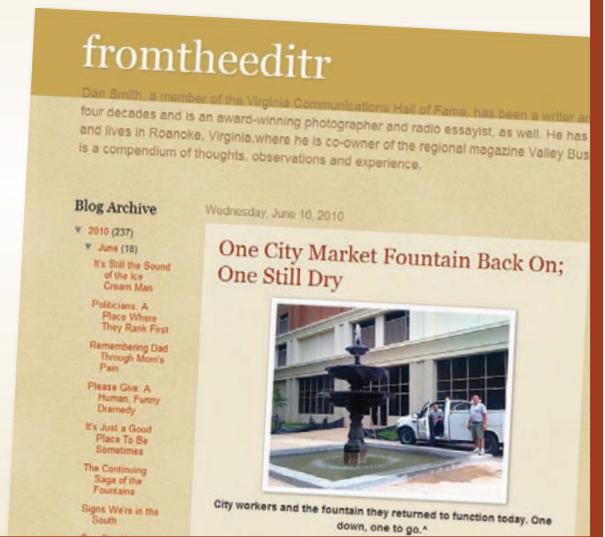
And that, I suppose, brings us to the point: most of us don't have the time or expertise to do this alone and if we're writers, it's especially difficult because that side of the brain is often dead. 

fromtheeditr.blogspot.com

More

Dan Smith

than most
can stand...



Letters

Good job

It is great to recognize Virginia Tech—and its entire footprint—as one of the the three primary drivers of the regional economy (FRONT cover story, February). I often share with job seekers and new people moving to the area to get involved in anything Virginia Tech, Carilion or New Century Technology Council related. This is where the leadership, growth and economic prosperity lay in our region. Nice work.

Stuart Mease
Director of Undergraduate Career Services
Virginia Tech Pamplin College of Business

Clarifications

All of us at Virginia Tech Carilion enjoyed the article on our students getting involved in service learning projects in the community ('Learning out of class,' January FRONT), as well as the several other mentions of VTC throughout the edition.

I did want to clarify a few things, though, just for future reference. There were just two small things in the service learning article by Gene Marrano. First, Dr. Trinkle got an extra title. He is our "Associate Dean for Community and Culture," but is not the

"assistant dean for medical education." The article lists both as his title; he is just the first. Also, there were a couple of times that the school was referred to as Virginia Tech-Carilion. The hyphen is not needed in this case.

The story says our curriculum is focused on training physicians who plan to go into research. This is not exactly true. Our curriculum does integrate research throughout the four years of study, but the school's goal is to develop physicians who are familiar with research so they can use the latest studies to better treat patients (translate research from the bench to the bedside). While some of our students may decide to devote much of their time to research, that is not our ultimate goal because we'd like our students to go onto interact and work with patients.

Alison Matthiessen
Marketing Communications Specialist
Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine
and Research Institute

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

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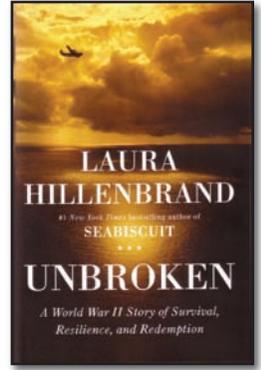
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Books @ the FRONT >

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@vbfront.com



One of the year's best

Laura Hillenbrand exhausts me. That's why I can't get enough of her. The author of the remarkable *Seabiscuit* is back with *Unbroken: An Extraordinary True Story of Courage and Survival* (Fourth Estate, \$27.77). In this tale of an Olympic runner who becomes a Japanese prisoner of war during WWII, Hillenbrand is again simply relentless, wearing out the reader with a tale of courage, determination and human endurance that is often difficult to read. Difficult because of what's involved in the life of Louie Zamperini and certainly not because of Hillenbrand's marvelous writing and exhaustive research.

Like *Seabiscuit*, this is a tale that is difficult to believe, heavily documented though it is. Zamperini, before the war, was expected to be the first man to break the four-minute mile. The war interrupted that pursuit and he had to turn his obsession elsewhere—to staying alive, first on a 47-day ocean float following a plane crash, then in a succession of prison camps where cruelty was the coin of the realm. Post-war, his PTSD had to be faced with that same courage and conviction.

Hillenbrand is truly one of our better storytellers, historians and reporters. Her writing is crisp and rich with extraordinary detail, her eyes serving us at every juncture. Like *Seabiscuit*, *Unbroken* is a story of unparalleled endurance, courage and ultimate victory and it's one of the best books of the year.

—Dan Smith

Special sequel

Against my usual inclination and certainly my preference, I stepped into John Casey's

Compass Rose (Knopf; \$28) knowing full well it was a sequel. I hadn't read his critically acclaimed *Spartina*, released way back in 1989. No matter. There is no doubt he's picking up a story where it was left off, but in essence, that's the truth of every great story—and *Rose* stands on her own. The book is very well written.

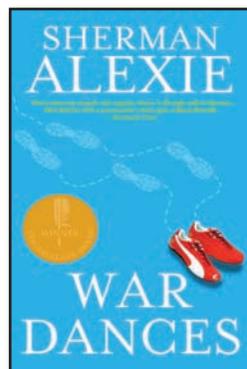
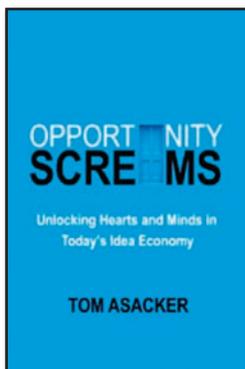
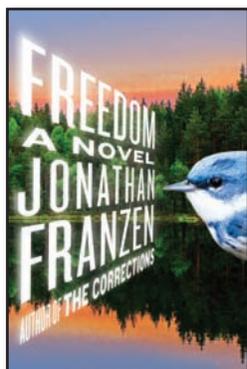
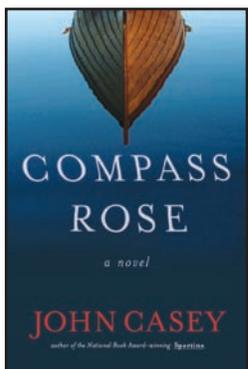
Often, it's contrived when a character or narrator states the theme of a work, but Casey purrs, "If I had to say in a single phrase what my life has been, it is this—a love affair with this small piece of rock-strewn woods and ponds, and the people who truly live in it." The chapters are short, purposeful, brief glimpses of real people who slip in easily but go down deep. The stagnant, suffering characters are those who don't build boats (real or allegorical)—they watch other characters build them—or worse—they merely step into the boats and ride along. *Rose* tells us you have to pursue something—even if it's the moment.

Two haunting perceptions navigated with me throughout the journey: an undercurrent of melancholy in the intertwined lives inhabiting this fictional small Rhode Island sea town; and the reality of the strong current of time. Even in a slow place like South County, any sturdy boat can sail away fast.

—Tom Field

'Satisfying read'

The Berglunds are a family that put the fun in dysfunctional in Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom* (\$28, Farrar Straus Giroux). It's exhausting to read the litany of bad choices these people make and the complicating consequences of their choices. But through the magic of Franzen's writing and his big warm heart that



leads to incisive, funny insights on the human heart, interpersonal relationship and the world at large, you come to understand and even like these people in all their messy complexity.

The novel gives Franzen a chance to vent on the social issues and culture of the 1980s and 1990s—stay-at-home moms vs. working mothers, urban gentrification, environmental issues such as overpopulation, land conservation and mountain top removal mining, indie music, the first Gulf War and the privatization of the defense process. Read it for the prose and the ideas he espouses and in the end, find the hope that makes this such an ultimately satisfying read.

—Becky Hepler

Interactive excitement

The biggest challenge facing small business owners is how to open the doors to opportunity and capitalize on the people behind them. Author Tom Asacker explains in *Opportunity Screams* (\$24.95, Paramount Market Publishing) that the “future belongs to those unwilling to accept the stifling status quo, to those who stay excited, puzzled, and surprised. It belongs to those child-like people who are constantly asking questions and wondering how things work, to the geniuses.”

Asacker gives us a perspective and executes his message in a way that stimulates creativity and demonstrates the techniques he ascribes to. The text will remain fresh and interactive by using keywords throughout the text tied to his Web site. You can log on to the book’s Web site and watch videos about certain topics in order to keep them current. You can also send comments the author will answer through video blog posts. It brought the book to life.

Opportunity Screams is definitely worth the read. Short, easy to understand, and stimulating to creative thought, my iPad was full of notes on how to open the doors.

—Lynda McNutt Foster

Get the audio book

A prolific and prize-winning author, Sherman Alexie is one of the best known voices for Native American life and culture, and certainly there are many of those issues addressed in *War Dances*, the Pen-Faulkner Award winning collection of short stories, poems and essays. But that kind of labeling hides the fact that his insights do apply to all humans.

His characters are flawed—the vintage clothing dealer with the failing marriage who courts a fellow traveler across several airports—but there is a gentleness about them that makes you forgive them and understand their failings. Alexie does heart-wrenching and funny equally well and sometimes in the same story, like the one about the son watching his father die from a “natural Indian death,” alcoholism and diabetes.

Laughing through the tears is a very real occurrence here. Do yourself a favor and get the audio book so you can hear all the inflection and emotion in the lyrical speech he creates.

—Becky Hepler

(The reviewers: Lynda McNutt Foster is founder of www.synergysessions.org. Tom Field is FRONT publisher. Becky Hepler is a school librarian in Montgomery County and a freelance writer. Dan Smith is editor of FRONT.)

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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).

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[www.JoelSWilliams.com]



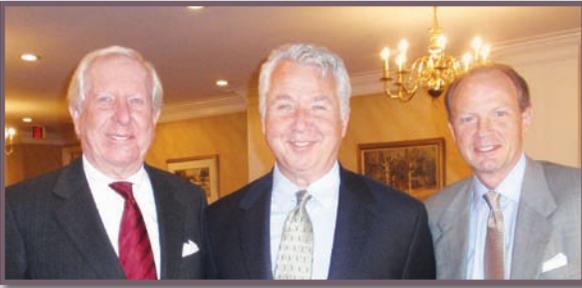
Donna Dilley

FEBRUARY 2011 > Contributor of the Month

Donna Dilley, who has shone like a star for the FRONT since its first issue, but who has decided to move on to other things, is our selection for the February, 2011 Contributor of the Month. Donna has built a substantial following over the years with us (at the Blue Ridge Business Journal before we even started the FRONT) and her column has always been eminently readable, topical and timely. Her advice has always been as substantial as a mother's hug. We'll miss her in the future.

“I was an independent do-it-yourself kind of kid

— Page 40



Kirk's vision >

New River Pharmaceutical Chairman/CEO **Randal Kirk**, flanked here by Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore partners **Bill Rakes** and **Mike Pace** was the featured speaker in late January at GLRM's occasional Bankers Forum at the Shenandoah Club

in Roanoke. Kirk, a noted venture capitalist from Radford, told the capacity crowd that a few decades ago, Research Triangle Park in North Carolina looked similar to what is offered in this region today. The vision and leadership of a few academic/business leaders transformed it into major economic center. Vision and able leadership remain the most critical factors in a region's development, he says.



Showcase in Salem >

photos: Dan Smith

Susan Swan of Susan Swan Consulting (blue blazer) chats with **Liz Belcher** of the Roanoke Valley Greenway about their favorite magazine at the Business and Technology Forum, sponsored by the Salem Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce Feb. 6 at the Salem Civic Center. In the other photo, **Anna Karbassiyoon** (white T-shirt) and **Vicki Love** of Virginia Business Systems talk about—what else?—business.

Write on >

The **Roanoke Regional Writers Conference** at Hollins University (which is partially sponsored by FRONT) Jan. 28-29 drew a record, sellout crowd. The classes (a diverse lineup) concluded with a panel on "Where are the writing jobs?" moderated by FRONT publisher **Tom Field**, featuring **Bill Kovarik** of Radford University, author **Keith Ferrell**, editor **Meg Hibbert** of Salem Times-Register, FRONT editor **Dan Smith**, copywriter **Lizette Staplefoote** of Rackspace, and **Darrell Laurant** of the Writer's Bridge.



photo: Erin Pope

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

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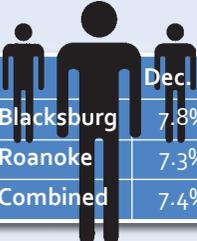
Forbes named First Citizens BancShares, Inc. the fourth-best bank in America in its December 2010 “Best and Worst Banks” ranking. First Citizens Bank is a subsidiary of First Citizens BancShares, Inc. Member FDIC

The signs are positive

The green shoots of economic recovery seem to be pushing up through cold ground. Unemployment is down in the Roanoke and Blacksburg Metropolitan Statistical Areas, employment is up and so are taxable retail sales and home prices. As a further indication of local economic growth and stability, the region outpaced the state in several indicators.

Unemployment/Employment

Unemployment dropped over the year in both the Blacksburg and Roanoke MSAs – and in the combined region—and dropped at a faster pace than the state as a whole. For only the second time since December 2009, the Roanoke MSA's unemployment rate fell below 7.0 percent and led the combined region to a 6.9 percent unemployment rate for December. Virginia's rate dropped from 6.7 percent to 6.4 percent, a change of 4.5 percent, slower than the 6.7 percent drop in the regional unemployment rate from a year ago.



	UNEMPLOYMENT		
	Dec. 09	Nov. 10	Dec. 10
Blacksburg	7.8%	7.2%	7.1%
Roanoke	7.3%	7.1%	6.8%
Combined	7.4%	7.1%	6.9%

The employment picture in the region continues its improvement. More people were working in December than a year ago (1.6 percent). But the number of people **employed** dropped slightly from November to December (-0.4 percent), with Roanoke registering a slight gain and Blacksburg, a slight loss.

EMPLOYED		
Dec. 2009	Nov. 2010	Dec. 2010
218,198	222,599	221,795

The number of people filing **initial unemployment claims** continues to drop locally and continues to fall at a faster pace than Virginia. From week 4 2010 to the same week this year, initial unemployment claims in the Roanoke and Blacksburg MSAs fell by 18.1 percent, compared the state decline of 12.8 percent.

INITIAL UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS	
Week 4 2010	Week 4 2011
767	628

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Employment in the **goods producing sector** of the economy is down a bit in the Blacksburg and Roanoke MSAs from December 2009 to December 2010, but held steady from the previous month. The 12-month decline is at a slightly lower level than the state's, however (2.5 percent compared to 2.6 percent). A slow recovery is underway for the manufacturing sector, according to Institute of Supply Management's monthly Manufacturing Report on Business. The group reports that economic activity in the manufacturing sector expanded in January for the eighteenth consecutive month.

GOODS PRODUCING SECTOR

Dec. 2009	Nov. 2010	Dec. 2010
35,500	34,600	34,600

Real Estate

Both December home prices and the 2010 annual average were up in the Roanoke Region. December prices registered gains from both a year ago and the previous month. Local prices rose 7.2 percent from December to December, while the national average dropped by 0.4 percent over the same period.



HOME PRICES		
Dec. 2009	Nov. 2010	Dec. 2010
\$197,748	\$207,256	\$211,977

2009	2010
\$188,855	\$195,310

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

Retail Sales

Cash registers were ringing in November in the Blacksburg and Roanoke MSAs. Local option sales tax revenue rose by 6 percent in the region from the previous year and by 1.9 percent from October. Statewide, sales tax revenue fell month to month and year to year by 0.8 percent each.



RETAIL SALES		
Nov. 2009	Oct. 2011	Nov. 2011
\$4,310,203	\$4,484,215	\$4,570,773

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation.

—By Anne Piedmont,
Piedmont Research Associates



Granger MacFarlane: "The prospects out there are enormous."

David Perry

The world according to Granger MacFarlane >

Executive Summary:

The future for this region is bright and filled with possibilities if you are to believe this octogenarian with the encyclopedic understanding of how things work.

By David Perry

Ask Granger MacFarlane how the hotel business is and you'll get a civics lesson. Ask him what it's like moving into his twilight years and he'll launch into seminar on how technology is building a better future. Ask him about economic development and he's off in five different directions at once, going at it with the energy of a linebacker and the topical grasp of a college professor.

He remains one of the true visionaries in this region, whether he's stirring up the State Senate, as he did for years as this region's maverick Democrat, or envisioning a future for our grandchildren. His ideas are almost always good, whether or not they're adopted.

MacFarlane has two reasons to believe that business is about to pick up in the Roanoke Valley and he's going to tell you all about them. The first reason is sleek, modern and

high-tech. The second hails from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.

"The new intermodal facility is really going to juice the area up," says MacFarlane of the trains-to-trucks transfer facility planned for eastern Montgomery County. MacFarlane cites as evidence the Inland Port facility in Front Royal, a potential model for the facility planned by Norfolk Southern and the Commonwealth of Virginia along U.S. 460 in Elliston.

"In 1989, the first inland port was established in Front Royal," he says. "They now have 26 new businesses in the Front Royal and Winchester area and have spawned between 5,500 and 6,000 new jobs."

The Inland Port in Front Royal transfers goods between trucks and trains headed to or from ports in Virginia and midwest manufacturing centers like Chicago. Using intermodal transport of goods saves both time and money.

"The route to Chicago from Norfolk is 233 miles shorter if you go through Elliston and through what they call the Heartland Corridor" rail line, says MacFarlane. Along the Heartland Corridor, rail tunnels have been enlarged to accommodate shipping containers double-stacked on rail cars, resulting in less fuel use, one day less in travel from factory to port, and an overall reduction in the cost of moving freight.

"That has brought the establishment of a lot

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

of satellite divisions of really good businesses to that area. The same thing will happen in Elliston," says MacFarlane.

Rail transport may be part of the solution, but it's been part of Roanoke's problem, too, dating back to the relocation of Norfolk Southern's headquarters to Norfolk in 1982. MacFarlane says that Virginia Tech is filling that void.

"When we lost the Norfolk Southern headquarters, and they took the checkbook, and all the people on the 7th floor [of N&W headquarters] went to Norfolk, we lost a lot of our good leadership, and we lost the stabilization of a business that had been here 150 years," says MacFarlane. But that's changing "largely because of the integration and coordination of the Tech leadership as it turns its view eastward from Blacksburg."

"The definition of 'the valley' has to be expanded from what it was many years ago," MacFarlane says. "The valley' now has to include the New River Valley, or at least the eastern part, because Virginia Tech has such a strong presence in the region, and beneficially so. It has spilled over into Roanoke and it's helped us a lot."

He points to the newly-opened Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute as the best example of the growing relationship between the Roanoke Valley and Virginia Tech.

"With the combination of the Virginia

In Brief

Name: J. Granger MacFarlane, II

Age: 80

Company: Eastern Motor Inns

Location: Roanoke

Title: President

Type of Business: Hotel/motel operator

History: A veteran of a half-century of business in the Roanoke Valley, a conversation with this former state senator is a graduate seminar in history, economics and state politics. A member of the Virginia Port Authority Board of Commissioners, MacFarlane says business is slow, but the planned intermodal facility in Elliston and new ventures with Virginia Tech may change all that.

Tech Carilion operation, which is high-end, high-tech, and right in the city, and the inland port at Elliston, we'll be able to accommodate young people coming out of any of the universities and community colleges," MacFarlane says. "There'll be new jobs and good paying jobs available.

"You put all this stuff in a pot and stir it up, the prospects out there are enormous. I hope I live long enough to see it in its full bloom." 

"Power To The People"

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



Huffman



Pierson



Lanter



DeHart

Banks

Valley Bank in Roanoke has made the following changes: **Barbara Huffman** has been named assistant vice president; **Jason Pierson**, **Stacy Lanter**, **Julie DeHart** and **Donna Haynes** are new banking officers.

Steve English and **Angela Edmonds** have been named financial center



Haynes



English



Edmonds

managers at StellarOne Bank in Vinton and Roanoke respectively.



Firebaugh

Gary Firebaugh, a financial advisor for Radford's SunTrust Investment Services, has earned the Chartered Financial Consultant professional designation from The American College.

LEGAL FRONT



Graham



Max Wiegard



Spencer Wiegard



Segura

Law Firms

Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke has added three partners: **Travis J. Graham** (commercial litigation), **Maxwell H. Wiegard** (environmental, real estate and land use litigation), and **Spencer M. Wiegard** (construction clients). **Anthony M. Segura** has joined the firm as an associate attorney in the plaintiff's practice

group, where he will assist clients with medical malpractice and products liability cases.

WELLNESS FRONT

Education

Noted developmental psychologists **Sharon L. Ramey** and **Craig T. Ramey** have joined the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute in Roanoke. They are Virginia Tech Carilion Distinguished Research Scholars at the research institute and research professors of psychology in the College of Science at Virginia Tech.



Smartt

Julianne Smartt has been promoted to admissions coordinator at the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine-Virginia Campus in Blacksburg.



Bickel

Warren Bickel, a leading researcher on brain processes that affect human decision-making including

Have a career announcement?

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

addiction, has been named director of the newly established Center for Substance Abuse at the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute.



VanHousen

Eldercare

Susan VanHousen has been named administrator of Friendship Health and

Rehab Center's 373 bed facility, Virginia's largest licensed rehabilitation, skilled, and intermediate care facility. VanHousen, of Roanoke, most recently served as a administrator for Carrington Place at Wytheville and previously for several of Avante's nursing and rehabilitation centers throughout Virginia.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Architecture/Engineering

SFCS Inc. in Roanoke has added **Dereck Aplin** as a project architect and **Tim Heffron** as controller.

Stephanie A. Klaus of Draper Aden Associates in Blacksburg has earned her



Klaus

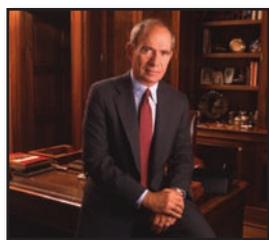
Professional Engineer license. **Scott Kroll** has been named site planning and engineering division leader.



ADVANCE AUTO



MEDECO



BERTRAM FIRESTONE



BRUCE HORNSBY



ROANOKE TIMES



ROWE

gregvaughnphotography.com

Career FRONT



Coles

Construction

Mimi Rainero Coles, Roanoke and Central Virginia sales manager of Permatile Concrete Products Company, has been elected secretary/treasurer of the National Precast Concrete Association Board of Directors.



Judd



Love

The builder award goes to **Ron Boothe** of Boone Homes of Roanoke and the member of the year associate is **Gary Judd** of 84 Lumber Company in Troutville. **Vicki Love** of Virginia Business Systems in Roanoke, is the Rookie of the Year.



Thomas

Real estate

Gwen Thomas of MKB Realtors in Roanoke has earned the Accredited Buyer's Representative designation from the National Association of Realtors.



Compton



Stump

Laura Compton, of CMG Leasing in Blacksburg, is the 2010 Property Manager of the Year for the New River Valley Apartment Council. **Shelia Stump**,

of SAS Builders in Blacksburg, has been elected 2011 New River Valley Home Builders Association president. She is the recipient of the 2010 Community Service Award and the Johnny Haynes Memorial Award from the NRVHBA.



Clayton

Ginny Rossin is the new director of the English Language Institute; **Taj Elshush** has been named director of the Institute for Technology; **Jennifere Clayton** is the executive director of business development at the Institute of Technology.

Pearl Chiu, assistant professor with the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute, has received a \$1.125 million National Institute of Mental Health Biobehavioral Research Award for Innovative New Scientists Award to study depression and substance abuse.

RETAIL FRONT



Moyer

Audio

Shakira Moyer has been named the marketing coordinator of Lee Hartman and Sons in Roanoke.

Auto parts

Advance Auto Parts in Roanoke has named **Bill Carter** senior VP/commercial.

OTHER FRONTS

Chambers

The Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce has elected **Tulane Patterson** of Generation Solutions board chairman. Other officers are: **John Keith** of J. Crew past chairman; **Tom Hickey** of American National Bank & Trust of as treasurer. New board members are: **David Capps** of Merrill Lynch; **Garth Calhoun** of Bank of the James; **Darlene Mack** of Successful Innovations; **L. H. Muddin IV** of

EDUCATION FRONT



Elshush

Colleges

National College in Salem has made the following appointments:

Bankers Insurance; **Greg Nichols** of Banker Steel; **Jim Richards** of Petty Livingston Dawson & Richards; and **Randy Smith** of WSET.



Pushaw

Economic Development

The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center has named **Christine Pushaw** member services coordinator.

Government

Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, dean and executive vice president the Edward Via College



Tooke-Rawlins

of Osteopathic Medicine-Virginia Campus in Blacksburg, has been named to the Virginia Health Workforce Development Authority.



Frank-Rempel

Organizations

Neal Frank-Rempel of Zia Construction & Remodeling in

Roanoke has been installed as the 2011 president of the Roanoke Regional Home Builders Association. Other officer positions are: vice president, **Brad Graham** of Graham Construction, Salem; secretary, **Barry Wright** of RP Publishing, Roanoke; treasurer, **Frank Caldwell IV** of Chandler Concrete, Roanoke; vice president/associate, **Michelle Diomedi** of Alcova Mortgage, Roanoke; and immediate past president, **Brent Fortenberry** of Bench Mark Builders, Roanoke.

Richmond H. Dugger, IV, president and COO of UXB International in Blacksburg, has joined the Board of Directors of the American-Turkish Council. The ATC is a

business association dedicated to promoting U.S.-Turkish commercial, defense, technology, and cultural relations.



Merritt

Russ Merritt has been named executive director of Literacy Volunteers of the Roanoke Valley.

Read the FRONT online

vbFRONT.com

Also get more stories and pictures at morefront.blogspot.com



Arlene Fields and Jonathan Kenny

Dan Smith

Moving downtown

Comfort Cuisine, a small caterer specializing in healthy menus tucked away in Garden City will make its downtown Roanoke debut shortly, moving into 16 West Marketplace and opening a long-awaited grocery store. As downtown housing has filled up in recent years, the need for a grocery store has grown and Comfort Cuisine will not only furnish that, but also a smoothie and coffee shop in addition to their healthy prepared foods that are delivered to customers, in many cases.

Jon Kenny and Arlene Fields each has considerable background in food service and business in general (see Dan Smith's column in the January issue of FRONT). John Garland of Spectrum Designs owns the building with several partners and has planned to make it something of a retail center for the growing community living in downtown Roanoke. The building has been a cafeteria and most recently a gym.

Garland says he's thrilled at the breakthrough and that Comfort Cuisine will provide "everything they [already] do, plus a downtown location to provide not only pickup and catering, but you can eat there, too, and buy the ingredients at the grocery store and follow [Jon's] recipes and make it yourself."

Walker buys 101.5

Roanoke radio station **WVMP, 101.5 FM**, which has become something of a force in the Roanoke radio market during the past year with its listener-driven programming and expanding partnerships, is in the process of being purchased by developer Ed Walker. FCC approval is being sought. Walker is the visionary downtown developer who has renovated several historic buildings and built the city's downtown community into a force.

Walker is purchasing the station through CCB, an initiative of CityWorks, the

social entrepreneurship entity run by Walker. It uses principles from commerce, entrepreneurship, arts and culture, education and knowledge, as well as connectivity to strengthen community in the region. 101.5 has been owned by Centennial Broadcasting and operated by its local station manager, Tom Kennedy, and his staff.

Carilion benefit

Carilion Clinic's overall community benefit hit a new high in 2009, reaching \$154.9 million. Carilion reports its community benefit to the Internal Revenue Service each

year. It is a community asset with no owners, investors or stockholders and revenue stays in the region, reinvested to meet local health care needs. A not-for-profit, Carilion is exempt from paying most taxes, including, in 2009 \$22.7 million.

Carilion gave approximately \$154.9 million back to the community, nearly \$7 for every dollar of tax exemption. Uncompensated care made up most of the reported community benefit, at \$129 million. This includes charity care, Medicare and Medicaid costs that are not reimbursed, and the cost of care that is later classified as uncollectible.

LG opens eye care center

LewisGale Physicians has opened a full-service optical center in Salem, making it the first for the physician group. Patients will find an array of products from sunglasses to more than a 100 different types of specialty lenses. In addition, ophthalmologist Dr. Richard R. Johnson, is on-site to provide eye care and.



Ed Walker

Dan Smith

Specialty products include a children's line of glasses, occupational lenses designed for computer work, and sports/recreational glasses tailored for a variety of activities including motorcycle riding, swimming, and baseball.

Spectrum contract

Spectrum Design of Roanoke has been selected by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission to evaluate energy use and recommend methods for reducing energy consumption and operation expenditures for municipal facilities in Rockbridge, Bath, Highland, Rockingham and Augusta Counties, and the cities of Lexington, Waynesboro, Buena Vista and Staunton.

Spectrum will assess the energy use in more than 20 public buildings throughout the Central Shenandoah Region. The energy audits will include

a comprehensive review of HVAC systems, water use, lighting, insulation and building envelope, and make recommendations for energy saving measures.

CRC launches business

The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (CRC) has announced the launch of **ReviewHounds**, a member company of the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center's business acceleration program, VT KnowledgeWorks. ReviewHounds' services to business owners include custom ReviewHounds TRACKreports documenting a company's online reputation.

ReviewHounds helps companies understand, monitor and improve their online reputations. A TRACKreport addresses these questions and more: "Where can people find you?" "Where do people talk about you?" "How are people rating you?" and how your reputation changes over time.

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.

Tech programs ranked

Virginia Tech's undergraduate programs in architecture and landscape architecture, both in the School of Architecture + Design, College of Architecture and Urban Studies, ranked No. 4 and No. 3, respectively, in the 12th annual America's Best Architecture & Design Schools study conducted by the journal DesignIntelligence. The school's programs in interior design and industrial design also ranked in the study's top 10 in their respective fields.

ND&P client

Neathawk Dubuque & Packett in Roanoke has

added Meggitt Training Systems, a defense and law enforcement training company headquartered in Suwanee, Ga., as its newest client. Meggitt joins other defense and law enforcement clients represented by ND&P, including the Virginia State Police, ITT Night Vision & Imaging and ATK Energetic Systems.

Beacon branches

Beacon Wealth Consultants Inc. is operating as an independent SEC Registered Investment Advisor (RIA) and recently opened new branch offices in Richmond, Alexandria and Greensboro.

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Coming Up...

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.

May 2011

Manufacturing

The United States has traditionally been a country where things were made. These days, though, that goal seems much harder to achieve. The May FRONT visits people who want to return to manufacturing to lift the economy.

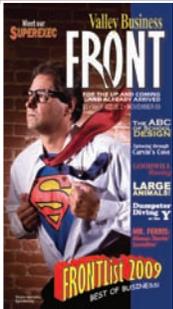
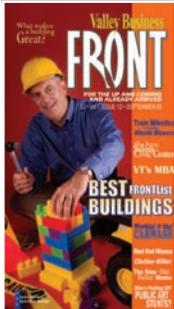
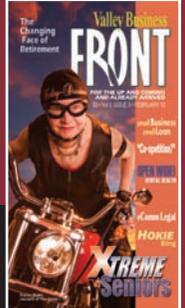
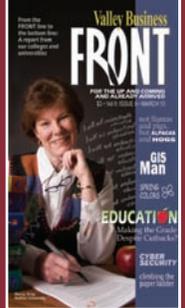
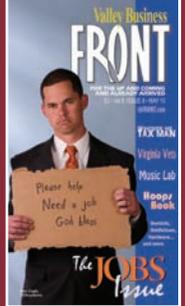
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Synchrony's new deal

Synchrony Inc. of Roanoke, which specializes in technology for rotating machinery and power conversion systems, has entered a partnership that capitalizes on its magnetic bearing technology. Gardner Denver, manufacturer of blowers and a specialist in centrifugal technology, will integrate Synchrony's high-speed motors on magnetic bearings into its new Hoffman Revolution line of high-speed aeration blowers for the water and wastewater treatment markets.

The new blower line carries the label "Powered by Synchrony." Synchrony's technology is an integral part of the Hoffman Revolution, with a high-speed permanent magnet motor controlled by a variable speed drive. The blowers offer flows from 2,500-11,000 CFM and pressures from 3-15 psig, while providing up to 45 percent energy savings from a footprint that is 50 percent smaller than a conventional multi-stage centrifugal blower.

HomeTown losses

HomeTown Bank has net losses of \$1.77 million for the fourth quarter and for 2010 and a net loss of \$3.9 million for the year. Those losses come despite core earnings that bank executives say are strong. In 2009 net income

was \$196,000 for the fourth quarter and \$496,000 for the year.

Microscope in Roanoke

The **Microscope Store** of Burnt Chimney has moved to a new location on McDowell Avenue in Roanoke. It is an online seller of microscopes and employs 10 people. It operates microscope.com and sells a house brand of microscope (Omano), as well as Asian brands. Customers typically include educators, the health care industry and families.

Lab changes name

Carilion-Spectrum, a Roanoke laboratory company formed in a merger recently, has changed its name to **Solstas Lab Partners**. The subsidiary of Carilion was part of Spectrum Laboratory Network of Greensboro, N.C. It is now one of the nation's largest lab companies.

Hall Associates gets job

The Market Building Foundation has named **Hall Associates** as the rental agent for Roanoke's City Market Building and Managing Partner Roger Elkin says one of the primary changes it will initiate will be expanded hours for the building. Elkin says that in the past the building was closed more hours than it was

open and was not open at night or on Sunday. He says that is likely to change.

Elkin says no vendors have been signed—or re-signed, in the case of those invited back with offers of thousands of dollars in setup fees—but that negotiations with the old-timers are on-going. He wouldn't give a price range for rentals ("it depends on the space") but agreed prices would range between \$12 and \$15 per square foot, about average for the Market. The rental includes a lot more than the space because common seating and cleanup, among other things, are part of the price paid.

SPCA hires tba

The Roanoke Valley SPCA has hired **tba** (the becher agency in Roanoke) help it develop materials to increase awareness for pet adoption and spay/neuter in the Roanoke region. Four to seven million pets die in shelters every year in the United States and one of the best ways to address the pet overpopulation problem is local shelter adoption, spaying and neutering.

Novozymes acquisition

Novozymes, a bio-innovation company with a plant in Roanoke County, has completed its acquisition EMD/Merck

Crop BioScience. Novozymes moves into development of sustainable solutions for industry and agriculture.

"We're excited to bring these two innovative companies together to help farmers produce more and better food, feed, fuel, and fiber while minimizing the environmental footprint," says Thomas Videbæk, executive vice president of Novozymes. The deal complements Novozymes' existing agricultural biologicals business. Novozymes hopes to accelerate the development of new products for farmers.

Carter sold

Caterpillar Inc. has reached an agreement to sell Carter Machinery Company Inc., based in Salem, the only Caterpillar dealership in the U.S. not independently owned. Carter has operations and stores covering Virginia and nine counties in southeast West Virginia. The current senior management of Carter Machinery, which led the buy-out of Carter Machinery from Caterpillar, will remain in place. Jim Parker, a retired Caterpillar VP, will become CEO of Carter Machinery and will be the principal owner going forward. Caterpillar has owned Carter Machinery since 1988.

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 treat pets,
I treat family members

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