

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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Defining Style

Erin Hildreth,
Children's Miracle Network



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WELCOME to the FRONT

We have employed a different tactic with our cover story this month than is usual for us. We asked an acknowledged expert to write our story on Style and gave Kathy Surace a free hand in examining this essential and personal part of the business life.

Much of what you will read is her opinion, mixed easily and well with the opinions of others. Kathy is a good enough journalist to stand back and report from a neutral position, but we reasoned that we would be robbing you of what she has learned in many years of her other profession if we did that.

This is one of those rare stories that we likely would not have written had somebody like Kathy not been available to put her touch on it. We suspect you'll agree that the result is the best explanation of the broken tradition.

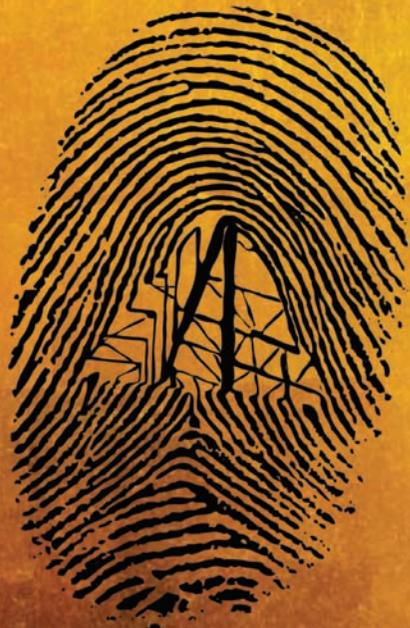


Tom Field



Dan Smith

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Approximate size of tumors when discovered by mammography

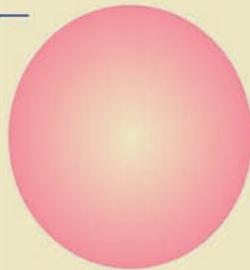
Average-size lump found by — **yearly** mammogram when past films can be compared.



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Cover photography of Erin Hildreth by Greg Vaughn Photography. Art direction by Tom Field.

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Tom Field



Sarah Beth Jones



Gene Marrano



Tim Thornton



Greg Vaughn

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 65.

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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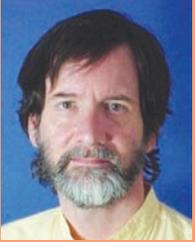
Dan Smith



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen



Randolph Walker

“Racquel found the wife sleeping in the truck parked right outside

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2011 / 12 Members

Nancy Agee Carilion (Wellness)
Laura Bradford ClaireV (Retail)
Nicholas C. Conte Woods Rogers (Legal)
Warner Dalhouse Retired (Seniors)
Cory Donovan NCTC (Tech/Industry)
John Garland Spectrum (Development)
Nancy Gray Hollins University (Education)
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Nancy May LewisGale Regional Health System (Wellness)
Stuart Mease Rackspace (Tech/Industry)
Mary Miller IDD (Tech/Industry)
Ed Walker Regeneration Partners (Development)
John Williamson RGC (Tech/Industry)

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

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Erin Hildreth, our FRONT cover model is the executive director of Children's Miracle Network Hospitals in Roanoke. Erin shows style and grace without being stuffy. And she even helped us keep the package very simple... traits that we talk about in our story. Thanks, Erin, for giving us a great visual on the definition of style. And most importantly, keep up the good mission at CMN.

A full-page photograph of Erin Hildreth, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a vibrant red, off-the-shoulder, wrap-style dress. She is holding a long, multi-strand pearl necklace with both hands, framing her face. The background is a simple white wall with a black diagonal shadow or shadow cast behind her.

Defining Style

By Kathy Surace

Greg Vaughn Photography

It is an important word, this "style." But it means so many things to so many people and seems to change with circumstance. So exactly what is it?

Style is a word that means something different to each of us. For many people, "style" means the prevailing fashion in clothing. Mike Pace of Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore says, "There is a difference between style and fashion. Fashion comes and goes. Style is part of who you are."

Style abounds in architecture, writing, dance, music and endless other disciplines. Even more, style is a manner of doing something, an attitude, the distinctive choices made in every facet of life.

Style comes in an infinite variety: elegant, homespun, intellectual, minimalist, chic, country, country-chic, to name a few.

The style we choose or invent for our self-expression can be very

personal and original—or an offshoot of a group we want to emulate. Many people embrace a new style trying to be different, only to find they now fit into a mold and seem a cliché despite their efforts.

Our personal style is reflected in the choices we make in life: career, where we live, what we drive, our spouse, friends, hobbies, music and favorite foods. We develop our style as we live and mature. Our attire is part of our personal style and, rather than be led by the prevailing clothing styles, we can express ourselves with our clothing choices.

Style in business attire has taken on new meaning in recent years with changes in the workplace and dress codes. Business suits still are prevalent in banking, finance and law, but other disciplines are embracing a more relaxed dress code.

Eloise Coupey, associate professor of marketing at Virginia

Do's and Don'ts of style

Do:

1. Decide what impression you want to project to business associates.
2. Before shopping, make a plan for items you need to create your style.
3. Invest in a classic wardrobe with clean lines that complement your body shape and proportions.
4. Start with clothing appropriate to the workplace you frequent.
5. Do keep in mind your clientele and dress in a way that won't make them feel underdressed
6. Add a signature piece that people can identify as your 'style'

Don't:

1. Don't show too much skin, tattoos or piercings – too much information! This means no low-cut or short clothing, flip flops or see-through shirts. For men, no short socks or visible chest hair.
2. Don't forget that your speech, mannerisms, grooming, and body language are all part of your style.
3. Don't be too trendy for your age - know your style and perfect it.
4. Don't ever look sloppy. At a minimum your wardrobe should be of good quality and design, in good repair, and clean.

—Kathy Surace

Tech, says, "The nature of business is changing, becoming more fragmented with the advent of smaller entrepreneurial businesses, telecommuting, and fewer businesses based on production. Since there is less human interaction in business, 'Millennial' jobseekers and employees place less importance on their appearance

and attire. Casual attire in the workplace creates a blurring of boundaries, a depressing of hierarchies and leads to a greater sense of egalitarianism" or social equality.

To make matters more complex, Cynthia Lawrence of Design Marketing in Roanoke, says, "There are now four generations in the workplace: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Millennial. They all dress differently, speak differently and project different attitudes and values."

As a result, all this freedom and diversity can lead



Dan Smith

Eloise Coupey, Professor of Marketing, Virginia Tech: "Your attire is an expression that you know what people expect of you and you've got what it takes to succeed."

Cynthia Lawrence, Design Marketing: "Style is a combination of attire, speech patterns, mannerisms, facial expressions and body language ... A business professional should project an air of maturity, confidence, and competence. Style is a mixture of visual, audible, and physical cues given consciously or subconsciously. First impressions are the most important, so self-awareness is critical."



Dan Smith

to confusion about what the business community truly expects in business style.

Stuart Mease, director of undergraduate services at Tech's Pamplin School of Business, says, "Everyone has a unique style. When to exercise it will depend on the culture of their company and industry. Business attire gets you more respect and noticed especially as a young adult. I would recommend to most young people to wear business attire to get a bit of an edge in their careers."

Consistent with workplace

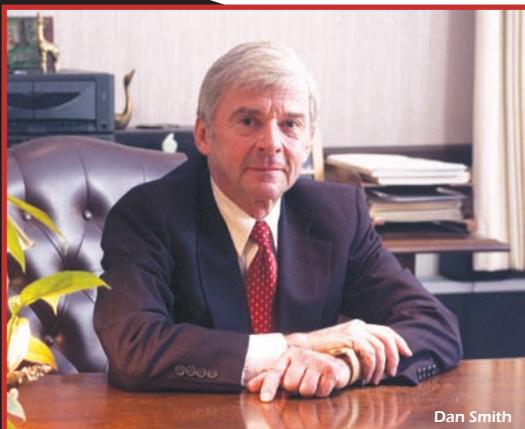
Richard Sorensen, dean of Pamplin, says, "I have found it most effective to dress in a style that is consistent with the expectations of the work place, which for a business person is typically the office. These

days, one usually has broad discretion concerning dress, as compared to years ago when style expectations were established by the employer.

"Even with today's flexibility, I find that for a man, a dark business suit with a white shirt and red or yellow tie is always in good taste and is my favorite style. A woman's equivalent to this style also works well."

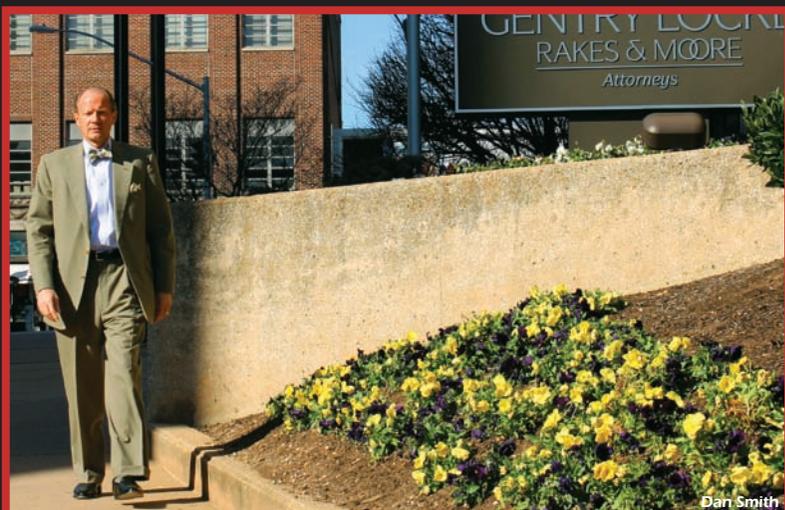
Larry Davidson, owner of Davidson's, a men's clothing store in Roanoke, says, "Today's climate is more competitive than ever [though] nothing will take the place of expertise and talent. ... Our attention to detail in our physical appearance can be the first advantage in showing the same care put into our work or artistry."

Mike Pace of Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore says, "Style is entirely a personal matter. From our perspective, our clients expect us to be professional. Included in that is looking the part. That doesn't mean that we dress the same



Dan Smith

Richard Sorensen, Dean, Pamplin College of Business, Virginia Tech: "Occasionally, perhaps once a week, wear either business casual or something quite different, such as a herringbone suit with black shirt and open collar or some other combination. This way, you don't get pegged as only one style of dress."



Dan Smith

Mike Pace, lawyer, Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore: "There's a difference between fashion and style. Fashion comes and goes. Style is part of who you are"

in every situation. Several years ago we adopted a business casual policy here and our lawyers approach their style based on what their clients expect. Ties and suits don't always make a client comfortable if their industry is more casual. We meet our clients where they are." By dressing in a style their clients expect Gentry Locke lawyers set their clients at ease and establish common ground.

Cynthia Lawrence agrees that we should "dress and project to make your audience comfortable, yet maintain the air of professionalism that they seek in a service provider."

As for whether he thinks one's style is important, John Francis Jr., of First Citizens Bank in Roanoke, says, "It is indeed important.

Often one's personal style can become an important element in his influence with clients, with co-workers and within the community. Dress professionally to be taken seriously. Your appearance says a great deal about the respect you have for whom you are meeting."

Apparently, many business people in our region believe that style in business attire is important because it defines us for others, telegraphs our self-perception, and helps us fit into a group.

Larry Davidson says, "Developing your own style can be achieved by looking to those who are successful leaders in your own chosen field. How do the most highly



John Francis, Jr.
First Citizen's Bank:
"Your appearance says a great deal about the respect you have for whom you are meeting with ... I keep a mirror shine on my shoes. I always wear darker suits with strong ties, and occasionally a bow tie."

Dan Smith

COVER STORY

successful musicians, artists, architects, bankers, lawyers or engineers present themselves? What is the best 'uniform' for you? How can it be uniquely you within that style? If unsure, form a long-term relationship with a trusted professional who can help guide you, just as you would for legal or medical advice."

Elouise Coupey says, "Dressing appropriately to one's audience demonstrates to them that you have shared values. If we want someone as a customer or to join us in business we need to assure them we can meet their expectations for professional performance."

In addition, our style can make us stand out, according to Kathy Lamanca, image consultant with Highway2Style. She says, "Style in business attire is the

tool you use to express to others who you are professionally. Consider your visual image, appearance and the way you communicate as your brand, your logo; the thing that sets you apart from others in your business world."

The artist

Claudia de Franko, an artist, former lecturer at Hollins University, and teacher at Community High School in downtown Roanoke, finds that her sense of style does make her stand out, with mixed reviews from her audience. As an artist it helps her establish her brand and make her memorable to others. On the other hand, at times her co-workers in the teaching

Kathy Lamanca, Highway2Style:
"If people react positively to your appearance when they see you, it is the first step in building a level of trust regarding your work skills, intelligence, capabilities and competence."



Claudia de Franko, artist, teacher:
"There is a fine line between vanity and pride ... Dressing is like eating for me. Why would I want to eat bad food? Would I purposely want to choose clothes that make me look or feel bad?"

field have noted that she is "too dressed up." This surprises and puzzles her since she believes "looking good doesn't necessarily mean you are rich. There is a fine line between vanity and pride."

In her role as a teacher, she strives to dress in colors

and styles that complement her, but keeps in mind that she is a role model for youth. Dressing attractively is necessary for her sense of well-being. De Franko laughingly says, "Dressing is like eating for me. Why would I want to eat bad food? Why would I intentionally choose clothes that make me look or feel bad?"

Having no style makes us disappear into the woodwork. Our style need not be cutting edge, but it should appear intentional and current. Otherwise we

In the NRV 'urban meets nature'

Alicia Lindeberg, a recent transplant to the New River Valley from Ohio, grew up in an area where fashion "was about what we needed not what we wanted. For that I am thankful." Still, she developed both an interest in and a flair for style early and she has been a fashion consultant for Chloe & Lola on the coast of North Carolina and Frances Kahn in Virginia Beach, helping find "styling that created a positive and unique image that best suited the clients and their lifestyles."

Her own style (she's 34) is a comfortable urban casual that is always chic, comfortable and appropriate. She has been out of the business for a while, but "I miss making women feel good about themselves and seeing the confidence that they have when they look and feel good. It doesn't matter how much you spend on clothes, what matters is how you wear them and how they make you feel. That's what style is: you make it your own. That's why I thoroughly enjoy vintage boutiques and thrift store shopping. It's the element of surprise."

The New River Valley seems to agree with her in that sense. "The style here ranges from hiking boots, fleeces and Carharts to blue jeans, high heels and trendy fashionable tops," she says.

"This is definitely a place of comfort and for what's functional. It's kinda like urban meets nature ... Most everyone here possesses a laid back and active lifestyle. People are quite comfortable with themselves, so having the newest trend isn't a priority, which is quite refreshing. That being said there is always room for creativity."

The challenge? "There are options here, just not a lot of variety," says Alicia. "Knowledge of what is appropriate for particular occasions might be an area that needs to be brushed up. However, if someone is not exposed to certain elements, then how would she know what's appropriate and what's not?"

—Dan Smith



Dan Smith

Alicia Lindeberg: 'Quite refreshing.'

appear apathetic, unfocused, or lacking in confidence.

Style is not exclusive to big cities or the rich and famous. It can be found in small towns and far-flung places, and requires only a sense of self. When you own your “style” you develop a persona that becomes your trademark or brand.

Natalie Faunce, host of “Daytime Blue Ridge” on WSLs-TV in Roanoke, explains, “Style is extremely important to me, simply because of the business I’m in. TV is a visual medium, and when people watch my show, that’s the first thing they notice about me. How I come across is very important. Style for me isn’t just the clothes I choose to wear on any particular day. I take it a step further. I have to

consider everything people will see on their television sets—which includes my clothes, hair, make-up, nails and jewelry. It all says something about me.”

Even your business has a style or brand that it uses to attract customers. When customers identify with a business’s style or brand, they are likely to patronize that company. Cities and regions have their own style. Some have a breezy “ocean-going” style, others a rustic “mountain village” appeal. Roanoke and its citizens have a style apparent to outsiders, if not to its own citizens, who are often perceived as “old-school, dressed down, or casual” by those in larger metropolitan areas.

‘Maturation process’

How do we go about developing a style? Doug Kidd, clothier with Tom James in Roanoke, devotes himself to ensuring his clients are impeccably turned out every day. Kidd’s clients



Natalie Faunce, host of Daytime Blue Ridge in Roanoke: “Style is extremely important to me, simply because of the business I’m in—how I come across is very important ... Style for me isn’t just the clothes I choose to wear on any particular day. I take it a step further.”



Doug Kidd, clothier with Tom James: “Style is a process. Begin to develop your own style with intentional steps.”

are busy executives in the business community who hate to shop, or just don't have the time. However, he welcomes the opportunity to introduce novices to high-end clothing. He challenges them to think about how they want to be perceived in their clothes and then use their image as a means to an end. He employs a process for developing a client's wardrobe that is "intentional, a maturation process."

Personally, Kidd notes that of late he likes to add a pocket square to his usual suit and custom shirt. He also likes to harmonize the subtle tones in his shirt and tie to add zip to his appearance. The details are all-important to his brand.

The same applies to John Francis who pays great attention to details, saying, "I keep a mirror shine on my shoes [he has an electric shoe buffer

in his office]. I always wear darker suits with strong ties, or occasionally a bow tie."

Vicki Bibee, vice president of Scott Insurance in Roanoke, feels strongly that "business style" should be "conservative but not frumpy. I think stylish apparel makes you look and feel confident. Clothing that's professional with just a little edge sets you apart." As for developing your own style, she goes on to advise, "Find brands and styles that compliment your body type, size, and height. Not too much jewelry or big stuff. I like to think of it as my signature look—classic and clean lines."

Kay Dunkley, director of the Virginia Tech Roanoke Center, has a sophisticated style that belies her roots on a Wythe County

Kay Dunkley, Director Virginia Tech Roanoke Center: "Fashion describes who you are and what you stand for; consequently, I put a lot of focus on wardrobe choices."



Dan Smith



Dan Smith

Vicki Bibee, Vice President, Scott Insurance, Roanoke: "Stylish apparel makes you look and feel confident. Clothing that's professional with just a little edge sets you apart."

COVER STORY

farm. After stints in D.C. and Fredericksburg, Dunkley travels extensively throughout the state from D.C. to far-flung counties. She assists localities in planning their training needs for employees.

Dunkley's business attire style focuses on understated neutrals, a sharp jacket and interesting accessories. She obviously knows her best colors and her style is current without being trendy. She projects competence and self-confidence.

She dresses up or down depending on how rural her audience is, so that all are comfortable. Dressing for the audience is important, she says, "Style must be flexible, depending on your audience. When you step out of your door, you are stepping into

their world. You need to show respect for them. My style has changed, depending on where I am based and who my audience is." She says people in this region "are secure in their own skin."

'I am important to me'

Sharon Lewis, purchasing manager for the City of Roanoke, is another professional with a strong sense of style. "My definition of style is a feeling I have about myself. I don't think about what I'm going to wear tomorrow or set out clothes for the next day. I go with how I feel each morning."

She agrees that one's style can set her



Sharon Lewis, Director of Purchasing, City of Roanoke: "My definition of style is a feeling I have about myself ... I don't put clothes at the top of my list of importance, although I think appearance should be ... My style reflects a history."



John Francis' electric shoe buffer

apart and give her a trademark or brand, declaring, "I like the bold—single bold things, eye-catcher things. It says something about me. I'm bold! Also, I always wear heels—I really love pumps for business." Lewis believes that personal style says, "I am important to me."

Lewis's department reflects her style: warm, welcoming, and cohesive. She has decorated her department, spending her own money to make it more attractive to visitors and her staff.

Although the dress code is unwritten, Lewis dresses sharply every day and her staff understands her expectations about office attire: dress in a business-like fashion when meeting with people from outside the office. On a workday that involves moving boxes of documents or without meetings, more casual attire is acceptable. Her staff has a sense of the style that Lewis wants her department to exude and follows suit. "I'm okay with them dressing down on Friday when their

schedule permits," she says.

Despite her strong feelings about style, Lewis doesn't shop much. "I don't put clothes at the top of my list of importance—although I think appearance should be. The style of clothing, things and people that surround me is 'me'. My style reflects a history."

Developing a business style takes time and thought, deliberate choices and a plan for building your wardrobe and your style. Whether male or female, always start with clothing that is considered appropriate to the workplace you frequent. Invest in a classic wardrobe with clean lines that complement your body shape and proportions. Keep in mind your clientele and dress in a way that won't make them feel underdressed.

Accessorize!

Once you feel that you have a good working wardrobe you're proud to wear, try adding in some accessories that you have admired



COVER STORY

on others. For men, a jaunty pocket square, a snazzier tie than usual, or colors that you may not have been brave enough to wear previously can add personal style to your appearance. Hats add a lot of personality to a man's wardrobe and can convey a lot about you. If a tie and jacket is formal for your workplace, choose a shirt with a great fit and more interest than plain white broadcloth.

For women, jackets, jewelry, scarves, handbags and shoes remain the best tools for conveying style in wardrobes. They can change a basic outfit from formal to casual in moments, adding personal style as well. Simply adding a scarf or a signature piece of jewelry to a neutral outfit can set you apart and signal your style.

Style is reflected in a wardrobe that is sharp, in good shape, clean and complements the person wearing it. If your workplace requires a hard hat and rugged jeans, make sure the jeans are clean, crisp and without holes. Unless you are doing hard, manual labor,

you need to dress in clean work clothes despite casual conditions.

So, what is Style? Style is the manner in which we dress, work, talk, create, and communicate. It demonstrates our values and creates opportunities for us to connect with others. Our business attire reflects our style and can work for or against us.

Indeed, Nancy Agee, CEO of Carilion Clinic believes that we have a style whether we intend to or not. She says, "You have a certain style regardless of whether it is thoughtful and planned or haphazard and chaotic. Style can change over time as one changes, evolves, matures, responds to differing life events, etc., but the basic communication of self expression is always there."

Style is memorable and obvious in the choices we make every day. We can try to ignore it, but it's still there. Embrace it, develop it, own it and celebrate it. 





Host for an international visitor >

Recently I served as host for international business colleagues visiting the United States for the first time. It was a pleasure for me to show them around, and watch them fall in love with this beautiful part of America.

Management guru Peter Drucker observed, “If you don’t think globally you deserve to be unemployed—and you will be.” American professionals today realize that ethnocentricity—the concept that the world revolves around our culture—has no place in 21st century business relationships.

Roger Axtell, author of *Dos and Taboos of Hosting International Visitors*, notes that first time international visitors usually have four initial impressions. First: they are fascinated by the vastness of the United States and the huge distances we can travel. Secondly, they are struck by the many people who are overweight. They relate that to the abundant amount of food that is available everywhere. I won’t comment here.

Another impression is the rapidity with which everything is done—how quickly Americans move, eat, and do business. The pace of American life is palpable; I always feel it when I return from a trip abroad. The fourth impression is that we are outgoing and friendly to everyone. Those traits can sometimes land us in trouble with our more reserved international visitors. Here are some thoughts to consider as you prepare to host international colleagues:

- Rank and status are vitally important in other cultures.
- Friendliness should not cross the line when it comes to status and rank.
- Err on the side of formality at first.
- Non-English speaking visitors are not deaf. Talking loudly will not improve their comprehension of English.
- When your visitor arrives, consider jet lag, and do not schedule events too soon after arrival.
- Be sensitive to dietary needs.
- Visitors from Arab countries might be offended if they are offered pork products.
- Some Chinese colleagues will be unable to eat the rare steak that Americans enjoy.
- Not all appetites (or tummies) can handle a heavy American breakfast.
- Plan a few outings around the history of your area.
- Shopping is a favorite with international visitors. No matter how sophisticated they appear, most love to spend time in an American shopping mall—yes, even the big box stores.
- Your visitor would be delighted to be invited into an American home.

Hosting international colleagues is rewarding. Call upon your American ingenuity, do a little research, and you will be amazed at the serendipitous things that will happen as a result. 

Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
There is a lot to think about if you are going to make your foreign guest comfortable and happy and if you are to ensure his visit is memorable.

Too many clothes, nothing to wear >

In my job as an image consultant, I often help clients purge their closets of excess clothing. Most people who hear this tell me they have the same problem: too many clothes and nothing to wear.

During this process I am happiest when my client has a collection of basic garments that I can set aside to form the basis of their revamped wardrobe. Too often I find that most people lack basics and have an array of unique pieces that can't be worn together to make them look their best. I promptly make a shopping list for their basics.

Some Americans have bad habits when it comes to their wardrobes.

- We shop out of boredom for sale rack bargains, which are cheap and plentiful.
- We buy garments and accessories that have possibilities, but with no concrete plan for them, they just clutter our closets.
- We shop without a goal to fill specific needs in our wardrobe.
- We impulse-buy items that aren't our style because we love them—but since they're not just right for us, we never wear them.

We need to think more like Europeans or New Yorkers when it comes to our wardrobes. Typical New Yorkers are famous for having tiny apartments and not much storage. Europeans also live in much smaller houses or apartments than the typical American. Both groups value what they gain from living in New York or Europe and are willing to give up closet space and possessions in favor of life experiences.

Both groups tend to choose quality over quantity when shopping. Black, gray, taupe and other neutrals are the basis for a wardrobe made interesting with bursts of seasonal color in blouses, jackets, shoes, jewelry and handbags. Their classic basics last season after season—sometimes for decades—because the quality of the fabric, design, and construction is high. Less time is spent shopping, clutter is kept to a minimum, and all items in the closet are visible, work together, and are worn often.

Solving the problem of “too many clothes, but nothing to wear” requires a permanent change in thinking and habits. Reducing your wardrobe to basic pieces that you love will simplify your life. Soon you'll be doing as the Romans do with all that spare time—throwing back an espresso at a café. 



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Shop like a New Yorker when building your wardrobe and you'll have the basics you need for dressing well.

Apologies and motives >

Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:

The message behind the "I'm sorry" is the key one.

Dear Anne: My boss told me I apologize too much. I apologized. He said, "See what I mean?!" I was taught that it's polite to apologize when I'm wrong. How can it ever be wrong to apologize?

Dear Too Much: When I started my company in 2008, my husband handed me a clipped article from the Wall Street Journal titled "Ways Women Can Hold Their Own in a Male World." Writer Dana Mattioli paraphrased advice from Betty Spence, president of the National Association for Female Executives: "Eliminate the phrase 'I'm sorry' from your vocabulary, unless it's truly warranted. Women tend to apologize for situations that they aren't responsible for, which demonstrates weakness."

Wanting to be a strong company leader, not a weak one, I resolved to stop saying "I'm sorry." I was appalled to observe how often and how automatically the words "I'm sorry" came to my lips for the exact situations Spence cautioned about—ones for which I was not responsible.

As I became increasingly aware of the presence of "I'm sorry" in my vocabulary, I realized I used it rarely to express regret or remorse for my wrong doing. I used it primarily as a means of appeasement in response to someone questioning or challenging me, or being assertive, even aggressive. Rather than engage in direct dialogue about the subject at hand, I apologized first, manipulating myself into a subordinate position so the other person could feel powerful in the dominant position, then attempted to negotiate the deal. Since those negotiations did not occur between equals, they, of course, did not go well for my company.



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That awareness was incentive to continue to remove "I'm sorry" from my vocabulary. I temper that with having learned in both my personal and professional lives to, as quickly as possible, spot my errors, acknowledge my responsibility for them and the harm they may have caused others, apologize, listen, apologize again, and move on. I am human, I have erred, and I will err again. It's not "if" I will make a mistake again, but "when." I give and receive genuine apologies readily.

I have also learned that the best way to avoid "I'm sorry" is to not put myself in a position to need to apologize. At work, most transgressions are not personal but about not meeting the mark—missing meetings, missing details, missing deadlines. Job performance is usually within a person's power to control. When people choose not to exert that power, they fail to meet expectations, apologize, continue to hear criticism, and then claim, "But I said I was sorry!" They are attempting to substitute a good apology for good work. In business, that exchange rate doesn't work.

About gratuitous or frequent apologies, I become very thoughtful when I hear them from others, whether from women or from men. I ask myself if people are apologizing for wrongdoings for which they are responsible. If they are responsible, as a business person I wonder if the number of "I'm sorrys" matches the number of dollars their mistakes cost my company. If they're not responsible, I wonder what their motivation is for manipulating me with an "I'm sorry." What do they gain from putting me one-up to their one-down?

When you're wrong, it's not polite to apologize—it's imperative. If you're not wrong—what's your motivation? That is what your boss wants to know. 

Need help with a personal problem at work? E-mail your question to Anne at anne@handshakezo.com.



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Dan Smith

Mike Coffey and Bill Gust (sitting) of CCR

A more difficult transition >

Executive Summary:

Seeking the perfect way to exit a business involves a lot more than walking out the door and not looking back.

By Rob Johnson

Ownership transition strategies for small-business owners that don't leave their wallets light and their hearts heavy aren't as plentiful or clear as they were before the recession.

But guiding entrepreneurs through thorny tax liabilities, financial issues and concerns about the future of faithful employees and yearnings to preserve family or local ownership is a familiar trail to Bill Gust and Michael Coffey, who run Corporate Capital Resources. CCR is a five-person consulting subsidiary of the Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore law firm in downtown Roanoke formed in 2002.

"Our typical clients have achieved success independently. Now they want to prepare for retirement, get their money, pay little or no tax, and have all their employees keep their jobs," says Gust. "That's the point in our discussion when we sometimes ask, 'How about world peace? You want that too?'"

Keeping a sense of humor is essential for Gust, the president, and Coffey, managing vice president in a consulting business where they sometimes must dispense some of what they call “tough love.”

The CCR team works with clients and their advisors over whatever time is required to prepare a tailored transition plan. The documentation often details a coordinated set of tactics to maximize the wealth for a retiring business owner, while passing along control and minimizing tax consequences for family members, key management and employees.

This process is the business transition version of ordering multiple entrees on a restaurant menu for diners to share. Such a plan can be complex and may include a large array of corporate

finance, estate planning as well as stock gift and sale mechanisms: Limited partnerships for the owner’s children, stock sales to a separate tax exempt trust sponsored by the company for the benefit of employees or charitable trusts to support local causes, to mention a few.

Their skills are typically sought out by owners of everything from independent banks to car dealerships and construction companies, many of whom approach CCR with what is described as unrealistic expectations steeped in the economic past.

“They fondly remember the days when a business broker would tell them, ‘I can get you eight to 10 times your pretax earnings for your company,’” says Gust.

But now the selling prices for most small businesses have been adjusted due to

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the current economy. The possible decline in business value means some former transition options that were once attractive are less attractive. Those options would include selling a chunk of the business to an outside investor or sharing profits with long-time employees.

When new clients visit Corporate Capital, their first impression may be that they're walking into an intimidating large law firm where the clock has already started ticking on what they'll pay for advice. CCR notes that the reality is much different.

Although Gust is a veteran attorney and a partner at Gentry Locke, CCR charges its customers a fixed fee that is agreed upon early on, rather than by the hour. Their fees vary widely and have ranged from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

Coffey brings a certain informality to the long tables in Gentry Locke's conference rooms. Not an attorney, he has a background as a linguist and engineer with 25 years' experience in transition planning. He recommends a "systems engineering" approach to decision making to coordinate all concerns.

His approach with clients is: "Tell me what you want and let us help you get there. We'll quarterback the process and find workable solutions. If we cannot, we can certainly steer you in the right direction." 

Transition strategies >

Bill Gust of Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke outlined some of the challenges for the business professionals looking desiring to exit a business, while leaving something behind for family and faithful employees. Here's what he came up with as things to avoid:

- Waiting too long to start planning. Industry statistics indicate less than one-third of closely-held family businesses survive the transition from the first generation to the second.
- Trying to keep it too simple by relying on a plan that doesn't fully address emotional, tax and business management consequences.
- Failing to prepare rising management or family members to take the helm—not only in day-to-day operations but to assist in handling the complexities of transition details.
- Reluctance to give up control. Plan well enough and hire transition expertise you trust enough to ultimately step away.
- Living in the past. Outdated valuations of the company from a bygone economy can stall development of transition strategies that must be adaptable to current and changing business realities.

—Rob Johnson



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Gene Marrano

Maryellen Goodlatte of GFD&G: "Money well spent."

Buy-sell agreements: Tough to discuss, often essential >

Executive Summary:

It is one of the more important agreements co-owners can enter when beginning a new business or continuing an old one.

By Gene Marrano

It's something small business partners may not want to talk about when they are involved in the excitement of the launch of a new venture, but it needs to be put on the table—and in writing as soon as possible.

It's the buy-sell agreement and it's in place

if one owner wants out or is ready to retire? How much is her share of the business worth at that point? How is such an agreement worded?

Maryellen Goodlatte, a principal with the downtown Roanoke law firm of Glenn Feldmann Darby & Goodlatte, has worked with business owners over the years and says buy-sell agreements are underused documents that can save headaches down the road.

The agreement "establishes a relationship between the owners of a business," says Goodlatte. Single business owners—such as limited liability companies

(LLC) and S or C corporations—avoid some of the headaches, but firms with multiple owners from the start must look at the bigger picture. "Whenever you have more than one person [involved], the owners ought to seriously consider a buy-sell agreement," says Goodlatte.

The pieces of such a document find their way into an operating agreement that governs the activity of a limited liability company. "A buy-sell sets out the expectations of the owners of a business—what happens if one of us wants to sell? What happens if one of us dies? Can I sell my stock or interest in the LLC to anyone I want? What happens if we just hate each other and want to separate? Can a former owner continue to be a stockholder?"

Goodlatte compares it to a prenuptial agreement that two people might sign before they marry, protecting assets

acquired separately before taking legal vows. "A lot of business owners don't think about the breakup when they enter into an agreement," she says. "A little bit of foresight can save a whole lot of trouble down the road."

Other considerations for partners might involve guidelines regarding trade secrets, the goodwill built by a business, and non-compete clauses. Goodlatte says the wording and reach of the buy-sell agreement can take many forms. A properly drafted non-compete is enforceable, but has to be "reasonable" in terms of its time, territory reach and duration.

Exit strategies like a buy-sell must be crafted based on the person laying it out: is he the owner leaving or the one staying? "At the end they'd like to get something back [and] get something for their investment."

The partner staying, for instance, may be required to pay the principal leaving some agreed-to equity. The value of a business can be agreed to and updated periodically or an outside appraiser can be brought in to determine a figure.

Buy-sell insurance policies can be taken out to fund an agreement, but can only be used in the case of a partner's death. That type of insurance can be expensive and is often something businesses "a bit more mature" can afford, according to Goodlatte.

With the life cycle of many business ventures getting smaller and smaller, buy-sell agreements, no matter what they look like, are a prudent option. "There really isn't a one size fits all," notes Goodlatte. "It goes back to the expectation of the owners. Without [an agreement in place] there is some jeopardy. It's money well spent." 

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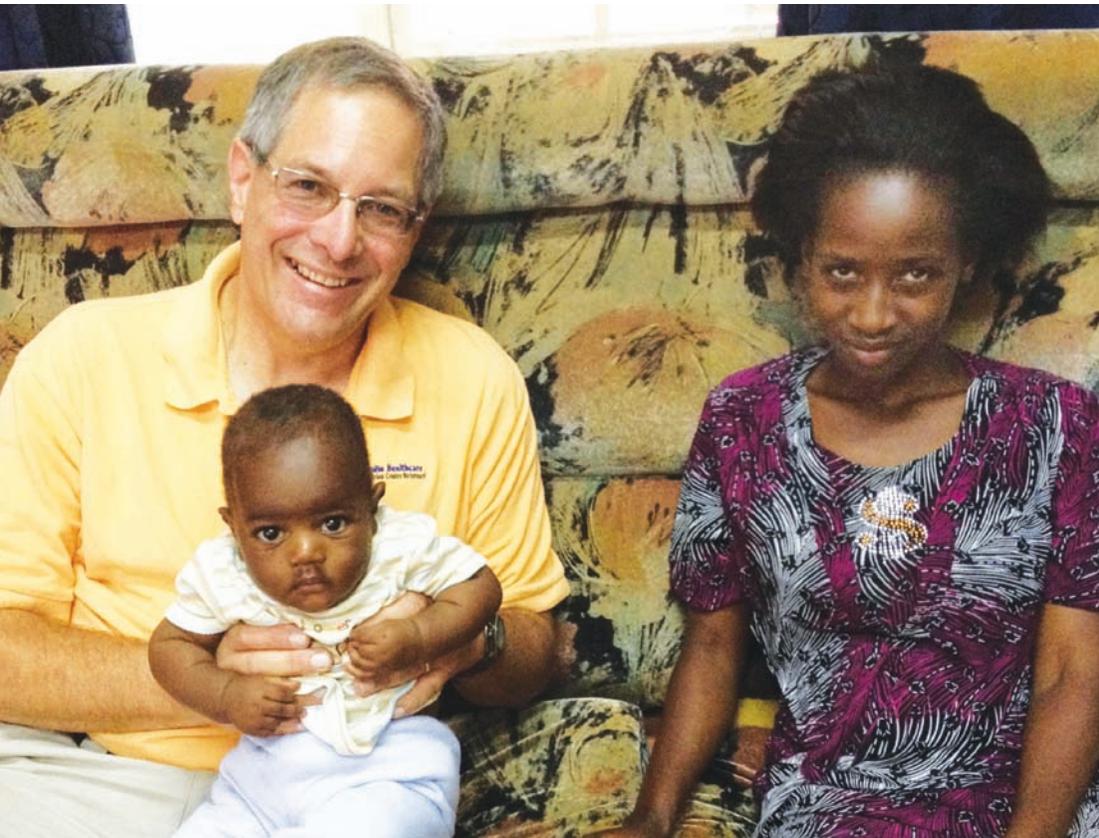
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Tom Clarke: “The goal has to be putting ourselves out of business.”

20 Kissitos and counting >

Executive Summary:

Growth of Roanoke-based Kissito means health care and other services for parts of the developing world that are in dire need.

By Sarah Beth Jones

In the Manafwa District of Uganda, there are no fewer than 20 babies and young children named Kissito. It’s not the name of a Ugandan celebrity or god; it’s not a Swahili word for an admired trait. Kissito is the name of a Roanoke-based organization that is working to change the face of Third World healthcare.

In the Manafwa and Mbale Districts of Uganda, and in Addis Ababa and the Kamashi and Hadiya Zones of Ethiopia, Kissito International (KHI) is developing a model of sustainable healthcare with a seemingly-contradictory goal.

“The goal has to be putting ourselves

out of business,” says Tom Clarke, founder, CEO and president of KHI.

It’s an unusual business plan, but one that brims with the hope of a rural, Third World health care system so thoughtfully developed that others—particularly natives of an area—could implement Kissito’s approach themselves.

“We’d like to see other people take our model, copy it and take it to other parts of the developing world,” says Elizabeth Parsons, director of development at KHI in Roanoke County.

“People are dying of colds, malnourishment, malaria, polio,” she says. “And the maternal and infant death rates are insanely high. If you’re a pregnant mom there, along with the joy and anticipation of a new family member, you have to be preparing for your funeral.”

The 20 children named Kissito are a testament to the emergency C-sections now available to women who would have otherwise lost their children and perhaps their own lives.

Elizabeth has not only served this population



Some of Kissito's patients in Africa.

from the comfort of the Roanoke Valley. The former journalist has also spent time in KHI-served areas, experiencing for a month at a time the heartbreak of desperate poverty and inspiring core of humanity it reveals.

"We estimate that our cost per patient service is about \$10 to \$12 in Uganda. It's \$11.49 in Ethiopia," Elizabeth says. She also refers to Plumpy'nut, a peanut-based

nutritional supplement that provides calories and essential nutrients to those suffering from malnourishment. "It's a paste which is great for kids who are sometimes too weak to chew. A case costs \$58 and can save six lives. That's \$9.66 per life."

"We don't need any magic invention to care for people. We just need basic drugs and a doctor and simple things," says Tom,

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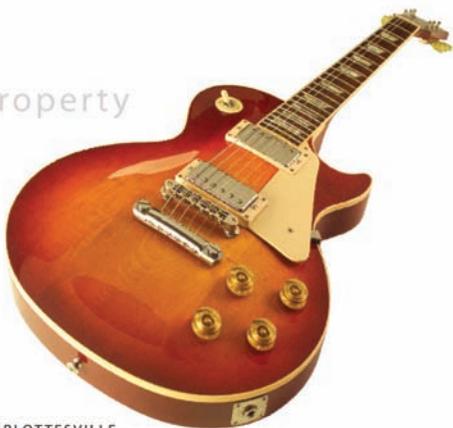
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Dan Smith

Elizabeth Parsons: “People are dying of colds, malnourishment, malaria, polio.”

No, they weren’t kidding >

Thirty-four year old Roanoke native Elizabeth Parsons joined KHI two years ago after finding a Craig’s List post for a project coordinator that seemed too good to be true. “I thought someone was messing with my head.”

Since then, she’s become the director of development, a position that – along with all other administrative expenses at KHI—is paid for by the employees and board of directors of KHI and its sister not-for-profit, the domestic-serving Kissito Healthcare.

In this way, KHI ensures that 100 percent of donations go straight to the clinics and services in Uganda and Ethiopia.

Though she says her work is her life, “and that’s how I like it,” she also finds time to cook, travel and write. In fact, Elizabeth has a master’s degree in creative writing from Hollins University and over 200 magazine articles in print. She is the former editor of the now-defunct Blue Ridge Business Journal.

—Sarah Beth Jones

who is all too accustomed to hearing questions about why KHI efforts are focused on Africa when there is poverty and need here in the U.S.

“I’ve spoken with [African] mothers through interpreters... mothers in their early 20s with three children and the children are starving and the mother is starving and what do they do when they wake up in the morning? They walk five, seven, eight miles to another village to cut a crop. At the end of the day, they’ll get a handful of what they cut to sell at the market to get a little handful of food, literally enough to keep them alive before walking back five, seven, eight miles. It

gets to the point where they’re too weak to do that anymore and so they take leaves off of trees and try to eat them to stay alive and then they watch their youngest child die in front of them. That doesn’t happen in America.”

The story is turning around with KHI’s model, though. Elizabeth tells a story of a little girl named Fiona whose mother brought her in as a gaunt, malnourished, HIV-positive two-and-a-half year old. “She wasn’t speaking but you could just tell by the way she took everything in that she was a bright, special child.”

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Becky Hepler

Raquel Roth

A good night's sleep >

Executive Summary:

At SleepEZ Raquel Roth figures out what's wrong with your slumber—or lack of it—and helps fix it.

By Becky Hepler

"To sleep, perchance to dream" is not just an elegant line from Shakespeare's "Hamlet." It is the fervid goal for the patients of sleep technologist Raquel Rothe, owner and operator of Salem's SleepEZ Center (www.sleepEZcenter.com).

Our bodies need the restorative power of sleep and yet, many Americans are chronically sleep-deprived, which leads to some serious consequences. Studies have shown links between sleep disorders and health issues such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, obesity and depression. There are over 80 different sleep disorders.

Raquel says that the body, like a battery, needs to recharge, restore, renew and it does this through sleep. Those lacking sleep are crankier, more tired and less productive. Among different sleep disorders, some are neurological-related like restless leg syndrome and

narcolepsy. Others respiratory related, like sleep apnea, in which sufferers stop breathing for at least 10 seconds or more during sleep. Says Raquel, "These sleep disorders can be easily diagnosed and effectively treated."

In dealing with sleep disorders doctors first order a diagnostic sleep study, in which patients are hooked to electronic monitors and sensors. Then specialists track and record their sleep and all the physiological and neurological processes that happen at that time. That's where Raquel enters the picture.

A native Texan who was a respiratory therapist by training, Raquel had been

working in a trauma unit until she lost a child in a car wreck, making the work in ER problematic. The hospital in San Antonio where she was employed was a teaching hospital and it was starting up a sleep research center. Since so many sleep disorders are rooted in breathing issues, she thought it would be a good fit. As it turned out, her work was so interesting it returned the joy to her job.

Love brought her to the Roanoke Valley and Raquel thought about starting her own center. Her new husband found a great space on West Main Street in Salem where SleepEZ Center was born in 2005.

The hospital setting didn't seem like an area conducive to sleep studies, which is why the only thing keeping the SleepEZ rooms from looking like a bed and breakfast is the tangle of wires coming from the wall beside the beds. "The more homelike and serene the environment, the better the test results will be," says Raquel. To that end, her four bedrooms are elegantly decorated with subtle colors and wood furniture and equipped with CD players, private baths and other amenities.

Patients are encouraged to bring personal things such as pillows or favorite blankets and even their mates. Raquel recalled a time in Texas when an elderly man had come in to be tested and was chagrined to learn that his wife, with whom he had slept every night of their 61 years together, would not be allowed to stay in the room with him. Not only was that night his most restless sleep ever, but Raquel found the wife sleeping in the truck parked right outside of the hospital the next morning. "That was heartbreaking," she said.

Raquel seems to have a natural talent for business and loves the people part of it. "I feel like I'm supposed to be a mentor," she says.

Her significant challenge is keeping up with the insurance regulations and then educating both doctors and patients about what the insurance will allow, which often is more than people expect. "It's the patient's insurance and thus, their choice as to where they will be tested," she says. 

Sleep tight >

National Sleep Foundation recommendations:

- Go to bed at the same time each night and rise at the same time each morning.
- Make sure your bedroom is a quiet, dark, and relaxing environment, which is neither too hot nor too cold.
- Make sure your bed is comfortable and use it only for sleeping and not for other activities, such as reading, watching TV, or listening to music.
- Remove all TVs from the sleeping area.
- Keep computers, and other "gadgets" out of the bedroom.
- Physical activity may help promote sleep, but not within a few hours of bedtime.
- Avoid large meals before bedtime.



Becky Hepler

Bedside at Sleep EZ



all photos: Laura Purcell

Alley's Country Store is an important part of life in Shawsville, Virginia.

Work Spaces

Passing along the country store >

Executive Summary:

Roger Alley bought Alley's Country Store for his wife. Then he retired and went to work. Next up, the kids.

By Laura Purcell

"I've got a little bit of everything and a whole lot of nothin'," says Roger Alley, owner of Alley's Country Store on Allegheny Springs Road in Shawsville. The store has served the community since the 1950s but Alley has owned it since 1984. As a long distance trucker, he bought it for his wife so she would have something to do after their four children were grown while he was on the road. After 30 years, life behind the wheel of a tractor-trailer lost its appeal. He ended up tripling the size of the store, and at age 72 intends to pass the business on to his son.

A little bit of everything is no exaggeration. Alley's carries some produce, snack and shelf-stable foods, soft drinks, alcohol, tobacco products, plumbing supplies, hunting supplies, and small hardware items, chicken feed and chicken scratch. He says he can work with



Roger Alley, right, helps a customer.



Some garden items wait for spring.

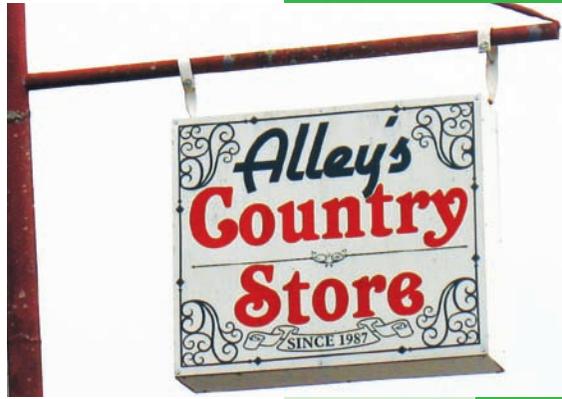
any distributor, save for a certain big name soft drink company. So he brings in those products himself, and also stocks hard to find soft-drinks, like Cheerwine, Nehi, and SunDrop, the trademark of the country store. Alley knows what to keep in stock because "I listen to the customer." "If I don't listen, I don't get much," he said.

He can also order anything a customer asks for. "I can get some items, like a part for a lawnmower or tractor, overnight, if they ask me to order it by the right time," Alley says.

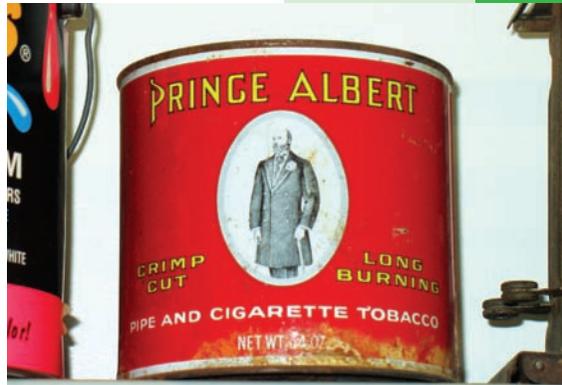
January, he says, "is a killer," the slowest time of the year. In the spring, Alley's carries seed and other gardening supplies. The store's deli and ice cream stand runs seasonally re-opened in March. In October, he'll carry pumpkins, and in December Christmas trees "hand trimmed and cheaper than in town," Alley says.

At Alley's, what you see is what you get. "We don't have a stockroom," Alley says. "This is the stockroom." Every product is neatly arranged and clearly priced. The store is clean and well-lit, and Alley is a kind and welcoming figure behind the checkout counter, greeting customers with a friendly "Hello, brother!" as they enter the store.

Alley's is more than just a store: it is also a community hub. "If the ambulance speeds off down the holler, I'll get a phone call askin' where it's goin'," Alley said. "And if it snows, folks'll call asking how the roads look." 



Alley's Country Store.



They even have Prince Albert in a can at Alley's Country Store.



Plumbing supplies neatly arranged and clearly priced.



A young customer contemplates the hardware selection.



Randolph Walker

Bill Chapman: "These, to me, were the best possible buildings I could have hoped for in this city."

Chapman recently opened The Lofts at West Station, consisting of two warehouses on Salem Avenue in Roanoke converted into loft apartments. (A loft apartment can be an apartment with a loft, but here it refers to any apartment in a former warehouse.) The 71 units were 75 percent rented in February. A restaurant on the ground floor, Beamer's 25, is slated for a late spring opening. (25 was Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer's jersey number in college and this past season was his 25th at Tech.)

The Lofts at West Station followed

Fulton Motor Lofts, a project that transformed a former auto dealership into 22 condominiums. Chapman says he and his partners have spent a little over \$11 million on West Station, Fulton and 416 Work Lofts, a commercial office loft project.

When Chapman arrived, he wasn't fully aware of Salem Avenue's reputation for prostitutes, drugs and crime. "Everyone I talked with that's lived in Roanoke for a long time that finds out I'm doing work on Salem says 'Oh my God.' To me, that's what creates development opportunities. These, to me, were the best possible buildings I could have hoped for in this city."

Not only has Chapman succeeded, he's done it during a real estate downturn. "Condominiums in 2008, what a nightmare!" he says, referring to the Fulton project. "Yet we sold every unit in the first year."

Chapman's grandfather owned a small

Development where it ain't >

Executive Summary:

Youth sports, a small private school and his parents instilled a sense of confidence in the young Bill Chapman, now a developer of multimillion-dollar urban housing projects in less desirable neighborhoods.

By Randolph Walker

The slogans on www.billchapmanent.com—"push the limits, rock the status quo"—prepare the visitor to meet a freewheeling, larger-than-life force of nature. In fact, Bill Chapman is surprisingly quiet, though definitely intense. In any case, rocking the status quo is exactly what he's done on his journey from unpretentious beginnings in Smithfield.

business, but nothing on the scale that he now operates. Where did Chapman get his confidence?

His mother was a nurse and his father trained firemen in Newport News. "My parents were very dedicated, loving parents that worked very hard and taught me to work at a young age."

He attended a private school, Isle of Wight Academy, but stresses that it was nothing like the elite private schools of Richmond's West End. He describes it as "a very small country private school. Over half the people that went to Isle of Wight were from farming families. There was no attitude at the school."

The school's small size allowed him to take a number of leadership positions. Another source of confidence, he says, was "sports at a young age, being involved on teams and understanding what leadership is."

In Brief

Name:	Bill Chapman
Age:	41
Company:	Bill Chapman Enterprises
Title:	President
Type of business:	Urban real estate development
Location:	Richmond, Roanoke
Background:	Born and raised in Smithfield. Graduated from VCU with a broadcasting journalism degree in 1993. Has rehabilitated numerous buildings in the historic districts of downtown Richmond and Roanoke. Lives off Cary Street in West End Richmond in a 1950s contemporary style home with wife Mary Ann Rodriguez-Chapman, a pharmaceutical rep, and their 3-year-old son Connor.



Dan Smith

The Lofts at West Station in Roanoke, Chapman's newest development.



Bill Chapman at the Grand Opening of Lofts at West Station.

Graduating from VCU with a broadcasting degree, Chapman went into sports journalism. He had "a lot of fun jobs but not very well paying jobs, so I always had a restaurant job on the side."

In 1999 he started managing restaurants in Richmond. "I got a reputation as someone who turned around struggling restaurants. Working downtown I had an opportunity to perform in front of a lot of entrepreneurs who frequented downtown restaurants. Richmond was just starting to see a decent amount of rehabilitation work downtown, and I was given an opportunity to get into project management with a small

development company." His first project was Market Villas, a 31-unit apartment project in Shockoe Bottom.

He enjoyed "doing something that had the meaning to the city, and something that had meaning to the building, bringing back a 100-year-old building that had architectural integrity you don't see today."

The satisfaction he feels on the final walk-through hasn't changed. "You never get used to the before and after. It's just as awe-inspiring. When you see the finished product, you can't believe it was the same building." 

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Mary Hill

Twins Luke and Rachael Higgenbotham flank Michael Carroll at Froth.

Their cup Froth-eth over >

Executive Summary:

A pair of twins, who wanted to be in concrete construction, have segued nicely into coffee at Froth in Roanoke.

By Mary Hill

Rachel and Luke Higgenbotham had no intention a year ago of opening a coffee shop. Last April, the twin siblings were preparing to graduate from Virginia Tech and enter the workforce in their prospective fields—Luke remodeling residential properties with Systems Construction in Blacksburg and Rachel starting a four-month internship with Procon in Rocky Mount.

"I wanted to get into concrete construction," says Rachel, "but I asked to end my internship early because we had this idea."

The idea was Froth (www.facebook.com/frothcoffee), a new coffee shop that opened in October in the Forum on Starkey Road in Roanoke. Over the summer, the twins had learned that Mill Mountain Coffee & Tea would move out of the Forum to a nearby location in the former Bank of Floyd building. They saw the opportunity to create a new business that could take advantage of an established clientele. "It made sense to transition from coffee shop to coffee shop in the same space," says Rachel. "Some regulars would come back to this location, and we were hoping to attract new people too."

The Higgenbothams teamed with Michael Carroll, an experienced coffee shop manager and former Mill Mountain employee, who guided them through the ins and outs of the business. Together, the three developed a vision for the shop—a graceful, friendly place where people were knowledgeable about coffee, but which offered more than just the standard coffee shop fare.

Carroll helped the Higgenbothams name the business, develop a unique coffee blend,

and create a full range of distinctive menu items (including the popular Froth Griddle, a grilled sausage sandwich, with two glazed donuts in place of bread).

In addition to relying on Carroll's expertise, the twins turned to their parents, John and Shelly Higginbotham, for advice, business contacts, and occasional hands-on support. For example, their father's family business, Corrugated Container Corporation, completed minor design work for the menu boards.

The siblings researched stock and equipment extensively, both on the internet and by contacting regional food service suppliers. With financing from Valley Bank, they were able to procure the necessary items and renovate the space—a task aided by Luke's background in building construction.

"When I started, I thought coffee was just coffee. It's been interesting to learn [so much]," says Rachel.

"It's been an education," agrees Luke. "We've gotten to experience the whole spectrum of the business—from working with the coffee to doing behind-the-scenes paperwork, handling taxes and insurance, that sort of thing."

One might naturally assume Froth to be the Higginbothams' first formal business enterprise, but the pair had actually initiated another entrepreneurial venture prior to graduating college. Inspired by a company selling desk hutches on campus, the twins

In Brief

Name: Rachel and Luke Higginbotham

Age: 24

Companies: Froth; Diversified Fabrication Group

Location: Roanoke

Businesses: Coffee shop/restaurant (Froth); prefabricated desk hutch manufacture and distribution (DFG)

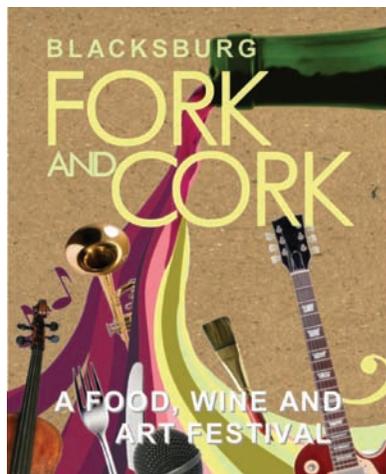
The short bit: Enterprising twins see opportunities and take them.

and a friend decided to manufacture their own version of the product constructed with lumber from a local hardware store. The first year, they sold 50 hutches. The next, they sold 100.

Buoyed by their success, Rachel and Luke founded Diversified Fabrication Group LLC. Under those auspices, they designed a prefabricated hutch kit which is scheduled for production and distribution in the coming months.

In case co-founding two start-ups prior to their 25th birthday isn't challenging enough, the Higginbothams are keeping one eye open to opportunities that may emerge in the coming years.

"I don't see Froth as a one-shop operation. I'd like to grow it," says Rachel. "But that's a ways down the future." 



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Gene Marrano

Bob Lawson: “They understand how to make a profit ... but not what is the proper amount of debt versus capital, how much debt they can afford.”

Tapping the brakes to retirement >

Executive Summary:

Bob Lawson has not even slowed down. He's using years of banking expertise to help others.

By Gene Marrano

Retired at the tender young age of 59, Bob Lawson wasn't idle for long. He has stayed involved with community events, helping to spearhead the fundraising needed for Center in the Square's \$30 million dollar makeover (the part not covered by tax credits). He started a business consulting company, Longview Associates, operated on a part-time basis.

Bob, who was responsible for the western

region of Virginia in his last role at SunTrust (everything west of Richmond, from Maryland to North Carolina), started out with United Virginia Bank and then Crestar, which merged with Atlanta-based SunTrust in 1998.

Banking these days “is a lot tougher business,” says Bob, pointing to a sluggish economy, bank failures and the recession. “Regulatory pressures are just enormous and very difficult to deal with. Banking has been through a tough 36 months.” Still, Bob insists, “We have to have a strong banking system.”

Six months into retirement Bob was ready to do something business-related and, at the urging of friends, formed Longview Associates. He's consulted with community banks, small businesses and not-for-profits on organizational issues and obtaining credit. Helping to position a business properly before the principals approach a bank seeking lines of credit is a specialty.

He also focuses on small business owners that may be around his age and have most of their assets tied up in that business. "Often they don't know how to extract that net worth as they plan for retirement [or] getting out of the business," says Bob.

There are other ways besides selling the business to extract money from it and that's where his expertise comes in. "It's a good part time occupation, which is all I want," says Bob of his consulting work. He finds it "very gratifying," to help business owners find a way to give back to the community. Corporate executives "have a lot to give back," and should continue to do that, even after retirement.

Many small business owners "don't understand the liability side of their balance sheet," says Bob. "They understand how to make a profit ... but not what is the proper amount of debt versus capital, how much debt they can afford." Understanding the relationship between debt and capital is where Lawson's expertise is valuable. Businesses are "snowflakes"—as in no two are exactly alike—but many owners don't fully understand credit and capital and "how all of that works," Bob says.

He occasionally does some volunteer work for the Taubman Museum of Art and has consulted with the Roanoke Regional Partnership and the economic development foundation associated with the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce. Lawson also volunteers at Virginia Tech.

In Brief

Name: Bob Lawson

Age: 64

Business: Retired as the regional president for SunTrust Bank since 2007 after 34 years in the banking industry, Lawson now operates a one-person business consulting firm on a part time basis. He also keeps busy playing golf these days.

Location: Roanoke

Background: Finance degree from Virginia Tech, master's in business from the University of Richmond. Started career in a management training program. "I was looking for a job," and wound up in banking, he says. That training program included time as a teller and a loan collector. Lawson and his wife Ann (who have two adult children and one grandchild) like to travel.

Retirement might mean slowing down a bit but Bob Lawson advises others facing the same scenario not to stand still: "You [should] have things that interest you, things that you want to do." That's a code Bob Lawson has lived by since leaving SunTrust. 



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Recovering coalfield gas >

Executive Summary:

At Virginia Tech, researchers are looking at some significant energy solutions that could result in mucho dinero for the region.

By Tim Thornton

Coal is the source of about 80 percent of the electricity used in this part of the world. But coal is dirty stuff. Burning it releases a long list of toxins and a significant amount of carbon dioxide, one of the gases helping to disrupt the world's climate.

If an experiment conducted by Virginia Tech's Virginia Center for Coal and Energy Research works out, coal may also play an important role in keeping some of that carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. In the process, it may also make some natural gas wells more productive.

"What we're looking at in Virginia is adding life to coal-bed methane wells," says

researcher Nino Ripepi. "There's a lot of gas we know is left in place. We think we can push it out."

There are about 4,500 gas wells in Southwest Virginia's coalfields, according to Ripepi. "Fifty percent of the gas can be left in place in these vertical wells," he says. "If we go in and recover, let's say 25 percent of that gas, we're talking billions of dollars now. This could be an economic driver, especially if you're being paid to put it away."

People would be paid to put carbon dioxide away if the United States develops a cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gases similar to the program that has reduced emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, prime ingredients in smog and acid rain. Anyone storing carbon dioxide in coal-bed methane wells could make more money by pumping previously unreachable natural gas to the surface. (Methane released into the atmosphere is roughly 20 times as potent a greenhouse gas as carbon dioxide, but burning natural gas produces less pollution and greenhouse gas than other fossil fuels.)

The pressure created by pumping carbon dioxide into the ground might push some gas out, but the real magic is in what Ripepi



Center for Coal and Energy Research workers in the field.

calls “that static cling phenomenon.” Carbon dioxide really likes to attach itself to coal.

“CO₂ wants to be there more than methane,” Ripepi says. “It will actually push methane molecules off the surface of coal.”

That strong attachment also provides another guard against the possibility that pumped-in carbon dioxide will leak into the atmosphere.

The project will pump 20,000 tons of carbon dioxide into two coal-bed methane wells in Buchanan County over a year. Researchers will measure the effects on the coal, on the gas and on the ground around them while monitoring the effectiveness of containing carbon dioxide that way. The project is funded by an \$11.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy and \$2.8 million from industry, state governments and the Virginia Center for Coal and Energy Research.

If it works, it could help create a whole new industry. “We’re going to have to reproduce the oil industry backwards,” Ripepi says. “We’re going to have pipelines everywhere. We’re going to have a CO₂ pipeline network throughout the country. There’s a huge economic possibility. It could be creating

jobs in areas where you have good sequestration storage sites.”

If Ripepi is right, Southwest Virginia would be one of those places. The goal is to have the process ready for industrial use by 2028.

Before carbon can be stored, it must be captured, and the challenge of capturing carbon dioxide is even more daunting than the challenge of containing it, so the carbon dioxide used in this experiment isn’t coming from a coal-fired power plant or any other major emitter of the gas. About \$2 million of the project’s money will go to buy tanker truck loads of carbon dioxide for researchers to pump into the ground. It’s not being kept out of the atmosphere. It’s being kept out of soft drinks. 



Tim Thornton

Nino Ripepi





Mike Pollman in front of the Christiansburg Rec Center.

For health and welfare >

Executive Summary:

The Bike Kitchen in Christiansburg has a lot of lofty goals for a small business.

By Rachael Garrity

There's no question: the world is a better place because some of its inhabitants are committed to giving back. As poet Maya Angelou put it: "You shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back." The most effective players in that particular game, though, are the ones who seek multiple, interactive approaches, built on teamwork and articulated through community collaboration. The Bike Kitchen (vabikekitchen@gmail.com) in Christiansburg is just such a project.

Sponsored by the New River Valley Bicycle Association, through a partnership with the

Virginia Tech Center for Student Engagement and Community Partnerships and the Town of Christiansburg, the new program provides low- or no-cost instruction in bicycle mechanics and educational workshops that promote cycling.

It is patterned after similar efforts across the country and focuses on making sure those without the means to buy/lease and insure a car or truck (one in five in the NRV live below the poverty line) have alternative transportation, a crucial step on their road to self-sufficiency. It also encourages a healthy lifestyle, offers participants the opportunity to learn new skills, and has the added benefit of improving air quality if it takes off with enough oomph.

The idea began with Beth Lohman and Jerry Ford, employees of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, who had seen a similar operation in Burlington, Vt. Active and engaged members of the New River Valley Bicycle Association, as well as of other "green" and community-based initiatives, they are not ones to sit on the sidelines when a good idea comes along. By late last year, they'd hired Mike Pollman, a Chicago native

who had worked on various Americorps projects out west.

A young man with a warm smile and a firm handshake, Pollman is eager to get the program off the drawing board. "Working with Americorps VISTA has opened my eyes to just how much a strong non-profit organization can do to help the people who need it most," he stresses. "And because Christiansburg has donated two truck bays at the Rec Center for our use, we are not saddled with rent, so we already have a leg up."

First on his agenda is finding the means—donations of money, labor, materials or all three—to build out the now-empty truck bays. Pulaski Bike has donated a Jamis bicycle the Bike Kitchen is using for a fund-raising raffle. Those who volunteer to help

get the operation up and running will be rewarded with free bicycles, helmets, locks or lights, based on the number of hours they work.

Pollman is quiet, but firm, when he tells the simple story of a conversation that occurred recently in a local shelter. "You just don't think about some things, even when you're in this business," he says. "As I understand it, when one of the shelter inhabitants heard about the possibility of getting a bike, he mentioned right away how much money he'd save by being able to get to a local grocery store instead of buying in the convenience store he could walk to and paying premium prices."

With bikes, a little money really can go a long way. And pedaling beats peddling every time. 

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The end of functional government >

My View

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

Excutive Summary: *Government is out of control at every level and the one power that could get it back on truck—if it would—is business.*

We recently finished with—one hopes—a thoroughly discouraging General Assembly session in Richmond that left many of us longing for the days when our state government provided necessary services, regulated some activities to the public good and stayed out of our private life.

This was a session dominated by a Republican Party desire to take advantage of slim margins in the General Assembly and one of its own in the governor's office in order to push through social legislation that it had longed to make law for decades. It got some of that wish, missed on some and created far more bitterness and division than already existed with its insufferable arrogance.

Fact is that the Republicans did not have majorities everywhere they said they did. The Senate, for example, was evenly divided, but the Republican Party, which had a Lt. Governor in the tie-breaking chair, claimed that was a majority and used it. Except when the budget was to be passed and the Democrats, using the only power they had (the power to say "no" in budgetary matters only) put the brakes on a state budget. That, of course, elicited howls of protest from the Republicans who said it was unfair.

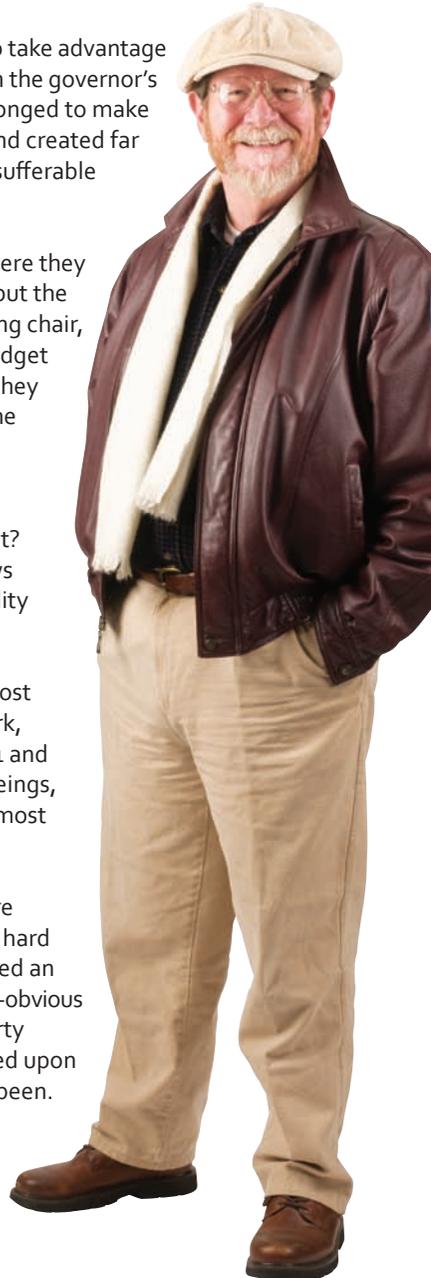
What did we get from this general assembly that is of benefit? About the only thing I can find is a pretty good bill that allows homeowners to install solar panels, in spite of what the locality might say.

I think the one agreement we all share on this latest—and most broken—version of our state legislature is that it doesn't work, can't work and that we seriously need to go back to Square 1 and start again. The people we have representing us are lesser beings, not worthy of their offices, which have been abused at an almost criminal level.

It's the same situation in Washington where all definitions are predicated on differences, not similarities. The hard left, the hard right and the disappearing middle tell us that we have reached an impasse that is dangerous to our country in obvious and not-so-obvious ways. National security should never be predicated upon party affiliation, and individual rights should avoid definitions based upon abortion politics or gun politics or war politics, as they have been.

I believe that, perhaps more than the population in general, the business community longs for something it can depend on in government. One of the reasons the economy remains

continued on Page 52



Project Management

101 >

By Tom Field
PublisherOn Tap
from the Pub

There are two things to be said at this time of year. The first—is to hide your toothpicks, your push-pins, your straws, popsicle sticks, colored markers, rubber bands, yarn, styrofoam, small springs, and hot glue gun. Oh, and that next quick-fix project you'll inevitably have where you are desperate and all you need is your handy roll of duct tape? Forget about it. It will be nowhere to be found.

The second thing to be said—is merely a statement: Damn you, Rube Goldberg! Damn you! (And yes, my fist is indeed shaking in the air.)

Somewhere, somebody in the Roanoke County Public School middle school Pre-AP Science program thought it was a good idea to institute the infamous Rube Goldberg project. That person is neither inquisitive nor simply interested in the eclectic. That person is maniacal.

Rube Goldberg—if you didn't already know (and RCPS is obviously hell-bent on its mission to see that everyone in the world knows who he is)—is the early 20th Century American cartoonist who illustrated crazy and complex machines. The machine would produce one result that could have been accomplished simply and quickly, but instead required multiple steps and a series of unnecessary activities (the more the merrier). I love Rube Goldberg... as a cartoonist. Without him, Tom & Jerry would have just been a cartoon about a cat chasing a mouse. But as a science project... grrrrrrrrrr.

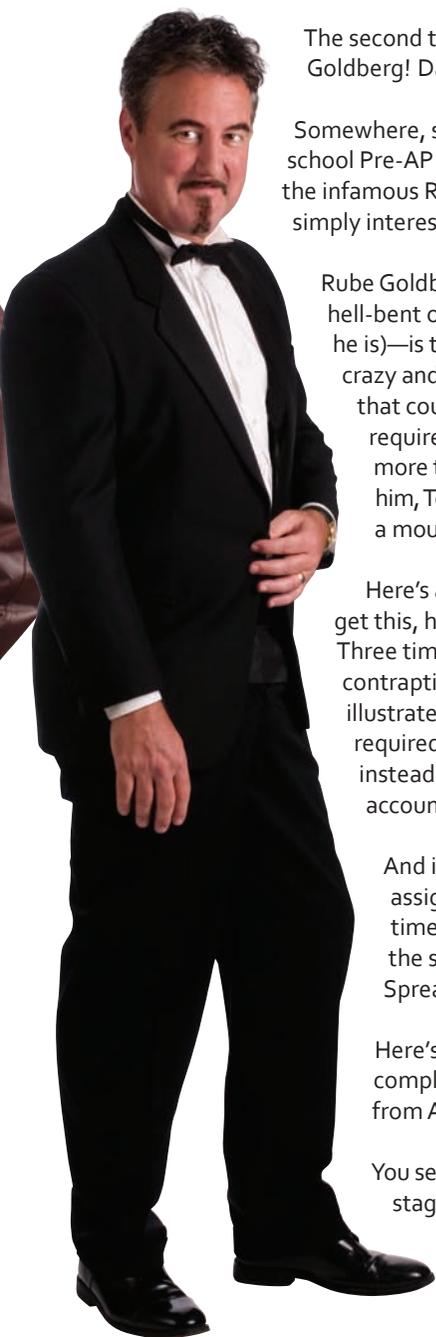
Here's an update for you 8th grade science teachers: Some parents, get this, have more than one child. Lauren is number three for me. Three times I've had to put up with the construction of an impractical contraption based off some rube's sketches (that's right, he merely illustrated them, he never actually built them) that should have required a piece of construction paper and a pair of scissors, but instead requires a pickup truck and a transfer from my savings account to my Lowe's Home Improvement credit card.

And if the Rube Goldberg project wasn't enough of a hellish assignment for my daughter (number three, third one, thrice times we've done this, 3x, triple, tres, trois, Roman numero III) the school deems it most wise to make it a "team" project. Spreadin' the love, I suppose.

Here's the real rube... err, rub. Teamwork doesn't always make complicated assignments any easier. That's the real lesson I get from AP Science. It only took me three sessions.

You see, to build a contraption from start to finish with intermittent stages, you're better off with a single designer. It's not like one person says, "Hey, I'll do a pulley," and the other says, "Okay, I'll make a pendulum to follow that." You have moving

continued on Page 52



Smith / My View

from Page 50

in a mess right now is because our government can't make a decision and business needs a foundation on which to build. If business has no clue how much money—if any—will be available to borrow in the next year or so, there will be no investment, no more jobs, no recovery and business owners will sit on whatever profit they make, rather than invest it wisely in their business.

Who can blame them when on a political whim—say energy tax credits or reduced taxes on the wealthy—an entire segment can be wiped out? Ronald Reagan did the former with Jimmy Carter's tax credits for clean energy. The latter came about in a fit of pique by Democrats, rebelling against a tax cut for the rich by taxing the luxury boat and small airplane industries off our shores. In both cases, the nose was bitten off to spite the face and nothing positive came of it.

Business has suddenly become a "person" (at least the corporate part of business has) and it is in control of which candidates get nominated by their party and which will serve in the offices we have outlined in our grand nation plan. This is one of the most egregious and anti-democratic strokes of the judicial pen we've encountered in many years of truly awful Supreme Court decisions. This one changes the game completely and the game wasn't all that hot to begin with.

Those of us hoping for some kind of return to effective government and even civility (the Senate used to be called "clubbish" and if that's the case now, it's the Bloods against the Crips) are on the edge of despair. It ain't happenin' any time soon and if it does, my guess is that the business community will have a huge hand in it. After all, the one thing politicians listen to—the only thing, save for Facebook and Twitter—is the sound of 30 pieces of silver clinking on their desks. 

Field / On Tap

from Page 51

objects to consider. Size and velocity. Angles of pitch. Friction and gravity and forces and all that jazz.

So, here's where we get the real lesson. It's a lesson of project management. Business 101.

Are you ready?

1. Don't ever expect equal contributions. If three people give exactly 33 percent, your project probably won't work or it will be comedic and inefficient. Team members won't give the same output (nor should they) and inevitably, one person gives far more than all the others. That's OK. The best outcomes depend on inequality (call it originality if that makes you feel better).

2. Don't share responsibilities; separate them. Delegate the segments into the natural independent activities they require. Instead of everyone designing, everyone getting the materials, everyone building... have one person be the expert or "champion" for his part of the assignment. With larger teams, the champ can direct his own group (call it a committee only if you must).

3. Don't wait until the last minute.

We always forget number three. In our work assignments. In our gift buying for special occasions. In our tax filings. And in our damn Rube Goldberg projects.

I have no idea what's going to happen with Lauren's Rube Goldberg project. As a parent of three who has sat on one too many push-pins (and I'm pretty sure that was dried glue I tasted on my fork last night), I fear what might happen is the same thing that happens in other areas with my kids. The oldest kid gets tons of pictures, videos, the most expensive costumes and uniforms for extra-curricular activities, and the most assistance on elaborate school projects. The middle child gets a little less of all that. And the youngest kid? We can't even find the camera.

My oldest child's Rube Goldberg project could very well have been awarded a patent at the U.S. Patent Office. Lauren's Rube Goldberg project might involve a pipe-cleaner stuck in a sponge.

Like many things in business (and in life) the most impractical activity can teach the most practical lesson. We shake our fists a lot. 

Letters

Favorite topics

Leave it to Valley Business FRONT to have wonderful articles and sidebars on two of my favorite delicacies – wine (cover story by Anne Piedmont) and olive oil (by Kathy Surace) in its February issue. All this and from a business perspective!

Of course it is always satisfying to see how Mr. Jefferson's Commonwealth has birthed any number of successful, delightful, and savory wineries and businesses. How he'd mourn the same can't be said for his politicians. But I digress.

Thanks for your wide ranging and eclectic coverage of the area's business, cultural, and

culinary delights. Your efforts do not go unnoticed. Nor unappreciated.

Kurt Navratil
Roanoke

Correction

The photo of Lee Willard and Ron Willard Sr. accompanying the cover story in the March was mis-identified. We regret the error.

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

““”

Developing a business style takes time and thought, deliberate choices and a plan for building your wardrobe and your style.

— Page 18

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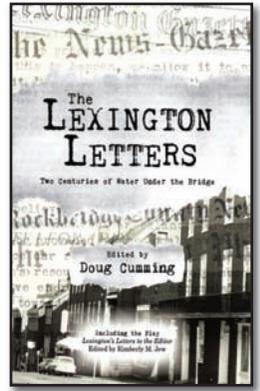
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Following are book recommendations from our publishers and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit 150-word reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to Editor Dan Smith at editrdan@msn.com



Letters to the editor

Washington & Lee University journalism professor Doug Cumming is becoming quite prolific. *The Lexington Letters: Two Centuries of Water Under the Bridge* (Mariner Press, \$24.95) is his third book in less than two years and continues an impressive run. *Letters* is edited with assistant W&L professor Kimberly Jew. The book, which involved examining 8,000 letters to Lexington newspapers going back to 1804, follows his superb *The Southern Press* and a collection of his father's work for Newsweek. *Letters* is a re-publication of letters to the editor of several Lexington and Rockbridge County papers.

Cumming employed a small army of students and Lexington citizens to help cull the letters and Jew wrote a play especially for the book, which appears at the back. Cumming calls *Letters*, "a work of re-cycling and re-use. It attempts to turn an ephemeral castoff literature ... into something wholly different." And it does, indeed, resulting not only in a fascinating read, but almost improbably, a delightful design, sprinkled with clips, ads and photos from the old papers. Like Cumming's earlier books, this one's a keeper.

—Dan Smith

Immeasurable Damage

How can you feel sorry for anyone from the family of Bernie Madoff? Read *The End of Normal* (Blue Rider Press, \$26.95) and you will feel sympathy for author Stephanie Madoff, her parents, her children and in particular her husband Mark. Stephanie openly takes you inside hers and Mark's world, from the

beginning of their relationship until a time after his suicide.

You get a glimpse of what it is/was like to be part of the "Bernie Madoff" family. You feel how she and Mark suffered because of what Bernie did to so many people. In the end, Mark could not cope with his feelings of shame for his father, the betrayal he felt from his mother for continuing to stand by Bernie, and the fact that so many people perpetually questioned whether he (Mark) had been part of the scheme.

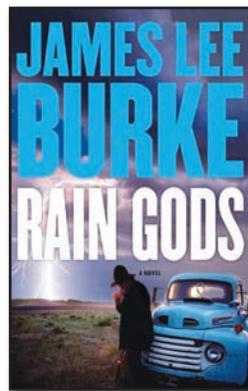
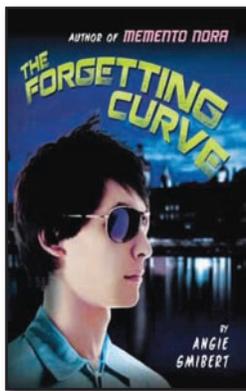
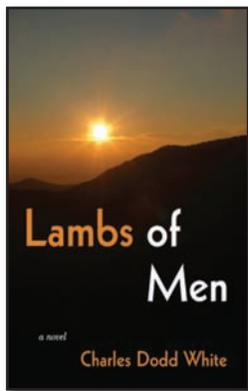
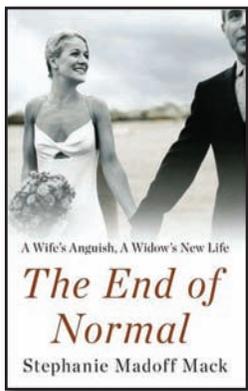
Where Bernie damaged the lives of so many financially, his actions damaged immeasurably the very soul of his own son.

—Kathy K. Lamanca

Home from war

Lambs of Men (Casperian Books, \$13.50, free on Kindle) by Charles Dodd White takes the reader on a journey through rural, post-World War I North Carolina. Marine Sergeant Hiram Tobit returns to a home he remembers but doesn't recognize. His mother has committed suicide, and his relationship with his father is complicated beyond the guilt they both carry. When tragedy strikes, they must work together to confront the age-old question: how can you forgive others, when you can't forgive yourself?

Written in prose that borders on poetry, the language is eclipsed only by the images. White exposes both the rugged beauty and frightening violence of nature and humanity. Peppered with stories spanning generations, readers are gently transported through a



challenging narrative with the engrossing lure of a campfire story and the lyrical beauty of a masterful classic. A well written novel guaranteed to please fans of the literary, the historical, and the regional alike.

—Nikaya Smith

Erased memory

Roanoker Angie Smibert's *The Forgetting Curve* (Marshall Cavendish, \$16.99) takes place in a not-too-distant Big-Brotherish future in which everyone is watched and their memories can be altered. Told from the viewpoints of three teens who want to hold on to their memories, this dystopian young adult novel explores the nature of reality. Is what we remember real?

When Tech-savvy Aiden Nomura—curious about why a Therapeutic Forgetting Clinic has opened near his school in Switzerland—returns to America, he reconnects with his cousin Winter, who allegedly had a mental breakdown. Or did she? Why do Winter's parents have no memories of being in Japan for a year? Why are citizens being implanted with chips? Aiden, Winter, and their friend Velvet seek answers to what's happening around them in this brave new world.

The Forgetting Curve, a sequel to Smibert's *Memento Nora*, will be released May 1.

—Becky Mushko

More of the same

James Lee Burke just doesn't change. He is

as good as it gets with this kind of crime novel, but those of us who love his writing have longed to see him expand into something more meaningful and meaty. But JLB is over 70 now and you know the one about old dogs and new tricks. *Rain Gods* (Simon & Schuster, \$25.99) is much like most of his work: tough, hard-working, no-nonsense lawman takes on some of the baddest dudes in the region (the Southwest this time) and a lot of blood and guts splatter the walls.

That doesn't sound like much until you start reading this master storyteller's prose. It will make you cry with its perception, descriptive beauty and its deep feel for people and their land. This time around, small-town, 70-year-old, sheriff Hackberry Holland is investigating (along with various federal law agencies) the machine gun murder of a group of illegal Thai women who were being imported (with balloons of heroin in their stomachs) for prostitution.

Lots of bad people involved here, none worse than Preacher, who becomes something of a Morarity to Holland's Holmes. This one is an unpredictable sick-o. Hard to put down, but harder to refrain from wanting more substance from Burke.

—Dan Smith

(**The reviewers:** Kathy Lamanca is marketing director for American Door and Glass in Roanoke. Nikaya Smith is a Roanoke-based writer and high school teacher. Author Becky Mushko is literary coordinator for Rocky Mount's annual Mountain Spirits Festival. Dan Smith is editor of FRONT.)



Multi-Chamber Affair >

A multi-chamber breakfast meeting was held at Sam's Club in Roanoke on February 23, drawing a sizeable crowd from four area chambers of commerce. Pictured above are executive directors Vicki Gardner, Smith Mountain Lake Chamber of Commerce;

Debbie Kavitz, Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce; Dan Naff, Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce; Angie Chewning Lewis, Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce.



Renovation groundbreaking >

A number of former employees of the Virginian Railroad were on hand March 7 to break ground for the renovation of the old Virginian Station near the Norfolk Southern tracks in Roanoke. The shovels used were old Virginian shovels and more than 50 people attended. The renovation of the 102-year-old facility, which was nearly destroyed by fire 10 years ago, is being done by G&H Contracting in Salem, which bid right at \$494,000 for Phase I. More than \$1.2 million has been raised for the entire project.

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



Ashley Pannell, BoydPhotography.com



Classic ADDYs >

Held at the stately Corinthian Ballroom in Roanoke on March 10, the AAF Roanoke advertising club presented its annual ADDY awards banquet under an "ADDYGeddon" end-of-the-world theme. In the professional category, the Gold winners included Modea (5); Anstey Hodge Advertising Group (4); Abandon Films (2); Access (1); Advance Auto Parts (1); Hired Guns Creative (1); Neathawk Dubuque & Packett (1); Random Found Objects (1); tba (1). Students from Liberty University, Radford University, and Virginia Tech also picked up Gold. Allan Mower was recognized as Advertising Person of the Year, Chocklett Press as Vendor of the Year, and Abandon Films won Best of Show.



Dan Smith

Cool Cities winners >

Journalist Gene Marrano (right in photo with FRONT editor Dan Smith) was the media award winner at the March 14 Cool Cities Coalition awards breakfast. Smith is a previous winner and made the presentation. A large group of individuals was presented for their environmental work in the region.



Pete Krull

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

The local economy started the year trending in a positive direction. Initial unemployment claims are down and local retailers had a better holiday season than they did last year (which, itself, was better than the year before). Home sales were up over the year, but home prices were down.

double the statewide rate of 2.5 percent.

Unemployment/Employment

January unemployment numbers weren't available in time for publication (we'll cover them next time), but the number of people filing **initial unemployment claims** continues to fall. From week 8 2011 to the same week this year, initial unemployment claims in the Roanoke and Blacksburg MSAs fell by 19.4 percent, a sharper drop than Virginia's 15.1 percent. Within the region, Montgomery County registered the deepest drop: 48.1 percent fewer claims filed since the same week last year.



INITIAL UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS	
Week 8 2011	Week 8 2012
423	341

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Retail Sales

Improving retail sales are a strong indicator of an improving economy. Holiday shoppers in the Blacksburg and Roanoke MSAs opened their wallets a little wider in December. Local option sales tax revenue rose by 25.4 percent from the previous month and nearly 5 percent from the previous year, nearly



RETAIL SALES		
Dec. 2010	Nov. 2011	Dec. 2011
\$5,760,318	\$4,813,086	\$6,033,445

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation

Real Estate

Home prices started the year lower than they were in January 2011 and in the previous month, but home sales were up over the year – and at a faster pace than national home sales. Locally, the number of homes sold rose 11.3 percent from January 2011, compared to 0.7 at the national level. The average local home price was down 6.2 percent from a year ago and 17.6 percent from December. The average national home price in January also was down – 2.2 percent over the year and 3.9 percent from December.



HOME PRICES		
Jan. 2011	Dec. 2011	Jan. 2012
\$166,369	\$189,322	\$155,955

HOMES SOLD		
Jan. 2011	Dec. 2011	Jan. 2012
187	250	208

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

—By Anne Piedmont,
Piedmont Research Associates

Read the FRONT online

vbFRONT.com

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

Where we've been living >

Most of us in the Roanoke and New River Valleys live in the same house we lived in a year ago.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006-2010 American Community Survey, 80.9 percent of the population (one year old and older) in the Roanoke and Blacksburg Metropolitan Statistical Areas hasn't moved. That's lower than for both Virginia (83.8 percent) and the United States (84.2 percent).

In the Roanoke MSA, the percentage of people living in the same house – 84.8 percent – is actually higher than the state and national averages, and is reflective of the older, more settled population. In the Blacksburg, MSA, dominated by two

large universities and a younger, more mobile population, just 73.8 percent of people older than a year lived in the same house a year ago.

Botetourt County has the highest percentage locally of people living in the same house from the previous year, which shouldn't be a surprise, since the county also has the highest percentage of owner-occupied homes in the region, the highest percentage of married households and the oldest median age.

Why does this matter? It is one more indication of the demographic diversity of the broader region, which offers communities attractive to many different lifestyles: from older, very stable counties to vibrant college towns. No "one size fits all," but many sizes available.

—By *Anne Piedmont*,
Piedmont Research Associates

2006-2010 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

	Lived in Same House	Different House, Same County	Different County, Within Virginia	Different County, Lived Abroad
Botetourt County	91.6%	45.5%	87.6%	2.2%
Craig County	90.9%	49.1%	68.8%	0.0%
Franklin County	86.4%	56.5%	78.2%	4.7%
Roanoke County	86.2%	35.2%	73.6%	4.3%
Roanoke City	80.6%	58.8%	73.8%	4.3%
Salem City	82.3%	22.5%	70.8%	4.7%
Roanoke MSA	84.8%	47.7%	74.6%	3.7%
Giles County	86.8%	54.9%	60.8%	3.4%
Montgomery County	69.1%	47.2%	67.6%	4.3%
Pulaski County	85.4%	50.6%	79.7%	1.9%
Radford City	61.6%	33.5%	87.3%	2.4%
Blacksburg MSA	73.8%	43.5%	72.3%	3.6%
Combined Region	80.9%	45.7%	73.5%	3.7%
Virginia	83.8%	43.5%	59.3%	8.6%



Joy Sutton at work on the set of "The Hour of Joy"

Oprah acolyte >

Executive Summary:

Joy Sutton just couldn't stand being away from television, so the LewisGale marketing professional got back into it in a big way with her own independent talk show.

By Gene Marrano

Joy Sutton can't seem to shake the broadcast journalism bug. The former news anchor and health beat reporter for WDBJ-7 in Roanoke has spent much of the past year getting an independent lifestyles talk show, "The Hour of Joy," off the ground.

"Always in the back of my mind, I knew I wanted to be host of my own talk show," says Joy, "because when I was 13 I [started] watching Oprah. That's how I mirrored my career."

Often up in the wee hours of the morning to work on the program before she heads off to her day job, Joy conceived the show's concept, sold commercial spots to sponsors

and has packaged "The Hour of Joy" with the goal of syndicating it. It airs twice on weekends (MY19 on Saturdays, Fox 21/27 on Sunday). Joy will shoot 13 shows this first season.

Taped before a live studio audience at the Blue Ridge Public Television studio in Roanoke, which she rents along with a crew, the show is divided into segments with titles like "The Joy of Giving," "The Joy of Dining" and "The Joy of Music." The target audience is women 25 and older.

She tapes two shows at a time to save on production cost and is no longer restricted to the two minutes or so she had to produce a health news feature. She often makes changes on the fly and banters with floor director Julie Newman (who has a talk show of her own) about minor set changes.

Joy had no plans to continue in broadcasting after she left Channel 7, but her appetite for TV talk shows was kept alive by a panel discussion show ("The Conversation") she was part of on Fox 21/27. While doing that she met a "life coach," Janet Crawford of Extraordinary Living, who helped her focus on future goals. "I realized I still had that dream inside of me that was unfulfilled," says Joy.

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

"It's my baby," says Joy, who reached out to other small business contacts to see how they got started.

Joy enlisted Denise Allen Membreno, a former WDBJ colleague, as a producer and scouted for a production crew. Kirk Wray of Motion Adrenaline shoots segments on location for "The Hour of Joy."

Joy entered a contest conducted by business consultant Linda Foster (Synergize My Business), earning leads on possible sponsors and promotional media placement. Several advertisers paid up front, based on Joy's vision for the show.

She consulted with the Small Business Development Center at the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce on her business plan. "I'm kind of a detail person. I wanted to make sure it would make sense and eventually be profitable."

"It was a lot more work than I ever anticipated," admits Joy, who makes it all look easy when she gets to sit down with guests on the set. "Owning your own business is extremely difficult. My day never stops ... but it's been a good learning experience." 

In Brief

Name: Joy Sutton

Age: 36

Company: Sutton Impact Media
("The Hour of Joy" show)

Location: Roanoke

Background: The Minnesota native has been in Roanoke for 12 years. She attended Howard University in D.C. and earned a master's at Virginia Tech in health education and promotion. Joy was a reporter and anchor at WDBJ-7 for 10 years. She's been the marketing communications manager for the LewisGale Regional Health System in Salem for two years. Joy performed at the Apollo Theatre in New York as a youngster and modeled hair on Black Entertainment Television several years ago.

Philosophy: "Surround yourself with good people that know what you're doing and give you good advice. You need to have mentors, those people that have been there."



Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Banks

Tammie Yarter is a new VP of client administration at Roanoke's Trust Company of Virginia.



Rapp

Investing

Chad Summers and **David Ellis** have created The Ellis-Summers Group, an independent investment advising and financial planning firm.



Wheeler

Mortgage

ALCOVA has named **Lance Bowen** to a post-closing team leader and **Christie Leech** a closing team leader.

LEGAL FRONT

Firms

LeClairRyan has announced the

promotion of 12 associates to partners and 12 partners to shareholders of the firm. **Brandy M. Rapp** of the Roanoke office of LeClairRyan, has been named a partner on the bankruptcy and creditors' rights team. **Brian S. Wheeler** has joined the firm as a partner in the firm's litigation department in the Blacksburg and Roanoke offices.

WELLNESS FRONT



McBride

Medical School

Elizabeth McBride has been appointed director of development at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Grant



Rakes

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Manufacturing

Lara Lee Strickler has been named a designer and sales person at Ideal Cabinets Design Studio in Roanoke.



Venable

Architects, Engineers

Spectrum Design in Roanoke has announced the following promotions within the firm.

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Have a career announcement?

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



Harper



Mayrosh

Principals: **Granville Grant, Michael Rakes** and **Chris Venable**.



Duncan

Senior Associates: **Nathan Harper, Jacqueline Mayrosh,** and **Lenore Duncan.** **John Garrett** has been named Spectrum's



Garrett

new Architectural Department head.

Tyler D. Morris, E.I.T. joined Wiley & Wilson in Lynchburg as a



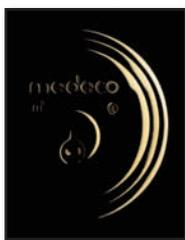
Miller

mechanical engineer-in-training in the mechanical department.

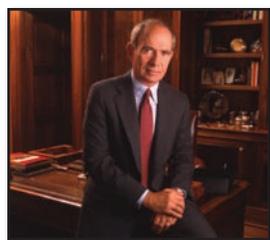
Janet Miller has joined Christiansburg-based



ADVANCE AUTO



MEDECO



BERTRAM FIRESTONE



BRUCE HORNSBY



ROANOKE TIMES



ROWE

gregvaughnphotography.com

Career FRONT

Gay and Neel as business development manager for its Staunton office.

Jeffrey Crate of Draper-Aden Associates in Blacksburg has won a Special Governor's Award from the National Solid Waste Management Association.

EDUCATION FRONT

Advertising/PR

Ashley Anthony has been named an account executive with Neathawk Dubuque & Packet agency in Roanoke.

Colleges

Ferrum College has named Schewel Furniture Company president **Marc Schewel** its Executive in Residence.

Jerome Niles has been named interim vice president for



Schewel

outreach and international affairs at Virginia Tech.



O'Connor

Training

CMR Institute in Roanoke, a provider of non-brand related education for biopharmaceutical representatives and managers has named **Michelle O'Connor** president and CEO.

OTHER FRONTS



Weeks

Consulting

Crimpers Climbing and **Robin Weeks** of My Pivotal Point have formed a partnership to offer corporate team building and leadership programs using indoor climbing facility in Christiansburg. Weeks will direct programs.

Economic Development

Virginia's Region 2000 Workforce Investment Board has named **Brian K. Davis** executive director.



Snyder

ISO Certifications

D'Ardenne Associates in Roanoke, an ISO management trainer, has named **Susan Snyder** an aerospace auditor.

“ ”
my day
never stops

— Page 60



Disaster Averted

Thanks to the IT experts at Entré.

Call us to learn the difference between networking and not working.

CONTRIBUTORS

Anne Giles Clelland is the founder of business news site Handshake 2.0 (handshake20.com) and President and CEO of Handshake Media, Incorporated, makers of Handshake mobile applications. She is co-founder of She Chooses (shechooses.com), the social network for women. [anne@handshake20.com]

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Mary Crockett Hill is the author of several books, most recently *A Theory of Everything*, winner of the Autumn House Poetry Prize and an educator. She lives in Elliston. [marycrockett.hill@yahoo.com]

Rob Johnson's journalism career began in 1972 and has included a two-decade stint at The Wall Street Journal, reporting on such industries as energy, manufacturing and tourism. He was later business editor of The Roanoke Times, where his reporters garnered national and state awards in 2007. These days he contributes articles to The Wall Street Journal's periodic special reports on small business and retirement. [bobbyj7676@gmail.com]

Sarah Beth Jones is a veteran newswoman who owns—with her husband Rob—Nary Ordinary Business Services (NO B.S.) in Floyd. She is a former columnist for the Greensboro Daily News and a native of North Carolina. [sbj@naryordinary.com]

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 ("Roanoke This Week with Gene Marrano" on Fox Radio 910). [gmarrano@cox.net]

Anne Piedmont is the president of Piedmont Research Associates, a marketing communications firm she has started after working for the Roanoke Regional Partnership as director of research for more than 18 years. She's also worked in public relations and journalism. She loves numbers and wants them to make sense for you. [annepied@yahoo.com]

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Dan Smith is editor and co-owner of Valley Business FRONT. A native of Asheville, N.C., he has been a journalist for more than four decades and has won many journalism awards (writing, photography and design). He is a member of the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame and was a 2009 recipient of the Perry F. Kendig Literary Award. He was Virginia's Business Journalist of the year in 2005. He is the founder of the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference. [dsmith@vbFRONT.com]

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

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

Tim Thornton is a writer and prize-winning dulcimer player who lives in Montgomery County. He has won a number of journalism awards over the years, most recently from the Society of Environmental Journalists and the Southern Environmental Law Center for his stories about mountaintop removal coal mining, conservation easements and the New River while working for The Roanoke Times. [timothywthornton@gmail.com]

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

Randolph Walker graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a journalism degree in 1983. He has been a daily newspaper reporter in Roanoke and an advertising copywriter for the Edmonds Packett Group. He is now a freelance writer as well as a performing musician and guitar teacher. [rwalker25@cox.net]



Johna Campbell

March 2012 > Contributor of the Month

Valley Business FRONT congratulates **Johna Campbell**, who receives the March 2012 "Contributor of the Month" award, including a "One Who's in the FRONT" certificate for her LegalFRONT feature on non-compete agreements. A human resources consultant and managing director of Cogent Management Resources, Johna is particularly skillful at writing with clarity. It's rare to find a writer who presents a story that both an industry insider and layman can appreciate; but Johna slips her stories right in that sweet spot where it's not too much and not too little. Never complicated and never oversimplified. Such a skill serves FRONT readers well—an audience who is smart, very engaged, but also quite diversified. Thank you, Johna, for a solid performance.



pedaling beats peddling

— Page 49



David Perry

Perry heads trust

The **Western Virginia Land Trust** has appointed interim director David Perry as the new executive director of the organization. Perry, a regular freelance writing contributor to **VBFRONT** (2010 Contributor of the Year), replaces Roger Holnback, who retired in February after 10 years with the land trust.

Perry, a Blacksburg native, has been with the land trust since 2006, when he was hired as the Trust's project manager. He became assistant director in 2011. Perry has a master's degree in park and resource management from Slippery Rock University and a bachelor's degree in geography from James Madison University. Prior to joining the land trust, he was employed with the Wicomico County

Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism in Salisbury, Md., and as a district executive with the East Carolina Council of the Boy Scouts of America in Kinston, N.C. He and his wife and two sons live in southwest Roanoke.

Isaacs closes

One of Grandin Village's most popular eateries, **The Isaacs Mediterranean Restaurant**, has closed. The property it occupies was sold recently and the new owner could not reach a lease agreement with the owners of The Isaacs, according to published reports. The restaurant's owners are in search of a new location, they say.

The building housing **The Isaacs Mediterranean Restaurant** and **Norberto's Italian Ristorante** was sold at

auction to Richard Bishop of Roanoke for \$525,000, nearly \$400,000 less than their 2010 appraised value. Bishop is a real estate investor and founder of Dominion Air and Machinery in Roanoke. The sale was Feb. 29 and Bishop had a month to seal the deal.

The building was in foreclosure, with more than \$800,000 owed StellarOne Bank by owners Benjamin Ward of Heathsville and Apollo Leong, a physician in Salem. They paid \$500,000 for the property four years ago and renovated it.

APCo files for route

Appalachian Power Company has filed an application with the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC) to construct a new \$25 million electric transmission line. The company says the line would reinforce the electric grid and prevent potential overload conditions in the Montgomery County, Blacksburg and Christiansburg area that could occur as early as summer 2015. Following a public comment period and environmental analysis, the company identified what it says is the least-impacting route possible for the 7.5 mile transmission line.

Moog cuts workforce

Moog Inc., which is based in New York and makes motion and fluid controls and systems, recently announced plans to trim five percent of its workforce in Blacksburg. Employees were offered "enhanced severance packages" to voluntarily leave. The two plants in Blacksburg have 1,010 employees.

Wins award

Friendship Retirement Community's Wandering Garden—a courtyard offering outdoor respite for patients with dementia and related illnesses—has been cited as an example of excellence. The Environments for Aging Showcase selected the Wandering Garden as one of 36 projects around the nation deserving to be included in Long Term Care magazine's annual April design issue.

Call center closes

Global Contact Services, which has operated a call center in Pulaski, has laid off its 40 employees because of the loss of a contract providing telemarketing for banks. The facility has been closed.

Hotel wins award

The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, a DoubleTree by Hilton

Hotel, was recently honored with the company's Best Property Operations - Americas East award at a Hilton Worldwide conference in Dallas.

R.D. Wright, director of property operations at the historic hotel and conference center, earned the prestigious honor after successfully obtaining the highest scores in property operation evaluations for three consecutive years. Only three such awards were given out within the Hilton Worldwide portfolio of hotels in the Americas

East region – which includes Hilton Worldwide managed properties from North America, Central America and South America.

Modea layoffs

Modea, the digital ad company in Blacksburg that has consistently been among the fastest growing companies in the region, has laid off 25 of its 79 employees. The company lost its lucrative Verizon Wireless account, for which Modea built simulators and emulators.

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.

President David Catalano reports that the company remains healthy, but needs to be smaller. He says the company will continue to pursue its plan to locate at Blacksburg Middle School.

Council expands to Roanoke

VT KnowledgeWorks in Blacksburg has expanded its Presidents' Councils to Roanoke with the appointment of Ken Ferris as moderator. Presidents'

So much more.

vbFRONT.com

- > Ten Finalists Announced for Entrepreneur Challenge
- > An Overview of FRONT's Style and Etiquette Conference
- > IA Executives Win State Award from SBA
- > Style Conference Generating Buzz in Market
- > Cool Cities Coalition Presents Environmental Awards
- > Best Foot Forward on WDBJ7 Sunday Morning

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

- > Arts Council Awards Regional Art Grants
- > Plans for Full-Time Ice Rink in Roanoke Emerge
- > HomeTown Bank Opens Mortgage Office in Roanoke
- > Modea Lays Off Many of Its Workers
- > VTK Expands Presidents' Council to Roanoke
- > Friendship's Garden Wins Award
- > Roanoke Bond Rating Stable at AA+
- > Hotel Roanoke Wins Prestigious Award

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

FRONT Notes

Councils are private networks of experienced executives working together to increase energy, share insight, reduce risk and improve leadership skills.

Ferris is a serial entrepreneur with more than 30 years of experience which has included being on the founding team of three technology start-up companies, each of which was sold to a

large, publicly traded company. He is past president and on the board of the Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council (RBTC).

Design award

Shelter Alternatives of Blacksburg has won the 2011 Design Excellence Award from the New River Valley Homebuilder's Association. In addition to being three-time past

winner of Builder of the Year, this recognition is the sixth Design Excellence Award for Shelter since 1993.

Stable bond

Fitch Ratings has affirmed the **City of Roanoke's** AA+ bond rating with a stable outlook. According to Fitch's assessment, "Roanoke is a regional economic hub, with a diverse economy that

leverages the city's employment sector strengths in health care and transportation. Growing opportunities in biomedical research spearheaded by a joint partnership between Carilion Clinic and [Virginia Tech] lend additional employment and income stability."

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](http://moreFRONT.com), also available by link at vbFRONT.com.

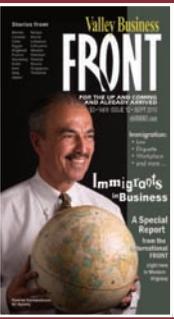
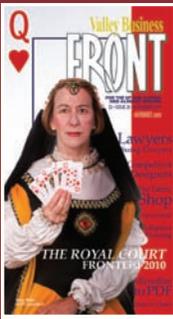
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Coming Up...

May 2012

Grant Writing

With non-profits struggling in a difficult economy, grant writers have become even more important to their overall operation. Meet the writers, learn about the process, and see what's being done to secure funding for organizations trying their best to serve our communities. In May...discover the art of applying for grants.



June 2012

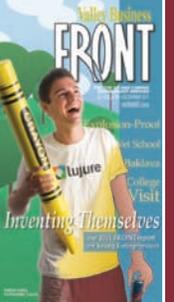
Grocery Stores

In the June FRONT, we go far beyond the "paper or plastic" question when it comes to grocery stores. Here's a business we drive by every day (and many of us visit several times a week) and probably take for granted. What's the state of business like for grocery stores in our region? In June, we take you inside...the grocery store.



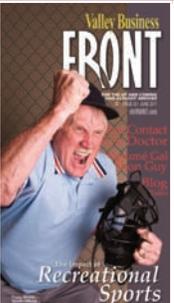
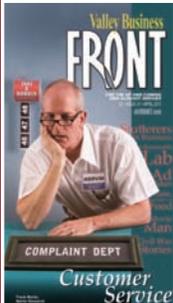
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“”
 businesses are like snowflakes—
 as in no two are exactly alike

— Page 44

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