

Valley Business

# FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING  
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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*What's About Tattoos*

Appraisals

Wellness  
Coalition

Clear Calling

in the  
Workplace?

Court  
Reporter

Art  
Realistic

Student  
Help

Erin Wommack,  
O. Winston Link Museum

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# WELCOME to the FRONT

One of the most frequent questions asked of us at FRONT is, "Where do you get your story ideas?" It's a simple question with a complex answer that has a number of parts, so the easy way to reply is, "Where the stories are."

That means we are out in the community both as participants and observers and we listen to people who tell stories. Our writers are equally involved and often come up with excellent stories. A good example is this month's cover story—one we might not have considered, since it is not our cultural demographic. But it is Sarah Beth Jones' and her suggestion that we allow her to do a cover piece on tattoos and piercings in work settings struck us as a perfect way to begin the year.

Sarah comes at this from inside. She's a business owner (Nary Ordinary Business Services—NO B.S.—in Floyd) and both she and her husband, Rob, have tattoos, meaningful tattoos. Sarah Beth explained the culture of the tattoo to us along the way and she explains it to you in her marvelous story.

Stories come at us from different angles every day and it is our job to recognize what our readers will like—or what our readers want to read. Then we have to assign the right writer to the story. It helps when the writer makes the suggestion, as Sarah Beth did and as Laura Purcell did with organized labor recently. Both nailed the stories they wanted to do. And you benefitted.

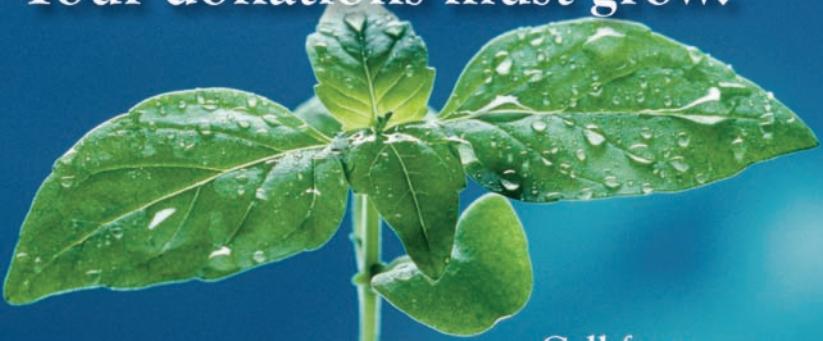


**Tom Field**



**Dan Smith**

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# JANUARY



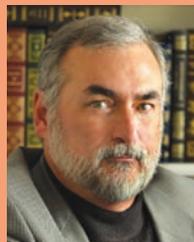
Lois Caliri



Johna Campbell



Gene Marrano



Michael Miller



Nicholas Vaassen



Greg Vaughn

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 48.

## 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



Anne Giles Clelland



Tom Field



Kathleen Harshberger



Sarah Beth Jones



David Perry



Anne Piedmont



Dan Smith



Kathy Surace



Randolph Walker

“”  
Is there a shortcut  
I can take?

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“”  
Well-fitted  
clothing is a  
pleasure to  
wear and to  
see on others

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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)
- Ellis Gutshall** Valley Bank (Finance)
- Nanci Hardwick** Schultz-Creehan (Tech/Industry)
- George Kegley** Retired (Seniors)
- John D. Long** Salem Museum (Culture)
- 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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Greg Vaughn Photography

**Erin Wommack** plays our business executive who happens to reveal tattoos hiding under her power suit. In real life, she manages marketing for the O. Winston Link Museum in Roanoke. To be clear, the tats on the cover are fake—the one shown above is real. Erin calls it her “anchor... dirty sailor style.”

## Body mod and the workplace >

**Executive Summary:** *Mamas have been warning the kids for years that tattoos and the piercings go on the naive young ones' permanent records. The trunk-sized tattoos and nipple rings are here in force and ... well, it doesn't seem to make much difference.*

By Sarah Beth Jones

# Tattoos in the Workplace

Barbie has caught plenty of flack over the years—for her unrealistic portrayal of beauty, her obsession with dream cars, houses and boats, and her career choices, most of which keep her solidly in the realm of gender-specific employment. In October 2011, she garnered the ire of a new set of parents when collaboration between Mattel and an L.A.-based fashion company, Tokidoki, resulted in a punk rock Barbie complete with pink hair and, yes, many tattoos.

While stigmas about body modification are still prominent in the business community, an October 2011 U.S. News & World Report survey asking, “Is Tokidoki’s tattoo Barbie inappropriate for children?” showed 66.76 percent of respondents answering in the negative.

Statistics such as this—and the 2010 Pew Research study showing that 38 percent of people ages 18 to 29 have tattoos—have many professionals joining Roanoke HR Consultant Johna Campbell in asking, “If we look back on this time, will there be a trend toward accepting tattoos in the workplace?”



## A little background

The earliest known tattoos were found in 1991 when Ötzi the Iceman was discovered in the Ötz valley in the Alps. Dating back to the fourth or fifth century B.C., Ötzi’s frozen body bears more than 55 carbon tattoos of dots and lines in locations similar enough to those used in acupuncture practices that historians speculate they were a part of an ancient healing technique.

Since Ötzi’s day, tattoos have traveled around the globe, from ancient Egypt where body art was a women-only club to Roman soldiers who spread the tattoo fashion across the empire until it was banned by Emperor Constantine. He considered tattooing to be contrary to his deeply-held Christian beliefs. Ancient tattoos have also been found in North and South America and across Asia. In Japan, tattoos have alternately been the illegal markings of criminals and so thoughtfully artistic that they inspired iconic American tattooists like Sailor Jerry.

Tattoos began the leg of their journey that stretched from Ötzi



to modern American hipsters and rockers by way of England and Captain James Cook. Between 1766 and 1770, Cook made three trips to the South Pacific where he found tattoos on the people of Polynesia. His enamored crew returned to Europe adorned with traditional body art. One such crew member was Cook's science officer and expedition botanist Sir Joseph Banks, who was not just a tattooed sailor, but a highly-regarded aristocrat to boot.

This is where the path of tattoo history diverges from its perception as an art form reserved for sailors and criminals. By the late 19th Century, tattoos were as popular among European aristocracy as among today's NBA players.

Prince Albert, Queen Victoria and Denmark's King Fredrick were all inked. Lady Randolph Churchill had a diamond bracelet specially crafted for occasions in which decorum necessitated that she cover the snake tattooed around her wrist. Her son Winston is said to have followed in her footsteps with an anchor on his arm.

Today, the demigods of music, sports and Hollywood carry on the tradition of tattooing in the upper echelons, but how does that reflect on the 9-to-5ers, the white collar working folks who have employers and/or clients they must impress?

## Today's business environment

As of November, the U.S. unemployment rate was 9 percent, which is roughly what it had been since April.

"Unemployment is high but employers are saying that they haven't found enough qualified people," says Johna Campbell, who co-owns the human resources consulting firm Cogent Management Resources. "Tattoos are another obstacle."

"In certain industries, it has become more acceptable," says Kathy Surace, whose company,



Tattoos don't bother me if they don't arrive before the person does.

—Johna Campbell,  
Cogent Management

## Tips for newbies >

- Learn about sterilization techniques and cross-contamination to know what to look for in a shop.  
—Shaun Carroll, owner of Hot Rod Tattoo
- Take an idea and collaborate with the artist to make [your tattoo] something really personal.  
—Mark Bell, owner of Main Street Tattoo
- Don't get anything with words on it.  
—Jeremy Holmes, coordinator of sustainability programs for the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission
- Each [tattoo artist] has a particular discipline, style and experience. So find one that has the style you like.  
—Keith Kincke, vice president of Deeds Inc.
- As for piercings, go for it. You only live once and they're not permanent.  
—Keri Sink, administrative assistant at Hall Community Services
- Go for it—just be sure to consider how you might feel about it five, 10 or 20 years down the road.  
—Evan Smith, marketing representative at ABB
- Choose your artist carefully. There are unbelievably talented artists out there and there's no room for budgeting when it comes to tattoos or piercings.  
—Erin Wommack, marketing & public relations coordinator at the O. Winston Link Museum
- Be sure to check out the tattooist's place of work, his or her reputation... talk to people and ask to see the tattoos of one or two people who have already "collected" some of that artist's work.  
—Meg Hibbert, editor of the Salem Times-Register and the New Castle Record
- It does hurt; don't forget to breathe.  
—Rob Jones, co-owner of Nary Ordinary Business Services in Floyd



Dan Smith

**Keri Sink: "My tattoos are all sentimental and mark important parts of my life."**



## Trends in tattooing >

Eternal trends:

- Stars
- Butterflies
- Crosses
- Wings

Today's trends:

- Lettering on the ribs, especially among young women
- Small tattoos behind the ears

Peacock Image, is geared toward helping people look their best. Kathy also writes a monthly column for the FRONT that focuses her fashion know-how on business attire.

Kathy cites creative fields like fashion and media, and fields that don't require interfacing with the end client, like computer programming, as professions in which personal expression of all sorts is more acceptable.

"However," she says, "in the traditional fields of law and banking, [body modification] still impacts one's credibility, which is vital to those industries."

Ariel Clark, art director at tba (the becher agency) PR + Advertising, says that she often forgets how unusual her position is as a professional who can and does display her body art. "If the prerogative of my office was to be corporate and therefore I had to wear long sleeves and take all the metal out of my face, certainly as an employee, I would feel a little confined by that."

Still, Ariel and Kathy are ultimately in agreement that covering tattoos helps build favorable first impressions, although they come to it from different paths.

"When tattoos are placed in a location that can be covered by clothing when necessary, it shows respect for others and for the business," says Kathy.

Ariel, on the other hand, sees her occasional decisions to cover her tattoos as a way to remain more focused and confident when meeting more traditional clients.

"When I do have to dress up for a presentation or something—if I put a jacket on to cover my tattoos—I feel like I have the protection of professionalism. I can go to the meeting and I'm not worried about my tattoos showing," she says.

Then, after a pause she says, "But that sounds really sad to say that, I think."



None of [people's warnings about tattoos] had any relevancy to me because I was adamantly drawn to this art form and knew that even if I did get something that I didn't like later on, that it would end up being part of my story.

—Keri Sink, *Hall Community Services*



Sarah Beth Jones

**Joey Kaylor: “People already realize I’m not going to conform to the social norms to begin with so why not?”**

## Art on display

According to the 2010 Pew Research study, 72 percent of respondents with tattoos reported that their tattoos were not usually visible.

Short of wearing turtle-necks year-round, Keri Sink has little choice but to show her tattoos at Hall Community Services where she works as an administrative assistant. Out of habit, Keri tends to wear long enough sleeves to cover the tattoos on her upper arms, a stack of skulls on her left arm and a tribute to her daughter on her right.

“The mermaid mother and daughter symbolize my daughter and me, and the anchor symbolizes my commitment to her as a mother,” she says. “My tattoos are all sentimental and mark important parts of my life.”

In the past, Keri has gotten negative feedback about her tattoos.

“I have been told that I don’t look ‘professional’ enough or that my appearance would deter customers,” she says, but in the open-minded environment of Hall Community Services, she’s had nothing but compliments from customers and clients.

Keri is naturally attractive and engaging. It’s easy to imagine that her beauty and charm help some people overlook what might otherwise be seen as edgy or inappropriate.

Joey Kaylor, on the other hand, is sometimes seen as an intimidating tower of a man. The owner of Protocol Automotive in Floyd, Joey has a beard that would make ZZ Top proud, a motorized anatomical heart tattooed on his chest and two full sleeves in progress. These, of course, go uncovered on the job.

“People already realize I’m not going to conform to the social norms to begin with so why not?” he says. This may be because his reputation as straight-shooter—a really, really straight-shooter—has made his tattoos less surprising to people. Though he added most of those tattoos in the past year, he says he



Mark Bell



People often decide they want a tattoo now and they want it cheap. Cheap is not always good, especially when there are needles and blood involved.

—Mark Bell,  
Main Street Tattoo





**Chef Adam Morse: "I'm proud of my heritage so why not?"**



**Meg Hibbert**

hasn't noticed any adverse effect on his business. He has, however, been surprised at the reaction he has gotten.

"The people you would expect to be open to tattoos—the liberal style people—are more judgmental than the conservative people in this area. I have preachers who come in and look at my work and they're absolutely amazed with it—they love the detail of the work," Joey says.

Surprisingly, it seems that every tattoo artist has a story of working on people of the cloth. Mark Bell, owner of Main Street Tattoo in Salem, said the most surprising to him were the stigmata he tattooed on the wrists of a youth minister.



As soon as I got the tattoo, I learned it gave me something in common with 90 percent of the jail population ... The tattoo artist warned me, 'People might discriminate against you,' and I told him, 'That's their problem.'

—Meg Hibbert, Salem Times Register editor

## The legal side

In 2001, Costco made headlines when it changed its dress code policy to disallow visible body modifications, including facial piercings other than earrings. It was a change well within the company's rights. According to Todd Leeson, a partner at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke, "There is no law that prohibits an employer from refusing to hire or employ a person because of a tattoo or piercing."

But the issue gets tricky when tattoos and other forms of body modification are considered spiritual practices, which then start toeing the line between employers' rights to define their brands and images and the rights of employees to free religious expression.

"The only thing that really can come into play," says Agnis Chakravorty, principle at Woods Rogers PLC, "is if the body art somehow convey some type of religious or other protected belief."



Kimberly Cloutier had worked for a Costco in Massachusetts for four years by the time it had changed the dress code. When the policy was updated, her supervisors instructed her to remove her facial piercings during her shift and she refused. It would have been an open-and-shut case for HR



except that Kimberly claimed her body modifications were gestures of faith guided by the Church of Body Modification.

According to the church's website, it is a decentralized entity that holds online classes once a month and believes that body modifications such as tattoos, piercing and branding can "strengthen the bond between mind, body, and soul."

"Title VII, a federal employment discrimination statute, could arguably provide a basis for a religious discrimination claim but only if the adverse party could show that the tattoo or piercing was part of some sort of sincerely held religious belief," says Todd Leeson. Who, though, is to determine sincerity in these instances?

Kimberly may have had grounds for the discrimination suit she filed but the courts ultimately sidestepped the issue of her religious beliefs and backed Costco in its termination, saying, "Even if Cloutier did not regularly receive any complaints about her appearance, her facial jewelry influenced Costco's public image and, in Costco's calculation, detracted from its professionalism."

"You have to remember that companies often consider their brand and image when hiring; tattoos could keep someone from fitting that image," said Alec Siegel, principal and executive director of Siegel Link, a recruiting firm based in Blacksburg.

Johna Campbell seconds that thought, saying that from her perspective as a HR professional, the culture of a business "just is." That is, the industry and clientele in large part determine whether visible body modifications are acceptable or detrimental.

As a sous chef at Blue 5 Restaurant in Roanoke and the partner in a budding catering firm, Adam Morse is in an industry that "just is" mostly okay with body art, especially for those in the kitchen. In fact, on the recent premier of the popular cooking reality show, "Top Chef," one contestant noted that the heavily inked contestants were going straight through the initial elimination while those left to stew sported bare skin.



Steve Orndorff



Sometimes, I'll forget it's there and then I'll be at the beach with my shirt off and someone will yell "Go Mountaineers!" and I think, "Oh right!"

—Steve Orndorff on the WV tattoo on his shoulder





Tammy Davis

## Why that? >

- When I got the tattoo in June of 2006, I was going through a difficult time personally and the wings symbolized my need for freedom and the urge that I had to just fly away from my problems.

—Tammy Davis, youth nutrition program assistant at Virginia Cooperative Extension

- I've always loved [Shaun Carroll's] work. It was kind of one of those ways to get art appreciation in front of people.

—Joey Kaylor, owner of Protocol Automotive

- It was, ostensibly, to commemorate a cross-country road trip a friend and I took, two weeks and 9,000 miles from Roanoke to New Orleans to San Diego to Canada and Chicago and back.

—Jeremy Holmes, coordinator of sustainability programs for the Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission

- I have always felt a connection with certain types of roses—my name means “rosebud” in Greek. I thought it apropos to get a Tudor rose, not only because it's pretty, but because I have an avid interest in that time

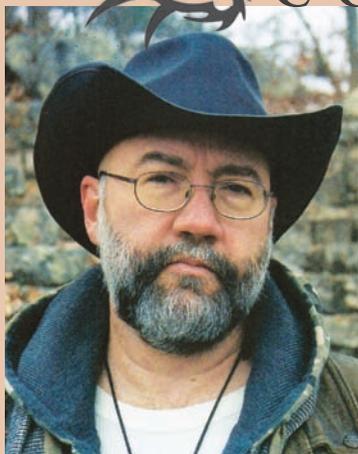


Kalyca Schultz



At 27, the Roanoke native is working on an extensive collection of tattoos with entirely Jewish themes. He displays a Star of David on one forearm and a chai, the Hebrew word for life, on the other. He's also in progress on half-sleeve murals that feature the 10 plagues visited upon the Egyptians in the Biblical book of Exodus. Blood, frogs, lice, wild animals, pestilence, boils, hail, locusts, darkness and the death of the firstborn—these are what finally convinced the pharaoh to let Moses' people go.

# COVER STORY



Jeff Mann



period and it is a fitting commemoration of my extended stay in London.

—Kalyca Schultz, master's student in library and information studies and a library specialist at Virginia Western Community College

- I originally got [tattoos and piercings] because I was intrigued by the art of tattooing and loved the subculture of the tattooed world.

—Keri Sink, administrative assistant at Hall Community Services

- I've always found tattoos attractive on other men, probably because I grew up in a small town in southern West Virginia where lots of local guys sported tattoos, so, for me, getting tattoos is a way of incorporating what I find desirable: an edgy, slightly wild masculinity.

—Jeff Mann, associate professor at Virginia Tech

- I wanted to have something on me that represented [my daughter Rachael] all the time.

—Carrie Turnbull, associate veterinarian at Pet Vet Roanoke, LLC



Carrie Turnbull



"I figure lots of people have crosses," says Adam. "I'm proud of my heritage so why not?"

The "why not" includes his recognition that for many Jewish congregations, body modification is so taboo that those with skin art won't be granted burial in a Jewish cemetery. Despite the prevalence of cross tattoos, some denominations of Christianity also forbid tattoos based on the same passage of Leviticus (19:28)





Jeremy Holmes



In the end, it ended by being fairly appropriate – I’m not really Odysseus, and we all know what happens when someone shows too much pride in all those Greek legends.

—Jeremy Holmes, in response to the misspelled “yeild” on a tattoo that quotes Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem “Ulysses.”



that fuels the Jewish prohibition: “You shall not ... incise any marks on yourself.”

Tattooing is also strictly forbidden in Islam though for a notably different reason: the perception that body modification is a sacrilegious attempt to further beautify God’s perfect creations.

## Matters of perception

Alec sometimes wishes the candidates he recruits would spend more time attempting to further beautify themselves, saying that when it comes to feedback from his clients, that is, the potential employers for whom he seeks candidates, “Grooming has often been more of an issue.”

Haircuts, shaves and a pressed shirt are some of the suggestions Alec has made to job seekers he’s met. “Grooming to go on interviews is about showing the potential employer that [the candidate will] take the time to prepare,” which Alec says demonstrates a future willingness to do the job right.

Tattoos don’t even come second in the list of concerns from clients; facial piercings hold that spot.

“One client said she stared at the candidate’s tongue ring the whole interview and couldn’t concentrate on the candidate,” Alec says.

Alec, a tattoo-free tattoo fan, says he’ll go to bat for a candidate whose talents are notable but whose body modifications might lead to a poor first impression with a prospective employer.

“I will sometimes say, ‘If you ignore [him] as a candidate, you’ll be doing yourself a disservice.’”

When Shaun Carroll, owner of Hot Rod Tattoo in Blacksburg, began as an apprentice at Ancient Art Tattoo in 1996, all of his clients were men ages 19 to 25.

“Now a lot more people are starting in their late 40s and early 50s,” he says. “People are still really worried about what others think, though.”

Shaun notes that his client list includes Virginia Tech employees from groundskeepers to tenured professors but that all keep



Sarah Beth Jones

**Artist Shaun Carroll: “Now a lot more people are starting in their late 40s and early 50s.”**

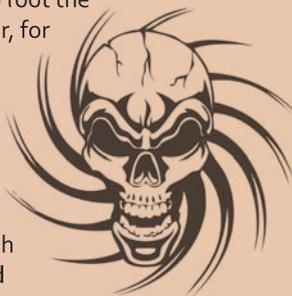
them hidden out of fear of what their coworkers would think. While a college environment seems, at first glance, to be one in which body modification would be not only acceptable but perhaps even appealing to the student demographic, Johna Campbell notes that the parents who foot the bill are as large a concern, if not larger, for those who must sell the university.

## The bottom line

There was once a time, not so long ago, that the only workplaces in which one would see tattoos were ships and sideshows. These days, the youngest adults—the Millennial generation of 18 to 29 years olds—the future leaders of business, are also the most heavily inked and heavily pierced generation in America’s history.

Kathy Surace may be right when she says, “I believe that once the younger generation ages and realizes that [it is] limiting [itself, it will] want to remove some of the visible tattoos.”

But maybe the youngsters will instead further impact perceptions of tattoos with work that is artful, personal and visible—assuming, that is, the tattooed put as much effort into their careers as they do their style. 



Isn’t it interesting that we’re concerned about tattoos on our warriors?

—Shaun Carroll, referring to tattoo restrictions in the military and on police forces



The general rule is that the employer has the right to have policies in place dealing with personal appearance unless it infringes on a [religious] belief by an employee.

—Agnis Chakravorty, Woods Rogers



## Networking and charisma >

Everyone has a favorite resolution this time of year: exercise, healthy eating, learning a new skill. The list is endless. In the professional world, at this time, we often vow to make more contacts and do more networking. So let's talk about networking and how charisma plays a part in the process.

Many professionals dread networking and, if you are one of those, it might help to remember these research findings: 40 percent of all adults live with social anxiety, and 75 percent of adults experience anxiety when walking into a room full of strangers. It does not matter if the occasion is a social or business gathering. So if you feel nervous when walking into a networking situation, remember you are not alone. Three out of four people there are just as anxious as you.

To arm ourselves for these situations, developing a little charisma will help. Have you ever noticed that some people seem to command attention simply by walking into a room? What's their secret? Are they born with that certain something that draws people to them? That something is often called charisma, a magnetic appeal. The word is rooted in Latin and Greek (aren't they all?) and refers to a grace or favor, which was considered a divine gift from God. Remember, rulers throughout history have maintained absolute power by asserting their "divine" rights.

No doubt about it, those with a high level of charisma will be listened to and respected as leaders. Who are these people who have that certain indefinable something? We often see it in actors, sports heroes, models, business leaders, and politicians. In my Business Etiquette seminars, I often ask the question, "Are these people born with that magnetism or do they learn it?" The truth is that very few of us are born with charisma. Fortunately, the gift of drawing people to you is a quality that can be developed, and if you want to succeed in the professional world, you have good reasons to do just that. Consider what it is and what it is not:

## Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

**Executive Summary:**  
*Arming yourself against anxiety can help you in those social situations.*

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- Charisma is not showing off.
- Charisma is not just reserved for the famous and celebrated.
- Charisma is a quality that can be developed.
- Charisma helps in any situation where you need or want to influence other people.
- Charisma is a tool that can help us in leading a team involved in project management, problem solving, innovation and pioneering.

Next month, we're going to talk about projecting confidence and authority—and charisma—as you make an entrance and work the room. 



Many professionals dread networking and, if you are one of those, it might help to remember these research findings: 40 percent of all adults live with social anxiety, and 75 percent of adults experience anxiety when walking into a room full of strangers.



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## Perfect job, but the pay ... >

*Dear Anne: I work for a company that I simply adore. It is a business I take great pride in and it is conducted with great ethical clarity. I don't want to leave the job, but the pay is terrible and no matter how I justify working at this company otherwise, making ends meet is a challenge. I know the company is paying what it can. It is a real quandary.*

---

**Dear Adore:** Forgive my iconoclasm, but Steve Jobs' advice to "follow your heart" becomes a sentimental platitude when the mortgage isn't paid. That you've found work you love is not to be under-valued. However, your work must generate enough resources to care for yourself, for those for whom you're responsible, and for those who love you who are watching you fail financially.

The part that interests me is, "I know the company is paying what it can." Why can't the company pay more? What's wrong with its business model that it can't generate enough profit to pay its employees wages that sustain them?

**Recommendation:** Sure, it's a "down economy" and "hanging in there" can be a virtue in hard times. Hard times are hard on soft business models. Forbearance can turn into a narrow, immobile way of being and thinking, both personally and professionally. What are your best customers paying for? How is your company getting those customers? Think openly and creatively about those questions and contribute to your company's "what" and "how." That would be an act of genuine adoration for your job. If you discover that the business model is so flawed it can only continue "paying what it can," regrettably, soon enough you'll be joining your company's owners in looking for new jobs. 📧

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## Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

**Executive Summary:**  
*Having a great job is wonderful, but making a living is an imperative.*

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## Puddling pants and highwaters >

In decades past, trouser legs were hemmed to exacting specifications. The perfect hem fell to the instep of the foot at the front of the leg and about one-half inch from the floor at the back of the leg. This caused a graceful break in the line of the trouser crease that allowed the pants to hang beautifully.

An increasing number of men are choosing to wear their trousers so long that they puddle around their ankles and drag on the ground. They might be unable to sew, reluctant to pay a tailor, or possibly expecting a growth spurt. Whatever the reason, it looks terrible.

On a younger man, a potential growth spurt, lack of funds, or ignorance of proper pants length is excusable, but only for the time being. He needs to educate himself. On an older man, it's more likely laziness, cheapness, or apathy. Even some women neglect to tailor their pants legs to the right length. Their excuse usually is that they wear different heel heights with the same pants.

Pants that puddle around the foot make the wearer appear shorter and childish. No matter how high quality the fabric, it destroys the line of the trouser and the overall look of the outfit. Pants that drag on the floor ruin a professional image.

Another interesting development with trouser hems occurs in the slim-cut suits favored by younger men. The trouser is flat front and the leg is slimmer and narrow at the hem.

As a result, the pants must be hemmed shorter than usual because they're too narrow to fall to the instep or close to the floor in back. Hem them to the top of the foot in front and as long as possible in back. Wear socks that blend with the trousers and shoes, creating a seamless line of color and the illusion of height.

After purchasing pants, it takes little more effort and expense to alter the pants to the perfect length. The results, though, are significant. The perfect length pants make the legs appear long and slim, allowing the fabric to drape elegantly. It gives the wearer confidence and improves their professional image.

Well-fitted clothing is a pleasure to wear and to see on others, even if it's inexpensive. Go the extra mile and have the pants hemmed to the perfect length. You'll be glad you did. 



## Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

### Executive Summary:

*When your pants pile up around your ankle, you are flirting with a "childish" look that a person in business can't afford.*



Dan Smith

The foreclosure of a single home in a neighborhood can have a negative impact on the assessed values of the other homes in the neighborhood.

## The battle over appraisals >

### Executive Summary:

*All too often, an appraisal that is out of line with what the bank, the seller, the buyer or logic says is reasonable is killing real estate deals at a time when selling is hard enough. Appraisers say the job has become harder and less profitable.*

### By Lois Caliri

A homeowner and a potential buyer are pretty confident they struck a deal, but then the appraisal is most likely to squash the sale. That “Ouch!” triggers the buyer’s lender to deny the loan because the appraisal is lower than the contract price.

“It’s ugly out there,” says Lee Mastin, a real estate broker with MKB Realtors. “The buyer either comes up with the cash or walks away from the deal.”

That’s exactly what happened with a

sale that was brokered by a Mountain to Lake Realtor. An appraisal came in lower than the contract price. The buyer wanted the property and had enough cash on hand to make the deal happen once the sellers lowered their price another \$5,000.

“In another failed transaction due to the appraisal, six weeks later, the seller luckily received another good offer,” says Betty Kingery, a Realtor serving Franklin County and Smith Mountain Lake. “That particular buyer used a different lender; the appraisal came in \$22,000 higher than the previous appraisal and all parties came to the closing table smiling.

“By the end of the summer, our National Association of Realtors reported 18 percent of our membership had experienced a contract cancellation due to a low appraisal. We just have fewer sales available to use for comparables and a large percentage of our solds have been foreclosures.”

Mastin calls the appraisal situation “the most significant issue in real estate and one of the primary causes of the fall of the housing market.”

Buyers and sellers have to be realistic, says Ken Chitester, spokesman for the Appraisal Institute, a Chicago-based association: "Owners tend to think their homes are worth more than they are." Appraisers, he says, are third party, independent analysts whose appraisals play a key role in lending decisions.

But that's a bitter pill to swallow for buyers, owners and Realtors.

While Kingery maintains that appraisers, as a whole, try to be fair and objective, she says regulations in the appraisal industry have a deep impact on the real estate market.

"After working very hard with buyers and sellers to put together an agreement, it's disappointing to get the news of a low appraisal and know that you have to go back to the drawing table," Kingery says. "When a low appraisal comes in, the buyers begin to doubt the true value of that property and it even affects their temperament as they look at other properties."

Appraisals are based on neighboring properties, says Richard Varney. "We don't have any control which way things will go."

At first blush this scenario appears to be a Realtor vs. Appraiser scenario, but

“ ”

After working very hard with buyers and sellers to put together an agreement, it's disappointing to get the news of a low appraisal and know that you have to go back to the drawing table. When a low appraisal comes in, the buyers begin to doubt the true value of that property and it even affects their temperament as they look at other properties.

—Realtor Betty Kingery

that's not the case. A market flooded with bankruptcies, foreclosures, short sales and bank-owned properties have lowered the values of homes. Middle dealers, appraisal management companies (AMCs), oversee and pay for the appraisers. And two giant banks each own two of the largest appraisal management companies. Bank of America owns LandSafe and Wells Fargo owns Rells Valuation.

"It's the fox watching the hen house,"

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Lee Mastin: "It's ugly out there."

Chitester says, but "it is allowed" as long as a separation exists between the banks and the appraisal companies they own.

## Changing appraisal role

For years, an appraisal was considered a formality. A mortgage broker would commonly suggest a business acquaintance to do the work, virtually assuring the appraisal, an opinion of value, matched the sale price.

But a May 2009 out-of-court settlement among Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and the New York Attorney General's office put a stop to that practice. The Home Valuation Code of Conduct established guidelines for appraisers to work independently without undue influence from mortgage brokers, lenders and real estate agents. Ultimately, those policies were passed into law in July 2010 with the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

Mortgage fraud prosecutors say the overhaul was necessary to curtail conflicts of interest and bloated estimates that contributed to the housing debacle. Hence, AMCs became the middlemen to assure fairness and objectivity. Lenders are not required to use an appraisal management company, but a middleman has to be part of the process, says Chitester.

What's hurting the appraisals, in some cases, is that comparable sales (an indicator for appraisals) are coming from the only sales in a given neighborhood, foreclosure sales

or bank-owned properties. "Clearly, they are not comparable in face, but clearly the circumstances of the property are different. Experienced, clearly educated and qualified, competent appraisers can make those adjustments for atypical sale," Chitester says.

The banks, however, won't let the appraisers make adjustments, says Lee Mastin.

When appraisers use short sales or repossessed sales in their comparable sales that are not the true market value, Mastin says, "That's what's preventing people from getting loans. It's screwing up the real estate market."

## Factoring the negatives

Appraisers say distressed sales must be factored into their comparable sales to develop a credible value opinion. According to the Appraisal Institute, appraisers must investigate the circumstances of each transaction ... including whether atypical motivations (highly motivated sales) or sale concessions were involved, or whether the condition of the property was compromised.

Meanwhile, Mastin waits. "You have to wait until all the junk gets out of the system before you get to the real deal," he says.

Even worse, appraisers argue, is what they perceive as a lack of knowledge within the

national appraisal companies, coupled with the fact that they want the work done cheap and fast.

When local appraisers refuse a job because the fee is too low, the AMC then shops price and finds an appraiser who will do the job. That appraiser may be out of town, leaving Realtors and Appraisers shaking their heads in dismay.

"Long distant" appraisers are sent to our area and they are not familiar with our community/county, their comparables do not always include the best choices," Kingery says. "We expect appraisals to be done by experts in our market ... They [appraisers] need to be familiar with the comps used and not just the price of the solds. It's frustrating for all Realtors in this rocky economy, as we see home prices dropping and an increased number of short sales and foreclosures hitting our market. Every sale is important."

According to a July GAO report to Congressional Committees, appraisers must be familiar with the specific type of property, the local market and geographic area.

Qualified appraisers won't work for

middlemen companies, according to Chitester. Turnaround times set forth by AMCs are unrealistic; they're squeezed on time and squeezed on salaries; they may not be as thorough, he says.

Varney agrees. Prior to AMCs Varney says appraisers' fees were about \$325. Now, they're about \$290. Also, Varney says appraisers undergo what he says is senseless scrutiny. On one of his appraisals he noted a vent-less gas fireplace in the basement. The buyer says it was vented. "OK, it's not," says Varney. He returned to the house and verified his first assessment. What followed was a two day back and forth between himself and the AMC. Varney's partner sent another photo to the AMC. All this slowed the sale.

On another occasion Varney reported there were new ceramic floors in the kitchen. The AMC called Varney, requesting pictures of the floor. "I had to stop what I was doing, go back to the house, take the photos and send them to the AMC," he says.

## Making less money

Varney says appraisers are making less money with the AMCs. He was asked to



Dan Smith

**Appraiser Richard Varney:** "We don't have any control which way things will go."

appraise a 90-acre farm in Bedford County. The bank did not want to make a loan on the total acreage, so the AMC wanted Varney to do two appraisals; one for a 10-acre parcel and the other for the remaining 80-acre parcel. The AMC asked what Varney would charge for his service. He gave one price for the 10-acre parcel and another for the remaining parcel. The AMC says, "I'll get back to you."

"The AMC's business model does not work," says Mark White, an appraiser and vice president of the Virginia Coalition of Appraiser Professionals. The AMCs position themselves between the lender and the appraiser; they provide a service to the lender, but charge the appraisers for their service.

For example, a borrower is charged \$400 by the lender for an appraisal. The lender hires an AMC which, in turn, hires an appraiser. The AMC pays an appraiser between \$175 to \$200, keeping the difference as payment for services rendered to the lender. This works for the AMC if it can find an appraiser to work for less than what is a 'customary and reasonable' fee, says White.

Dodd-Frank, though, requires appraisers to be paid "a customary and reasonable" fee.

'Now,' says White, the AMCs go back to the Lender, requesting a higher fee, say \$550, for the appraisal so they can pay the appraiser their "customary and reasonable" (\$400) fee as required by Dodd-Frank, and have \$150 to pay themselves, and the lender refused to pay more than \$400.

Herein lies the rub. The local, competent appraisers will not work for lower fees, says White, so the AMC's are forced to hire less qualified appraisers in order to stay in business.

This is why the Realtors, appraisers, and home builders are working together to change the Code of Virginia, requiring the AMCs to be regulated by the Virginia Real Estate Appraiser Board. This group wants to ensure policies and procedures are in place so that competent and qualified appraisers are available.

Nationally, the July GAO report says appraisal industry participants reported that the AMC portion is at least 30 percent of the fee the consumer pays for an appraisal.

Appraisers contend that lenders should pay the AMCs. But that could be problematic with bank-owned AMCs because federal law governs and regulates the banks.

Direct federal oversight of AMCs is limited because the focus of regulators is primarily on lenders, and state-level requirements for AMCs are uneven, says the July GAO report. "The GAO recommends that the heads of several government agencies, including the Federal Reserve and the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, consider the following criteria when developing minimum standards for state registration of AMCs: criteria for selecting appraisers, review of completed appraisals and the qualifications for appraisal reviewers." 

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Johnna Campbell

**Dawn Pierce: A year to build a business.**

## Serial entrepreneur >

### Executive Summary:

*Dawn Pierce's court reporting company is just the latest in her startup business history. But this one looks like a flagship.*

### By Johnna Campbell

Dawn Pierce's favorite quote in some ways defines her: "I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination." She's passionate, decisive, disciplined and cares deeply about her business.

Dawn is the sole proprietor of Pierce Reporting Company in downtown Roanoke. This isn't the first company she's owned, as a matter of fact; she's owned and sold several. Opening, running and then selling a company isn't a hobby, but rather her way of

## In Brief

**Name:** Dawn Pierce

**Age:** 52

**Company:** Pierce Reporting Company

**Founded:** 1992

**Location:** Roanoke

**Title:** Sole Proprietor

**Background:** Dawn grew up in Florida and moved to Roanoke in 1992. She has owned several court reporting companies over the years. She likes to give back to the community by participating in an annual event in which the Roanoke Valley Legal Secretary Association puts on a mock trial for high school students and paralegal students at Virginia Western Community College learn about the process. She is an avid sailor.

dealing with the cards she's been dealt.

She's been in business for herself since college. During high school, she took courses at night and upon graduation, had one year of college under her belt. One year later, she had earned an associate's degree, which led her to the freelance court reporting market.

Dawn was a trailing spouse for many years. She grew up in Orlando and her husband's job moved them to Mobile, Ala., then Raleigh, N.C., then finally to Roanoke. With each move she sold her business and started another in the new city. When Dawn tells this story, it seems easy, although clearly it's not. With Dawn's experience and tenacity, she has been able to take about one year to build each business.

While there are other court reporting companies in the outlying areas, Pierce Reporting Company is the only court

reporting company in downtown Roanoke. Her operating strategy is to network with the "one man bands," who freelance as court reporters in the outlying areas, to increase her geographical footprint. Regional travel is sometimes required and Dawn says she could travel globally if she had a handle on the language and dialect.

Over the years, the technology to support the profession has changed somewhat but the mission of every court reporter remains the same. "A court reporter's job is to record verbatim what has been said," Dawn says. "We create an unbiased record of everything that has been said so it can be used in the future."

Court reporters still use a stenotype machine and must be able to record a minimum of 225 words per minute to achieve a basic certification with National Court Reporters Association. Court reporters are able to



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nearly double their output by employing a scopist, who will translate and edit their work so that a transcript can be created.

Software has moved this process forward to the extent that a judge could actually see the transcript in real time as a proceeding is taking place. While court reporters are primarily employed in the court system, other specialties are developing, such as those who work from home creating closed captions for TV.

Today, business is good. Dawn has been able to maintain a contract with the Federal Grand Jury. This contract is the foundation of income that the business needs. She contracts with freelance court reporters for some of the work and some of the work she does herself.

Dawn is the face of the business and explained the four things she's learned in business:

- It's not what happened, it's what the client thinks happened. Successful business must understand the client's perspective.
- Businesses must be flexible to meet the needs of their clients.
- Always have safeguards in place. If you make a mistake, make sure it doesn't happen again.
- Build relationships to maintain business.

She uses these principles to create and maintain her business, which give her extraordinary personal and business flexibility.

When it's sunny and 60 degrees and the wind is blowing, she occasionally works from the deck of her sailboat at Smith Mountain Lake. That's a distinct perk. 

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Gene Marrano

**Dr. Chris Lauria:** "The basis of everything we're teaching is to be fit, eat well and think well."

## Good health, a traveling show >

### **Executive Summary:**

*The healthy living experts at the Roanoke Wellness Coalition work to get the word out that good health means good business, among other things.*

### **By Gene Marrano**

A group of Roanoke area professionals has been on a mission for the past year, bringing its message of nutrition, fitness and overall good health to corporations, church groups and anyone else who wants to hear it. The

Roanoke Wellness Coalition (540-314-9307), founded by Dr. Chris Lauria, a Roanoke County chiropractor and former college baseball player, takes its message on the road whenever possible.

Lauria, the local representative for a national non-profit called the Center for Wellness Professionals, decided he wanted to form a group locally and "get the message out about what wellness truly is." It's a fad of sorts now, says Lauria, but there is plenty of "bad information," and misconceptions about what it takes to be healthy. That's where the coalition hopes to make a difference.

Fitness spa owners Robyn and Richard Goodpasture, nutritionist Jeanie Redick, Natures Outlet owner Charlie Rea and wellness coach Sheila Guarnagia are



**Robyn Goodpasture: "If you're not healthy, you don't have a whole lot."**

whole lot. We wanted to give back to the community."

The Coalition has worked with the Allstate Insurance processing center in Roanoke County for the past year, appearing at "Lunch and Learn" sessions, health fairs and setting up a wellness program that 800-plus employees (most of whom sit at desks all day) have access to. "We basically educate," says Robyn, "everybody wants to be more fit."

Donna Smith, who chairs Allstate's wellness committee, helps schedule events that deal with health and fitness. "There's been a great response to having the [Roanoke Wellness Coalition] in here," says Smith. Robyn has held group training classes at Allstate, showing employees "how to be fit with very little time."

among the members of the Roanoke Wellness Coalition. Message therapy and coaching to achieve success help round out the group's holistic approach to being fit.

Wellness is not about buying a machine or an exercise program, says Chris. "It's all there at your fingertips, but people just don't realize it. The basis of everything we're teaching is to be fit, eat well and think well." Making the right choices in the grocery store—without resorting to "a pill or potion" as he puts it—and guidance on how to deal with stress is a main focus.

Robyn Goodpasture of FitStudio 365 was the first person Lauria called when organizing the Wellness Coalition. Robyn, who specializes in personal training and weight loss education at her South Roanoke location, says coalition members believe "if you're not healthy, you don't have a

Donna Smith says Allstate gave employees pedometers in 2011, challenging them to walk a million steps. A seminar by the Wellness Coalition on avoiding diabetes was well attended. "I've heard great responses from employees," notes Donna.

Chris Lauria says the coalition hopes to provide a turnkey corporate wellness program in the near future. Webinars are also on the drawing board. Many diseases originate with poor lifestyle choices, Chris points out. Being more fit keeps people on the job and drives down health care costs.

Chris does not promote his Lifestyle Wellness Center heavily when appearing with the coalition, nor do the other business owners involved. "Ultimately [we want] to be the point people, a safe avenue ... just establish ourselves as the point people for wellness in the area." 

## Tech Scoop

### Luna offers 'an object lesson' >

#### Executive Summary:

*In the business of technology, here's how it works.*

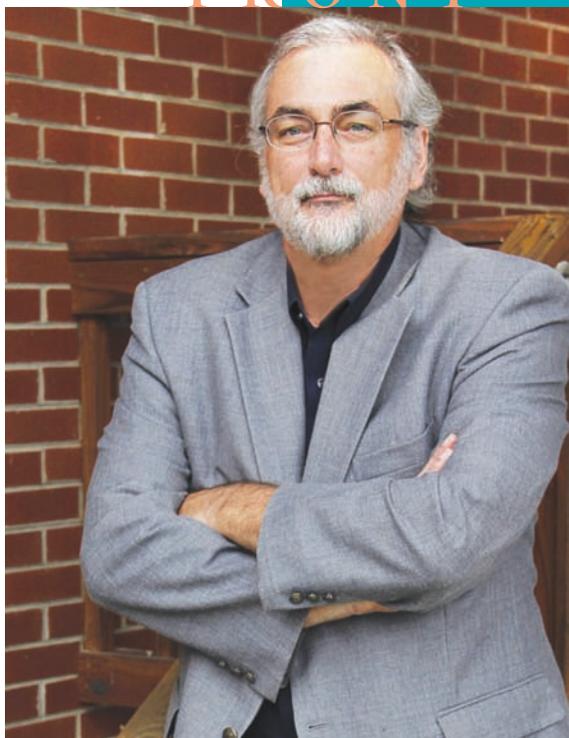
#### By Michael Miller

In mid-December, Roanoke-based Luna Innovations' CEO My Chung announced that the company would pare down its technology breadth to focus on three key areas: monitoring, protecting and improving critical processes in the medical, defense and composites industries.

Any business or technology leader who has lived in the region for long will have heard some version of the Luna rags-to-riches story: how a VT professor and some grad students struck out on their own, bootstrapping a tech startup into a public corporation with a market cap that once reached nearly \$100 million.

There are other aspects of the Luna story that you hear about as well. Luna has lost multiple millions of dollars every year since it went public in 2006. Luna stock, which opened at \$6 per share and briefly climbed to about \$10, now trades at \$1.25 most of the time. Maybe you recall a lawsuit and bankruptcy, or the fact that none of the original 25 employees, including the two main founders, Rick Claus and Kent Murphy, still works there.

The bad parts of the story are not really so bad. These are the sorts of things to be expected when the founders are very smart and tech-savvy, but lack any business experience. On the contrary, Luna can be an object lesson for other would-be technology entrepreneurs, both in their successes and the challenges it has overcome.



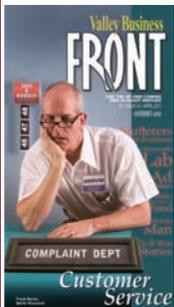
Michael Miller

Since the company's founding in about 1990, Luna has employed (read: trained) nearly 400 technology professionals in the Blacksburg-Roanoke region, most of whom are still here. Ex-Luna employees now populate maybe a dozen different younger businesses. Furthermore, the company's expertise in attracting government R&D funding has meant the infusion of more than \$200 million to the local economy over the past decade alone.

But probably Luna's biggest effect in the region has been its example, both good and bad. Budding techies look at Luna and think, "If Luna can do it I can do it, but I won't make its mistakes."

And that brings us to the leadership of Luna. My Chung was apparently brought in to help refocus the company from a primarily research-driven organization to a primarily product-driven one. The announcement of refocusing the organization, although still a little vague, is his first salvo in what will no doubt be a difficult but necessary transition.

Luna is still here, and plans to remain for a long while. 



# Coming Up..

**February 2012**

## Wine

What about wine? Well it's everywhere. Vineyards abound throughout our region as Virginia continues to earn its place and reputation as a preferred producer. On the business FRONT, wineries are not only bottling more, but hosting events and stepping up to the business crowd in as many new creative ways as the varieties of grapes they grow on the vine. See our special report in February.

**March 2012**

## The New Country Club

How are country clubs doing these days? What are membership levels like and in what kind of activities are they engaged? With all the talk about the increasing divide between the haves and the have-nots, are country clubs affected by the current economic climate? And what is the state of business for country clubs in our region? Read our insightful report in March. Just in time for golf member signups if you're so inclined.

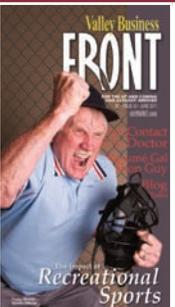
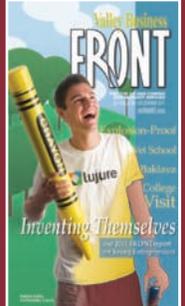
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David Perry

Mel Sweet sees “a lot of innovations.”

## Spare time no more >

### Executive Summary:

*Sweet's HVAC mixes old technology with new to get the right mix for the right customer.*

### By David Perry

Sweet's Heating & Air Conditioning was founded in 1973 in Mel Sweet's spare time. But today, the Moneta-based company is a full-service business that specializes in high-efficiency heating and cooling systems and solar installations.

The company, with a staff of 12, has about 5,000 customers in its database and works anywhere within a 50-60 mile radius of Moneta. Mel says his company will do “anything concerning hot air systems. We're doing solar now and we have done some boiler work. But because of the cost of operation, the efficiency, and the comfort you get out of them, mainly it's heat pumps. They are the number one item in this area.”

Mel says in the past several years, “Technology has gone through the roof.” Driving the technological changes has been the federal

requirement that prohibits manufacturers from producing heat pumps with a seasonal energy efficiency ratio (SEER) of less than 13. SEER is the cooling output in BTUs divided by the electric use. The higher the SEER ratio, the higher the efficiency.

“Manufacturers had to retool and redo things” due to the regulations, says Mel. “There were a lot of innovations,” including two-stage compressors and variable-speed DC motors.

Consumer preferences have changed along with the technology.

“fifteen years ago, you could go into a house and they'd very seldom question energy,” says Mel. “Things have changed—people are very energy-efficient. We're not quite as much a throwaway society today as we used to be.”

Consumers are better-informed today as well. Says Mel, “When you go into a house to do a presentation on a system, you'd better know what you're talking about or the customer's going to talk circles around you. It's all on the web. They can really research it.”

And the research shows some impressive figures for new heat pump units.

"If you had a 20-year-old unit and replaced it with a new one, you could pretty much cut your energy bill in half," says Mel. "You'll pay for the entire change-out in 10 years (through reduced energy bills). You get more comfort and a whole lot more peace of mind."

Adds Mel, "If they put in a high-efficiency, better-built, nicer unit, that thing doesn't work as hard and you're looking at 18-20 years of life. You just don't work it to death. A two-stage unit, when it's not working hard, it's loafing."

Sweet's is promoting solar installations as well, but hasn't had any takers yet. Mel blames the long payback time for residential installations. "If you're looking at commercial, you have a lot of tax breaks and can justify it easily. For residential, at today's energy rates, you're looking at 20 years or more to get the payback."

Customers who are considering solar have reasons other than money for doing it, says Mel.

"They're doing what they can to protect the planet," he says. "You're just paying for what the power company has to supplement. It's something that if you're really into the environment, it can give you a lot of satisfaction to put it in."

The cost to install solar can vary greatly. "It depends of how many panels you put in and which way the house faces," he says.

Mel predicts another product will be the next big thing: heat-pump water heaters. Heating water is a major user of electricity in most homes. "It'll heat water for half of what a regular electric water heater would."

Whatever the customer's needs, Mel's not one to back down from a difficult installation.

Says Mel, "That's probably the biggest payback in this business: to get into a house where it's a problematic thing and make the customer comfortable. It's the challenge." 



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photos: David Perry

Workers in a training session.

## Work Spaces

### Seeing clearly now >

#### Executive Summary:

*A worker-friendly facility at United Health Care in Roanoke replaces one that was less so.*

#### By David Perry

What did UnitedHealthcare's old call center have in common with the Western Virginia Regional Jail? No windows.

Things have changed. UnitedHealthcare finished a \$7 million expansion of its Thirlane Road facility in October that increased its footprint from 51,000 to 85,000 square feet, added new training and conference rooms, a cafe—and windows.

The natural lighting was “one of the first things people noticed—that and how quiet it was,” says UnitedHealthcare's

site director, Mike Weneta. Not only did the old facility lack windows, but it was noisy. Employees taking phone calls were positioned in a “daisy wheel” pattern (think pie wedges in a Trivial Pursuit piece) so that their voices were directed at each other.



# DEVELOPMENT FRONT

"The acoustics were not nearly as pleasant as we have now," says Weneta. Today, employees are positioned in a zig-zag pattern ("It's almost like an Aztec design in terms of the diagonal nature," says Weneta), so that sounds are focused in hundreds of different directions and diffused. Given the nature of UnitedHealthcare's business—Medicare Part D and retirement—this was especially important because "our demographic is more likely to have hearing loss," Weneta says.

But light and sound weren't the only areas to receive improvements in the renovation, which has roots dating back to 2005 when UnitedHealthcare ramped up for Medicare Part D and expanded the Roanoke facility from 180 to 550 employees. The new employee arrangement allows each worker 36 square feet of space versus 17 in the old layout. The company expanded from 2 to 10 conference rooms, added "huddle rooms" for employee coaching or personal phone calls, increased training

rooms to seven and improved the site's overall look and feel.

"Any time a site doesn't look up-to-date, it can be a hindrance in the labor market," says Weneta.

The entire renovation, which began in March, was completed while the facility stayed up and running. "It's a lot like building an airplane while it's still flying," Weneta says.

The new cafeteria is the clear jewel in the facility's crown. "The cafe is the number one employee amenity," says Weneta. "Our folks are pretty happy with having a place where they can go and get fresh food."

In the past, he says, employees found it tough to eat lunch on their 30-minute break. "There was nowhere to go for someone to get lunch and come back. In the call center world it's pretty important to stick to your schedule." 



Conference/training area.



The cafeteria is a selling point—with fresh foods.



photos: David Perry

**Irene Karageorge:** “I knew that if I were going to open a restaurant, it was going to be the way I'd do it for my family.”

## Mid-life crisis >

### Executive Summary:

*A banker and a chemist, Irene and Chris Karageorge couldn't not be in the restaurant business, but the Greek part didn't come so easily at Veranda Bistro.*

### By David Perry

Most people buy a sports car or a gym membership when they experience a mid-life crisis. Irene Karageorge opened a restaurant next to a gas station.

“I was a finance banker in management for many, many years, and one day I decided I wanted to open a bakery-slash-coffee shop. So I got a little bit more than I bargained for,” she says as she looks around the interior of Veranda Bistro, her Greek and Italian restaurant down Williamson Road from Hollins University.

“When we opened the restaurant, it was just a little sandwich shop more or less,” Irene says. “[Teachers from] Hollins University came in and said early on, ‘You’re Greek. Do you have any Greek food on the menu?’ And I didn’t. So the

Greek food evolved because the faculty at Hollins wanted Greek food.”

Despite being a native-born Greek, Irene, who is 50, “didn’t know how to cook the Greek food—my mom cooked the Greek food. They had a restaurant outside of the Pittsburgh area.”

“I stressed out so much,” Irene says. “I would call my home and say, ‘How do you make this?’ I would get the recipes in the evening from my mother and the next morning I would make it. Or I would make it at home all night long until I figured out how to make it.”

Husband Chris’ family had owned such Roanoke restaurants as Pete’s Deli, The City Lunch, La Maison du Gourmet and Le Gourmet Restaurant, while Irene’s aunt is Vicky Tsiakos of Paul’s Restaurant, a popular downtown Roanoke lunch counter. Chris is 51.

“I married a Greek, and his family had been in the restaurant business here in the Roanoke area forever,” says Irene. “We all worked in the restaurant business when we were young, but he’s a chemist, and I’m a banker, so none of us really knew what we were doing.”

# RETAIL / SERVICE FRONT

But eventually the little bakery-slash-coffee shop evolved into an eatery with a full menu of Greek and Italian fare, including moussaka, baklava, brick-oven pizza, strombolis and calzones. They started their eighth year in business in the fall.

One of Veranda Bistro's best-kept secrets is its local sourcing of much of its food.

"We have always believed from Day One in local," Irene says. "The sustainability that a lot of the local restaurants advertise—we've always done that. We never advertised it. There's a farmer that's literally a rock throw away. During the summer months we get our produce from him."

She adds, "I knew that if I were going to open a restaurant, it was going to be the way I'd do it for my family."

Customers may wonder what made Irene choose a location somewhat off the beaten path, not to mention sharing a building with a gas station. But she says the decision to move into the space on the Roanoke-Botetourt county border was easy.

"I fell in love with the outside veranda, Tinker Creek and the willow trees" that line the creek banks, she says. "My hope was that customers would see what I saw

and not us sitting beside a gas station. It was also close to the house" in Botetourt County.

Irene downplays the distance from Roanoke's population centers like South Roanoke or the Cave Spring area. "I'm from Pittsburgh," she says. "I'm used to driving an hour to go 14 miles."

Veranda Bistro, which seats 90 inside and 45 out, does a thriving catering and banquet business, averaging a couple dozen engagements a month. "The catering and the banquets are something that in the past few years have really taken off," Irene says. "I love that part of it. You know what you are doing—that you are preparing for 'x' amount of people."

Catering and banquets provide an extra source of stability and income in shaky economic times. "The restaurant business in today's economy ... today business is booming, tomorrow you're wondering how to pay the bills," she says.

Despite her success, Irene is quick to say she has no plans to expand. "This was a mid-life crisis," she says. "To be here eight years is an amazing accomplishment. Investors come to me all the time and say please open another one up, but this is it." 



The large veranda sold Irene Karageorge on the location of her restaurant.



Sara Beth Jones

(From left) Steve Orndorff, April Hutton and Mike Williams

## Renovation from inside >

### Executive Summary:

*English Meadows was a neglected mess when Mike Williams and Steve Orndorff found it a few years ago. It is not a mess now.*

By Sarah Beth Jones

It's easy to drive right past English Meadows. The senior living community sits on a hill off of Highway 8 just as it enters Christiansburg from the south, and is relatively nondescript from the outside. One step into the entryway, though, is all it takes to start getting the homey feel for which owners Mike Williams and Steve Orndorff and Administrator April Hutton strive.

First, it's the bulletin boards filled with photos that start just inside the main entrance and are sprinkled throughout the building. They're the kind of snapshots found in any family album—people painting or dancing at a party or simply just enjoying being together. In the dining room, the photos are joined with seasonal, brightly colored foam and paper crafts made by the residents, adults who range from middle age to one resident who recently celebrated her 100th birthday.

Friendships form in community areas, and the chairs lining the hallways are often filled with socializing residents. Three married couples live at English Meadows; Geri and Bobby met, courted and married there.

English Meadows has occupied that hilltop in Christiansburg for more than two decades, but when Mike and Steve bought it in 2008, it was half-empty, corporate-owned and in need of physical and procedural renovations that April compared to digging out of a hole.

When they celebrated their third anniversary of ownership this past October, they had only one available bed and, as April says, "We have our ground, our solid foundation; now we can grow from it."

Mike and Steve are dedicated to a flat-rate fee system in an industry marked by price-hiking add-ons for such necessities as managing medications. Because of this, their rates are 35 percent below the industry average and 32 percent below those of their local competitors. Still, they find money each month for improvements to the facility.

"You can make money and still make it affordable," says Mike.

Both he and Steve bring their previous experiences as business owners to their work at English Meadows, particularly their beliefs about top-down management.

"How you treat your employees is how they

will treat the residents," says Mike, who notes wage increases of 20 percent since taking ownership, taking the staff to a Keith Urban concert at the Greenbrier this past summer, and daily efforts to empower and inspire employees.

Says Steve, "I tell the staff that they don't work for me; they work for [the residents]. They have to make them and their families happy, not me."

Employee turnover rate at English Meadows is a testament to their efforts. Though hospitals can easily out bid the community on wages alone, English Meadows' annual turnover rate is in the low 30th percentile while the industry average is 65 to 70 percent.

"Every person who gets involved wants to spend time here," says April, who was joined by her parents, boyfriend and their children in an evening of hot cocoa and caroling last Christmas. "I missed my residents and they loved meeting my family."

English Meadows specializes in assisted living, which is defined by residents who can move around with relative independence but need assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADL), including medications, dressing and bathing. Mike and Steve would like to eventually expand the community to include all levels of senior care, from adult day care and independent living to nursing care.

## In Brief

- Business:** English Meadows Senior Living Community
- Services:** As an assisted living community, English Meadows provides care to adults who need help with such daily tasks as managing medications, dressing, bathing and eating healthfully
- Location:** Christiansburg
- Names:** Mike Williams and Steve Orndorff bought the community in 2008 and hired April Hutton as the administrator in 2009. Mike also founded and runs the Virginia Long-Term Care Network, the mission of which is to educate, inform, promote, and connect the long term care industry in Virginia
- Background:** At a time when horror stories about elder care are all too common, building trust with residents and families is a top priority. Their philosophy for combating concerns is full disclosure. "There's not a room or person in the building that I would hide," says Steve. "I eat all of my meals here. I would move my parents here."

In the meantime, as April says, "Our goal is ... the best care at the best price." 

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Randolph Walker

**Crowning Touch president Linda Balentine (from left) with MBA students Barry Cross, Natalya Franchuck, Maryann Leclaire and Deb Saunders**

## Grad students to the rescue >

### **Executive Summary:**

*A team of Radford MBA students is helping a Roanoke moving company plan to franchise its unique business model.*

### **By Randolph Walker**

When business owner Linda Balentine got the phone call, she was inclined to say no. Dr. Iain Clelland of Radford University wanted to place a team of MBA students with Balentine.

"You give and give to the community as a small business," says Linda, founder and president of Crowning Touch Senior Moving Services in Roanoke. "This is not the first time I have worked with university students.

What caught my attention was when he said these are already business professionals. This time I might actually benefit."

As it happened, Linda needed help with a complex business issue: formulating a franchising plan for Crowning Touch. So she accepted Clelland's offer to have a team of MBA students prepare a strategy to take her unique business model nationwide.

As far as Linda knows, no other business offers the same combination of services as Crowning Touch ([www.crowningtouchusa.com](http://www.crowningtouchusa.com)). Aimed at seniors who are downsizing, Crowning Touch combines traditional moving along with auctioning or consignment of unneeded items.

"It has always been my goal to franchise the company," says Linda, who started Crowning Touch in 1996. In 2010 she appeared on MSNBC's "Elevator Pitch,"

summing up her appeal for investors and getting feedback from two financial experts. Franchising was still on her mind when she got the call from Clelland, an associate professor of management.

Radford University's MBA program offers a full-time track as well as a professional track designed for working adults. Clelland's Business Consulting (MGNT 652) course meets Monday evenings at the Roanoke Higher Education Center. In addition to the team that worked with Linda, four other teams worked with two other clients, Magnets USA and Global Metal Finishing.

The students who assisted Linda were Deb Saunders, who works for Ply Gem Industries; Barry Cross, with VDOT; Maryann LeClaire, with Brown, Edwards & Co.; and Natalya Franchuck, a financial analyst and planner.

The question Linda initially posed was, in her words: "Is there a shortcut I can take to franchising the company other than raising \$600,000?" That question led to others. "One of them was branding," says Linda. "The name of my company doesn't reflect all that we do. This is not another moving company."

It's not another auction house either. Crowning Touch does not use the traditional auction model. Using Linda's proprietary auction software, the auction starts Friday at noon and ends Saturday night. Participants are free to come and go. Potential buyers submit bids and are notified by text message if someone has outbid them.

The auction segment accounts for 41 percent of Crowning Touch's revenue, Linda says. Auction clients aren't necessarily moving clients, although most are. "Her plan is somewhat bulletproof because auctioning goes up in a bad economy," Saunders notes.



**Iain Clelland**

While consultants often deal with just one aspect of a business, such as sales or productivity, the Radford MBA students studied the client's entire business.

Crowning Touch was challenging, Clelland says. "I would be hard pressed to think of another franchise model that's as sophisticated as this one. It's an innovative business model that I don't think anyone has seen before. Trying to turn that into a franchise model is a unique challenge."

Linda says she and her employees were thrilled with the team's December 1 presentation. Among other things, the students suggested she begin marketing her auction software. "It would strengthen our brand and give me the capital I need to move forward." 

*Businesses interested in working with a team of Radford MBA students may contact Dr. Iain Clelland at (540) 831-5073.*



David Perry

**Artist Mark Young: “Every aspect of the art business since 2008 has been slammed—just pushed to the ground. It’s been brutal. A lot of galleries have gone out of business. A lot of artists have quit being artists. It’s a very challenging thing to do, but it doesn’t make art any less important.”**

## Making a living with his heart >

### Executive Summary:

*For many years, Mark Young followed his head to a successful career in the broadcast industry. Then his racing heart caught up and took the lead for good.*

### By David Perry

Mark Young is too together to possibly be an artist.

Athlete-thin, well-dressed, clean shaven, close haircut ... nary a counter-culture bumper sticker to be found adorning his detached studio at his upscale Botetourt County home.

Blame a lifetime spent in the business world before this talented painter decided to pursue his dream and become a full-time artist.

Mark and wife Kathy Baske Young worked

in the broadcast media industry for decades, living in places like Richmond, Atlanta, New York and Norfolk. Mark even rose to national vice president of sales for Arbitron, the company that tracks ratings for radio stations.

When they moved to Cary, N.C., in the 1990s, he decided the time had come to hang up the tie and pick up a paintbrush. Mark says he always had a talent for art, but didn’t pursue it for financial reasons.

“I was talented when I was young,” the Bristol native says. “My teachers encouraged me. I had a chance to go to VCU on an art scholarship. I didn’t think I could afford to be an artist—it’s very difficult to make a living being an artist.”

He adds, “I had always wanted to become a full-time artist, but only when I could afford it.”

So for the past 15 years, Mark has painted. “I’ve been pretty successful at it,” he says. “My business background has been helpful because most artists don’t have the background in marketing and

advertising.” His excellent website (<http://www.markyoung.com/about.htm>) is a reflection of that marketing background.

Having lived all over the mid-Atlantic, Mark and Kathy chose Roanoke as their final stop for a number of factors, including the mountains that frame the view from his home, access to quality health care and an airport.

They moved to the Roanoke Valley in 1999.

“The first day after we moved here we went to the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce and joined,” Mark says. “It was so easy for us to become part of Roanoke. We love it here—best place I've ever lived.”

But while Mark's heart is in Big Lick, his art is elsewhere. The two main galleries where his works are shown are both in the Hampton Roads area. Mark cites a lack of galleries in Roanoke that match his price point as the reason. His portraits go for anywhere from \$6,000 to \$15,000.

Mark says Roanoke needs more art galleries. He points out that while Asheville, N.C., which is 10,000 people smaller than Roanoke, has 40 or 50 galleries, Roanoke has around 10.

When he came to town, “one of the things I was thinking of doing was opening a full-scale, 5,000 square foot art gallery. I did a complete business plan on it and ran all the numbers and decided it just wouldn't work.”

## In Brief

**Name:** Mark Young

**Age:** 60

**Profession:** Artist

**Location:** Bonsack

**Background:** A businessman with the soul of an artist, Mark passed on an art scholarship to VCU and instead pursued a bachelor's degree from Washington and Lee and an MBA from the University of Virginia. Finally, the callings of his heart brought him to art-full time, and today he uses the stunning view of Read Mountain from his home just off the Blue Ridge Parkway to motivate and inspire his work. He enjoys painting portraits the most, although he's not opposed to an occasional dog, cow or Blue Ridge sunset. Wife Kathy Baske Young is an executive coach and past president of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Like his business acumen, Mark's painting style is decidedly realist. He likes to paint a variety of subjects.

“I enjoy the technical challenge of rendering different scenes, people, animals, vegetables, flowers, light ... Every painting is a new challenge,” he says.



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Rachael Garrity

## December 2011 > Contributor of the Month

**Rachael Garrity** is no stranger to the honor and is always on the shortlist. Rachel, says Editor Dan Smith, "is probably our best pure writer. Her prose is precise, colorful and insightful and by using both her marvelous vocabulary and deep understanding of the topics and those who make them interesting, her by-line is one I'd seek out if I were a casual reader of FRONT." This month she is being honored for stories on Smart College Visit and Warm Hearth Village. Congratulations, Rach. You can read Rachael's current and back issue articles at vbFRONT.com



regulations in the appraisal industry have had a deep impact on... real estate



David Perry

Mark Young: "I'm known for my realist style."

"I'm known for my realist style," he says. "I consider it requiring a high level of skill—the handling of the paint, the drawing, the capturing of light. My signature skill is probably the capturing of light."

Some of Mark's most intriguing work is his trompe l'oeil, French for "deceive the eye." These works are ultra-realistic and resemble a photograph. One piece in his studio even features an actual arm of a chair extending out of the painting, adding

to the surprising lifelike quality of the art.

And while Mark's work is art, it's also a business.

He says, "Every aspect of the art business since 2008 has been slammed—just pushed to the ground. It's been brutal. A lot of galleries have gone out of business. A lot of artists have quit being artists. It's a very challenging thing to do, but it doesn't make art any less important." 



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# Ditching the USPS >

## My View

By **Dan Smith**  
Editor

BLOG: [ [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com](http://fromtheeditr.blogspot.com) ]

**Excutive Summary:** *The Post Office faces one of the most difficult budget decisions in history and it's bound to have an effect on businesses.*

We're sitting on the edge of restructuring the U.S. Postal Service again and most of the notice so far has concentrated on the loss of Saturday delivery and the fact that first class letters will take a day or two longer to deliver for those unwilling to pay extra for quick service.

My guess is that the effects here won't be nearly as strong on business customers as they will on residential mail and a lot of that has to do with the simple fact that business customers have already taken steps to reduce their postal bills by making their dealings with USPS more efficient. Most businesses use mailing services to prepare their mail for USPS and they are heavy users of commercial carriers—who are not required to handle first class letters, which has a negative impact on the USPS.

There will be an effect on the business community; we just don't know what it is yet. But none of this is new. Change is the norm, in case you haven't noticed. Consider what the computer has done to the way we communicate. I have been a journalist for more than 45 years—just a speck of time in the overall view—and in those four decades, my profession has changed beyond recognition. We aren't alone in that, either. Most of our society is radically altering the way we speak and write to each other.

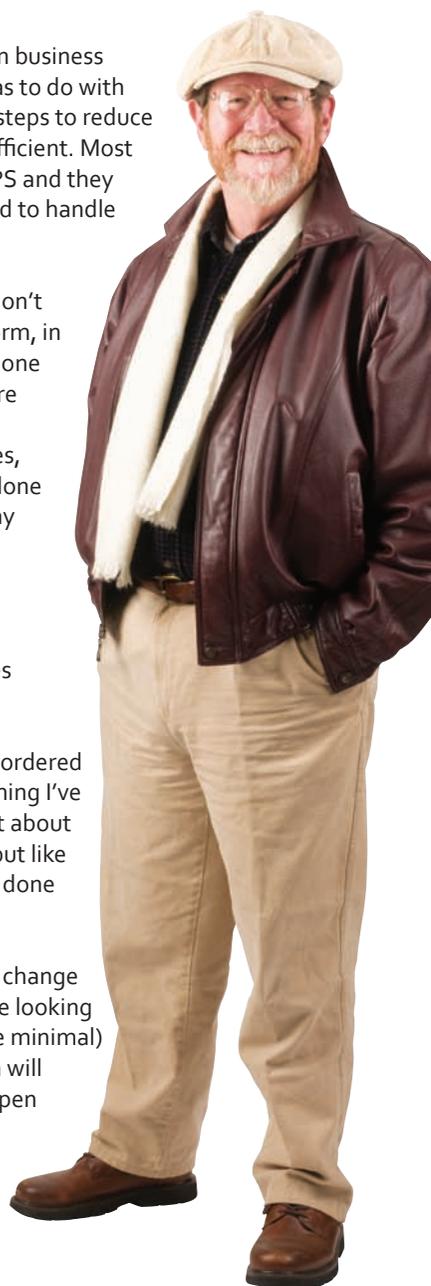
We are communicating via cell and Internet rather than conventional paper mail, but there are many things we still need the mail for, like deliveries of those millions of packages purchased online during the holidays.

The USPS is in big trouble, primarily, because of a Congress-ordered pre-paid pension system that is just about as bazaar as anything I've ever seen. It is paying ahead a couple of generations and just about everybody in Congress agrees that's monumentally stupid, but like everything else about Congress these days, nothing is being done to fix it.

The USPS is looking for solutions elsewhere because it can't change the easy-fix reversal of the Congressional mandate. So, we're looking at the elimination of Saturday delivery (whose impact will be minimal) and slower mail (which could be problematic), both of which will likely help reduce use of the Postal Service even further, deepen its debt and move it closer than ever to bankruptcy.

Right now, we're looking at the closing of many neighborhood post offices and the loss of 28,000 jobs

continued on Page 52



## The Irony of Indifference >

By Tom Field  
Publisher

## On Tap from the Pub

One of the fringe benefits you get when your child goes to college is the \$732 per semester average spending for books. Okay, so the expenditure is not so pleasant (you *must* have the 3rd edition and you *must* work from the required assigned textbook, which turns out to be used for exactly one passage). But I get to read or peruse all the books Virginia's University wants my daughter to be exposed to, once she's finished with them. No one has learned the art of reading past or through highlighted text or scribbled margin notes better than me. She recently tossed some "modern literature" at me, and that old feeling of enlightenment came back upon me like it did way back in 1978 in Mrs. Rosenbaum's English class when she introduced me to Emerson for the first time (who is not modern lit, just to be clear).

What struck me about my daughter's Lydia Davis book was just how dispassionate it was. "Doesn't it remind you of Hemmingway, though?" my daughter asked. "I thought you'd like it." In fact, I do. There's a certain attraction to books or any media that seem to *intentionally* present everything in the most un-attracting fashion. Whether it's Hemmingway's indifference or Samuel Beckett's minimalism or Ayn Rand's objectivism or even Jerry Seinfeld's "show about nothing," there's a strange and compelling pull from words and scenes that *just describe*. At least on the surface.

There is beauty in just describing something.  
Even a plain ol' something.

I have been guilty of privately devaluing certain conversations because I've thought they were boring. I even wrote a song once, called *Yada, Yada, Yada* (thanks, Seinfeld) because there are times when all I hear is blah, blah, blah (but I thought the song title sounded better in Yiddish). The song assumes God hears yada all the time, since He always knows where the topic is going anyway.

But if I want to hear Lydia Davis describe a plain walk down a road (with no adjectives, no elaboration, no illustration, no *superfluosity*) then why should any string of words ever be boring? The fact is, the art of conversation comes mostly from listening. Beauty is in the ear of the beholder.

My daughter's holiday break from university and unbundling of books from her pack was perfect timing for our upcoming new year. I will listen with a new ear. I will try harder.

I will never abandon my fantasies. My high drama. My poetry and metaphors and analogies. But it wouldn't hurt any of us to experience all the stories. Whether they're as melodramatic as little cat feet bringing in the fog (Carl Sandburg) or as straightforward as a cat in a hat (Dr. Seuss). 



## Smith / My View

from Page 50

that we can't afford to lose. In addition to shuttered post offices, closing 252 out of 461 mail processing centers, including one in Roanoke, would be shut down. The jobs loss would be another wallop for the economy at a time when stimulus would be far preferable to job cuts.

USPS believes it will save \$40 billion in 10 years by eliminating Saturday delivery, but the pre-funded retirement package is costing between \$5.4 billion and \$5.8 billion a year (that's \$54 billion to \$58 billion over 10 years for the mathematically challenged). Let's not even mention that the USPS is the only federal agency required to pre-fund.

The Postal Service has been in the red for the past five years and is staring down a \$14.1 billion loss next year if nothing changes—like cutting \$20 billion by 2015.

My guess is that we're looking at a new reality for mail delivery in this country. The Constitution requires that we have a postal service, and the assumption generally is that taxpayers will subsidize government programs. The USPS has almost always been treated differently—even unfairly—and it is in a position right now of facing the impossible: a retirement program that is absurd; loss of one of its basic functions with quick first class delivery; loss of one-sixth of its delivery days; closing of a huge number of processing centers and post offices; devastated morale among its thinning workforce.

Bet you'd love for your business to face those obstacles. Still, it's about adjusting to new realities and that is the most important point. It will continue to be. 



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## Letters

### A superb issue

I just read the December issue and was struck by the picture you and your team paint of the Valleys: innovative (Inventing Themselves), caring (Rescue Mission), progressive (CityWorks). You can really feel the passion for our home. I hope every packet of material sent to prospective companies contains vbFRONT in it—particularly this December issue.

**Terri Jones**  
Access  
Roanoke

### Restaurant review

Good read, thanks for sharing [the story on The Palisades Restaurant in Eggleston, VA].

**Ideal Cabinets Design Studio**  
from *Valley Business FRONT Facebook posting*

### College revisit

Delighted to see our client SmartCollegeVisit and its founder, Z. Kelly Queijo, featured in the Valley Business FRONT.

**Handshake 2.0**  
from *Valley Business FRONT Facebook posting*

### Networking it

...she introduced me to Valley Business FRONT. If you want to know who is in business in the Valley and meet them personally, this is a good place to start.

**D. Pierce**  
from *Valley Business FRONT Facebook posting*

Send letters to [news@vbFRONT.com](mailto: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](http://www.vbFRONT.com)



## Roanoke needs more art galleries

— Page 47

# Reach Out!

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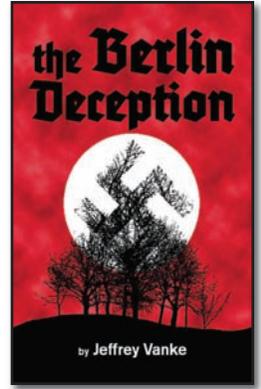
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## Books @ the FRONT >

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



### *Rip-roaring thriller*

Roanoker Jeff Vanke's *The Berlin Deception* (Create Space publishing, \$12.95; \$2.95 Kindle) is a doozy of a spy thriller set in the years before World War II. A British spy named Becker uncovers Hitler's plot to deceive the Allies into appeasement and must escape Germany with Maria, a co-worker whose life he has inadvertently endangered.

The pace of the book is tense and exhilarating as it hurtles from one spirited chase to another, with a determined SS officer on their trail and Becker questioning Maria's true nature. Comparisons to Ludlum and Follett are apt, and Vanke's wordcraft is on par with these masters of the genre. Vanke holds a PhD in European history from Harvard, and he's included details that infuse *The Berlin Deception* with a sense of place and time.

—Mark Ching

### *Rare delicacy*

"The circus arrives without warning..." As familiar daytime colors abruptly cede to *The Night Circus* (by Erin Morgenstern, Doubleday, \$24.95), the reader enters the black and white world of "Le Cirque des Rêves."

From dueling magicians, Celia, Marco and their ruthless masters, to walk-ons like Bailey's tyrannical sister, characters

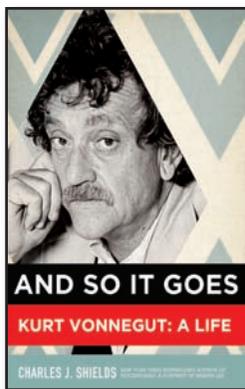
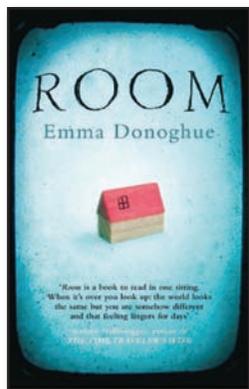
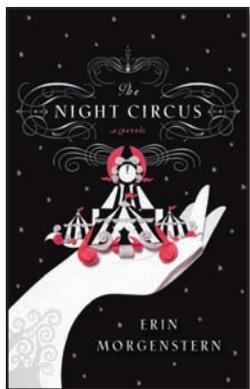
are skillfully wrought in this cabinet of curiosities just the other side of the laws of physics (and propriety). The tale's genius is in the tension of their tethers to reality, flickering like silver wires in a moody, unstable temporal universe somewhere between Newton and Einstein.

Morgenstern's most wonderful character is the circus itself, created as much by the reader as by the characters within it. There are as many "Cirques des Rêves" as there are minds on which this shadowplay is projected. This book is a rare delicacy to be savored in the dark and, preferably, with the lingering taste of caramel on your tongue.

—Monica Rokicki-Guajardo

### *Boxed in*

In *Room* by Emma Donoghue (Back Bay Books, \$14.99), Jack's ma was abducted at age 19. Seven years later, "Room" is the only world five-year-old Jack knows. His universe is Futon, Wardrobe (where he is safely ensconced each night by 9 p.m. to avoid Old Nick), Skylight and TV. What he sees on television is not real, says Ma; it is all imagination. In this way, she tries to protect Jack from what he is missing: a real life. Locked in a soundproof shed, in Old Nick's back yard, the two barely survive but Jack thrives intellectually. Ma gives him her mind because it is all she has. And then, a plan is born to escape. Escape to what? Actually Jack, there is



a whole big world out there.

Told from the boy's point of view, *Room* is the most unusual book I've read in a long while. The writing is top notch; the characterization superb. The idea of being cocooned in captivity in the middle of a neighborhood, is all too real in today's headlines. This book explores the survival aspects of the mind, the protective drive of a mother, and the psychological effects of it all.

—Heather Brush

## On Vonnegut

*And So It Goes: Kurt Vonnegut: A Life* (\$30, Henry Holt) was authorized by Vonnegut. It is the rare confluence of an accurate accounting of one writer's life with all his foibles on display. With access to thousands of pages of letters, Charles J. Shields offers an honest look into the personal and creative lives of a cult writer.

Long a favorite on college campuses, Vonnegut's novels confounded his readers. A humorist, an ironist and an unabashed hack in his early years, Shields lays bare what Vonnegut did to turn "the twenty-six letters of the alphabet into combinations that would pay his bills." Shields does not gloss over Vonnegut's womanizing, his inability to be a husband and parent and his lack of focus during his college career. His depiction of a tortured psyche that

thrust itself into his own fiction makes the reader of this biography want to revisit *Slaughterhouse-Five* or *Cat's Cradle*.

—Betsy Ashton

## A lot of promise

It is truly lovely to watch a young writer grow up and I feel like I'm getting to do that with Elliston-based Amanda Pauley. Amanda has a story in an impressive anthology: *Press 53: Open Awards Anthology* (Press 53, \$14.95 paperback), titled "Social Services." Her story is the winner of the first prize for "Short-Short Story" and it is a worthy representation of a talented young woman whose use of the language is as special as her understanding of the people she writes about here.

Amanda is another of those word-driven Hollins graduates and she is carrying the torch well. Let's hope we see not only more from her, but longer works, as well. There's a lot of talent there.

—Dan Smith

(**The reviewers:** Mark Ching is a writer, artist and filmmaker in Roanoke. Monica Rokicki-Guajardo is a partner in Better Building Works. Heather Brush is a single mom to two great teenagers and earns a living as a Roanoke artist. Betsy Ashton is a Smith Mountain Lake-based writer. Dan Smith is FRONT editor.)

# FRONT 'N ABOUT



## Happy winner >

Catawba Sustainable Community's **Christy Gabbard** accepts a preservation award from the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation's **George Kegley** at the organization's annual meeting. The RVPF's awards went to Big Lick Junction/Community School, Meridium, Patrick Henry Hotel, City Market Building, Salem Historical Society Museum, the gazebo at Lake Spring Park in Salem and a book on the Deyerle family by Michael Pulice. Story on Page 67.



## Contributor of the Year >

FRONT Editor **Dan Smith** (right) presents **Michael Miller** of Blacksburg with the magazine's Contributor of the Year award at the company's annual awards luncheon at Hunting Hills Country Club Dec. 6. Miller was joined by Alison Weaver, Laura Purcell and Janeson Keeley as individual winners. The list is on the right-hand page here, along with a history of our awards.

*Valley Business FRONT is FRONT'n About at many events each month. Check the blog links at [www.vbFRONT.com](http://www.vbFRONT.com) for more coverage.*

Valley Business  
**FRONT** Hall of Fame

**2008**

Contributor of the Month

Oct Lori White  
 Nov Alison Weaver  
 Dec Don Simmons

**2009**

Contributor of the Month

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

Most Outstanding Writer

David Perry

Story of the Year

Alison Weaver

Editor's Award

Kathy Surace

Editor's Award

Rachael Garrity

Most Valuable Player

Jane Dalier

Cover of the Year

Food Fight! (Jan)

**2010**

Contributor of the Month

Jan Alison Weaver  
 Feb Donna Dilley  
 Mar Keith Ferrell  
 Apr Nicholas Vaassen  
 May Janeson Keeley  
 Jun Gene Marrano  
 July Michele Shimchock  
 Aug Susan Ayers  
 Sep Rachael Garrity

Oct Michael Miller  
 Nov Anne Piedmont  
 Dec Allison Weaver

Most Outstanding Writer

Alison Weaver

Story of the Year

Alison Weaver

Editor's Award

Susan Ayers

Best Photo from Writer

David Perry

Most Outstanding Columnist

Janeson Keeley

Most Outstanding Support

Emily Field

New Media Marketing

Jane Dalier

Cover of the Year

Senior Biker Babe (Feb)

**2011**

Contributor of the Month

Jan Kathy Surace  
 Feb Donna Dilley  
 Mar Laura Purcell  
 Apr Susan Ayers  
 May Rob Johnson  
 Jun Anne Piedmont  
 July Pete Krull  
 Aug Sarah Beth Jones  
 Sep Rob Johnson  
 Oct Laura Purcell  
 Nov Tom Field  
 Dec Kathy Surace

Story of the Year

Alison Weaver

Contributor of the Year

Michael Miller

Editor's Award

Laura Purcell

Columnist of the Year

Janeson Keeley

Cover of the Year

Alternative Medicine



**Tom Field**  
 Publisher / Creative Director



**Dan Smith**  
 Editor in Chief

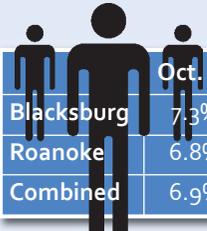


# ECONOMIC INDICATORS

There are more and more indications that the economy really is starting to improve—locally and nationally. Unemployment is down across the board. More people are working and fewer are filing initial unemployment claims. Home sales are up locally from a year ago and a month ago.

## Unemployment/Employment

**Unemployment rates** in the combined New River and Roanoke Valleys are down sharply from a year ago and down from last month, as well. Rates are dropping in the region faster than for than both Virginia and the United States. Virginia's unemployment rate fell 5.5 percent over the year and the U.S. rate fell 6.3 percent, while the combined Blacksburg and Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Areas dropped 8.7 percent. Within the region, the Blacksburg MSA rate fell 10.9 percent and Roanoke's, 8.8 percent. The region's 425 initial unemployment claims filed during the week of November 25 represent a 12.7 percent drop from the same week last year—better than the statewide drop of 10.3 percent, and a hopeful indicator for further reductions in the unemployment rates. Within the region, the Roanoke MSA saw a 16.4 percent drop and the Blacksburg MSA saw a 4.1 percent drop. Initial unemployment claims in Botetourt County fell 47.1 percent—the region's biggest drop.



	UNEMPLOYMENT		
	Oct. 10	Sept. 11	Oct. 11
Blacksburg	7.3%	6.9%	6.5%
Roanoke	6.8%	6.7%	6.2%
Combined	6.9%	6.7%	6.3%

While unemployment is down, the number of people **employed** is up—by almost 5,900, or 2.7 percent.

### EMPLOYED

Oct. 2010	Sept. 2011	Oct. 2011
220,630	225,643	226,529

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

## Real Estate

The **average home price** in the region jumped 12.9 percent from September, while the national average home price fell 2.5 percent over the same period. Home prices fell for the year, both locally and nationally. The average price of a home nationally fell from \$218,300 in October 2010 to 208,200, down 4.6 percent, while the local average fell 11.7 percent. The number of homes sold in the region jumped 23 percent from a year ago, a higher rate than the 13.5 jump nationally.

### HOME PRICES



Oct. 2010	Sept. 2011	Oct. 2011
\$204,110	\$160,055	\$180,212

### HOMES SOLD

Oct. 2010	Sept. 2011	Oct. 2011
239	281	294

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

—By Anne Piedmont,  
Piedmont Research Associates

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## How we get to work >

If you drove alone to work this morning, you're not alone. According to the U.S. Census 2005-09 American Community Survey (the most recent full data set available), 81.7 percent of the workers over 16 years old in the Roanoke and New River Valleys drove to work with no one else in the vehicle. That's higher than both the Virginia (77.1 percent) and national (75.9 percent) averages. And it should get the attention of green advocates who want to reduce the number of vehicles on our roads.

Pulaski County had the most solo drivers, 87.4 percent of the total, while the rest of the Blacksburg MSA stayed near the state average. Montgomery County had the smallest percentage of people driving alone at 75.1, which is below

the state and national averages.

The more rural counties, Craig, Franklin and Giles, had the highest percentage of carpoolers. Counties with vibrant town centers, such as Rocky Mount and Blacksburg, as well as Salem and Radford, had higher percentages of walkers.

Public transportation is used at a rate far below the state's and nation's, even in areas where it is available. Our region's relatively short commutes may be one reason why commuters drive themselves rather than take the bus, though the growing popularity of the Star Line Trolley and Smart Way Bus may change those numbers in the future. In fact, it will be interesting to see how the commuting data changes as new surveys become available – and gas prices continue to rise.

—By Anne Piedmont,  
Piedmont Research Associates

## THE COMMUTE TO WORK

	Drive Alone	Carpool	Public Transp.	Walked	Other	Work at Home	Avg. Commute
Botetourt Co.	85.2%	8.1%	0.1%	0.9%	0.8%	4.8%	25.9 mins
Craig Co.	81.2%	13.4%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	4.5%	41.4 mins
Franklin Co.	81.5%	11.4%	0.3%	2.7%	0.5%	3.6%	27.3 mins
Roanoke Co.	86.3%	7.9%	0.5%	1.5%	0.4%	3.6%	20.4 mins
Roanoke City	81.2%	10.7%	2.7%	1.6%	1.4%	2.3%	18.2 mins
Salem	81.1%	7.7%	0.7%	4.2%	1.1%	5.3%	17.7 mins
<b>Roanoke MSA</b>	<b>83.3%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>21.6 mins</b>
Giles Co.	79.4%	14.7%	0.1%	1.1%	0.9%	3.8%	26.5 mins
Montgomery Co.	75.1%	10.6%	2.5%	4.7%	1.8%	5.4%	17.8 mins
Pulaski Co.	87.4%	8.6%	0.3%	0.9%	0.9%	2.0%	21.0 mins
Radford	76.4%	10.3%	0.9%	9.2%	0.5%	2.7%	17.5 mins
<b>Blacksburg MSA</b>	<b>78.3%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>19.4 mins</b>
<b>Combined MSAs</b>	<b>81.7%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	
Virginia	77.1%	11.1%	4.2%	2.3%	1.3%	4.2%	26.9 mins
United States	75.9%	10.5%	5.0%	2.9%	1.7%	4.0%	25.2 mins



Randolph Walker

**Don Lorton, Carilion's CFO: "I don't know how I ever ended up in a desk job."**

## The cavalryman and the accountant >

### **Executive Summary:**

*CFO Don Lorton's role in Carilion's reorganization hasn't been limited to finance.*

**By Randolph Walker**

One of the few personal items in Don Lorton's office on the first floor of Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital is a photograph of a Civil War soldier, rakishly holding a pistol across his chest. Some visitors have wondered whether the photo is actually Lorton in period uniform. It's not; but there is a family resemblance between Lorton and his military ancestor.

As Carilion's Chief Financial Officer, Lorton's weapons are facts and figures, rather than a saber and a revolver, but he fights a battle nonetheless. His efforts to restore Carilion to fiscal stability following a transition to a clinic model were rewarded in September, when Standard & Poor's upgraded Carilion's outlook from negative to stable, within the A plus rating bracket.

Lorton is quick to credit his colleagues at Carilion ([www.carilionclinic.org](http://www.carilionclinic.org)). "This is a team project. The magnitude of the financial improvement would have been unattainable without the collaboration and buy-in of all the clinic physicians," he says.

S&P defines its AA rating as "very strong capacity to meet financial commitments." The A rating is defined as "strong capacity to meet financial commitments, but somewhat susceptible to adverse economic conditions and changes in circumstances."

"We were AA minus until 2009, and we went to A plus," Lorton says. "So we had a one notch downgrade. It was due to deterioration in the financial results—the worst business economy in decades. Second was our conversion to a clinic model and investing our earnings in that transition. And third, we were transitioning as an organization to a single medical record [system]."

While "better ratings are always good," Lorton says, "I think for the current environment, the A plus rating is fine. I'd like to see us move next year to a positive outlook."

Carilion's leadership knew that changes would affect revenues, and chose to start the process at a time when the system was in a "position of strength," Lorton says.

# EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Looking to maximize earnings, Carilion brought in outside experts in coding and documentation who helped improve reimbursement from insurance companies. Carilion sends out one and half million bills per year, Lorton says.

Final accounting for fiscal 2011 hasn't been completed yet, but Lorton expects a "relatively modest" loss of less than \$10 million. For fiscal 2012, he's predicting a profit of around \$10 million.

The transition to a clinic model and single record system was expected to take about 10 years, and it's halfway done, Lorton says.

Announced in 2006, the reorganization as Carilion Clinic hasn't been without some turmoil, with some physician groups leaving and many other doctors coming on board. Lorton's role has extended beyond finance, as he has been involved in developing Carilion's primary care physician group.

With the day's financial work done, Lorton lays down his pen and goes home to his farm in Bedford County where, more often than not, he has to repair damage. "If you raise horses you're constantly going to be fixing fences or a stall door."

Training horses, he says, is his passion.

"My goal is to make a good trail horse out of 'em ... you get 'em to accept the rider and follow your commands."

## In Brief

**Name:** Donald E. Lorton  
**Age:** 63  
**Company:** Carilion Clinic  
**Type of business:** Not-for-profit health care  
**Location:** Headquartered in Roanoke, with hospitals ranging from Tazewell to Lexington  
**Position:** Chief Financial Officer and Executive Vice President  
**Background:** Born in Radford. Graduated from Pulaski County High School in 1966. Associate's degree from National College in 1969. Joined Roanoke Memorial Hospitals in 1972. Member of American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Healthcare Financial Management Association and many other organizations. Lives in Bedford County, is married and has four children and two grandchildren.

Sometimes, however, the horse has other ideas. "As a result, my medical record has a few orthopedic surgeries. I have a few pieces of titanium in my body."

Despite the occasional injuries, this financial officer loves life on a farm. "I love being outdoors. I don't know how I ever ended up in a desk job." 



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# Career FRONT

## FINANCIAL FRONT



Amos

### Banks

**Tammy Amos** has been appointed to financial center manager the West Salem StellarOne Financial Center.



Still

**Susan K. Still**, president and CEO of HomeTown Bank in Roanoke, has been named by the American Bankers Association to serve on America's Community Bankers Council. It is



Mason

composed of CEOs and top executives of community banks, with assets under \$1 billion from every state. **Melissa Mason** has joined HomeTown Bank as senior vice president and mortgage manager.



Newell

**Bill Newell** has joined StellarOne Bank in Roanoke as senior executive vice president and director of commercial banking.



Dalton

### Planning

Partners in Financial Planning in Roanoke has named **Todd D. Dalton** an associate financial planner.

## LEGAL FRONT

### Investing

**Lisa Tilley** has joined Corporate Capital Resources, a wholly owned subsidiary of Roanoke-based law firm Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore, as senior management consultant. She will collaborate with clients' professional legal, banking, insurance, and financial services teams to ensure coordination of effort and completion

of goals. Tilley is past president of the Roanoke Area Chapter of the Virginia Society of CPAs.



Eure



Murchison

### Law Firms

**Khelin Nicole Eure** has joined Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore as an associate attorney in the firm's plaintiffs practice group. **Abigail E. Murchison** has joined the firm in the commercial litigation practice group.

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## WELLNESS FRONT



Miller

### Practices

**Dr. K. Jeffrey Miller** has joined Tuck Chiropractic Clinic in Blacksburg as director of clinical operations.

## DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Campbell

### Architects/Engineers

SFCS Inc. has promoted the



Mueller

following staff in its Roanoke office: upon Manjit Toor's retirement, **Tye Campbell** is CEO and **Tim Mueller** is president; new senior

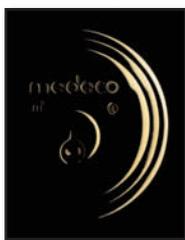


Hale

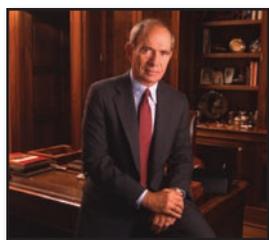
vice presidents are **Allen W. Hale**, **Vernon Feather** and **Drew Kepley**; senior associate **Melissa Prichard** is now a stockholder;



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# Career FRONT



Feather



Sowers



Kepley



Pritchard



Favor

and **Craig Favor** has been named a stockholder. In addition **Justine M. Sowers** has received certification as a Certified Interior Designer.



Stump

## Real Estate

**Shelia Stump**, residential coordinator for SAS Builders of Blacksburg, has obtained the Certified Aging in Place Specialist designation from the National Association of Home Builders.

## RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT



Becher

## Advertising/PR

**Thomas Becher**, president of The Becher Agency (tba) in Roanoke, has been named to serve on the national nominating committee of the Public Relations Society of America. He will represent the Mid-Atlantic region to select the slate of officers for the 2013 PRSA national board.

## EDUCATION FRONT

### Schools

Riverside Military Academy of Gainesville, Ga., has named



Oakey

**Daniel G. "Bud" Oakey**, class of 1975 and chairman and managing director of Advantus Strategies, as its Alumni Council chairman and board of trustees member.

## OTHER FRONTS



Bowman

## Awards

**Dr. Benjamin Bowman** of Tuck Chiropractic Clinic in Fairlawn has been named Business Person of the Year by

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the Radford Chamber of Commerce.



Clark

**Michael Clark**, parks and recreation manager for the Roanoke Parks and Recreation Department has received the National Recreation Parks Association Southern Network Young Professional Award.



Nelson

### *Economic Development*

The City of Roanoke Department of Economic Development has named **Marc Nelson** special projects coordinator. The redevelopment of existing properties and new development initiatives will be led by him. He will also be charged with the

development and implementation of programs for new, existing and emerging businesses in technology and innovation-oriented sectors.

### *Organizations*

The Roanoke Women's Foundation, a component fund of Foundation for Roanoke Valley, has named government attorney **Alice Burlinson** to its Board of Directors.

Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition has elected **Julio Stephens**,



Burlinson

sustainability coordinator at Radford University, to its board of director.

Virginia Blue Ridge Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure has named **Melissa Woodson** executive director. She had been executive director of the YMCA.

## So much more.

**vbFRONT.com**

- > Carilion, Eye Clinics To Collaborate
- > Wireless Medicare Has Joint Venture
- > Roanoke Co-Op Helps Charities, Keeps Bags from Landfill
- > G&H Gets School Contract from Roanoke County
- > Manufacturers Receive Second Round of Grants
- > Social Media Meetup: Christmas Lunch
- > Luna Plans To Redefine Its Mission
- > Dresser-Rand Acquires Synchrony for \$50M

## morefront.blogspot.com

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

- > Executive Coaching Tips Workshop Set
- > Tech-Wake Research Rewarded with Projects
- > Michael Miller Wins Top FRONT Award
- > A History Lesson from the Ex-Governor
- > Preservation Foundation Presents Awards
- > Western Va. Land Trust Ranks 5th Nationally
- > City Hires EconDev Projects Coordinator
- > WDBJ7 Adds Morning News Anchor
- > LewisGale Joins Carilion Medicare Plan

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

## *Carilion joins eye groups*

**Carilion Clinic, Vistar Eye Center, Eye Care & Surgery and Blue Ridge Eye Center** will collaborate to provide emergency and in-patient eye care to patients at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital. The agreement includes the provision of 24/7 on-call service for Carilion's Level-1 trauma program, along with general and retinal ophthalmologic care for emergency/urgent care and hospitalized patients.

The three physician groups will continue as independent practices, but will collaborate with Carilion's trauma and emergency programs to further advance the level and quality of eye care in the region. The physicians participating in the collaboration include:

- Eugene H. Eng, M.D., Carey W. Robinson, M.D., and William M. Thompson, M.D., with Eye Care & Surgery;
- Chad Albright, M.D., Jon Brisley, M.D., Timothy Byrnes, M.D., Frank Cotter, M.D., John Facciani, M.D., Kurt Guelzow, M.D., Craig Hartranft, M.D., John Hines, M.D., David Kinsler, M.D., Scott Strelow, M.D., Kenneth Tuck, M.D., and John R. Wood, M.D. with Vistar Eye Center;
- Joseph S. Weisman, M.D. with Blue Ridge Eye Center.

## *Earns award*

Sawyer Paving of Salem, a Boxley Company, has earned the Diamond Achievement Commendation for Excellence in Asphalt Plant/Site Operations from the National Asphalt Pavement Association.

## *Shenandoah sale approved*

Roanoke-based **Shenandoah Life Insurance Company** sat on the precipice of existence until late December when policyholders approved its sale to Arizona-based United Prosperity Life Insurance Company, part of the Prosperity Life Insurance Group. The sale should take place during early 2012.

The vote gave permission for a conversion from mutual company to stock insurance company and Shenandoah got an agreement for an infusion of \$60 million from United to stabilize its reserves.

## *Wireless MedCARE venture*

**Wireless MedCARE, LLC** has announced a customer and joint venture agreement with Senior Homestyle Living, LLC of Arlington, Texas in which Wireless MedCARE will provide its FDA-cleared VivaTRAK sensor assisted care system to two Senior Homestyle Living (SHL) facilities currently under

construction in Texas.

The VivaTRAK platform technology aggregates sensor and device information for healthcare applications in long-term care facilities and in homes. Benefits include higher quality care and operational efficiencies. In addition to the 32-bed installation, the two companies have agreed to form VivaSense Solutions, a joint venture that will be owned equally by the two companies.

VivaSense will focus on further product development, marketing and sales of technology products with applications in the independent living, assisted living and home healthcare market segments. Wireless MedCARE staff will provide product development and an advanced technology roadmap to meet the product needs at SHL installations.

## *Synchrony acquired*

**Dresser-Rand Group Inc.**, a global supplier of rotating equipment and aftermarket parts and services, has signed a definitive agreement to acquire Synchrony Inc., of Roanoke County. The transaction is expected to close in January 2012.

Synchrony, whose president, Victor Ianello was FRONT's executive of the year in 2009 and is a former chairman of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce

Board, is a technology development company of technologies and products including active magnetic bearings (AMB), high speed motors and generators, and power electronics for clean, efficient, and reliable rotating machinery.

Under the agreement, Dresser-Rand will acquire Synchrony, Inc. for approximately \$50 million net of cash acquired. The agreement includes the potential for additional consideration of up to a maximum of \$10 million tied to technical milestones and to business performance. It should be noted that the operating costs for this acquisition are already included in the Company's guidance for 2012 previously provided.

Founded in 1993, Synchrony manufactures, and tests its products in an ISO 9001-certified facility which includes a best-in-class model shop for rapid prototype fabrication and assembly.

## *Luna changes strategy*

Roanoke-based **Luna Innovations Inc.** has announced a new corporate strategy to row revenue that focuses on serving high-growth industries with new technology solutions to measure, monitor, protect and improve critical processes in the medical, defense and composites industries. The strategy, recently approved by

the company's board of directors, focuses on three key objectives:

- Become the leading provider of sensing systems and standard test methods for composite materials by offering disruptive technology that revolutionizes the industry.
- Continue to pioneer the way and be the leading supplier of fiber-optic shape sensing technology for robotic and minimally invasive surgical systems.
- Be the leading choice

for ensuring the integrity of integrated circuits used in defense systems.

### *Preservation Awards presented*

Some of the usual suspects and a few newcomers are among the winners of the **Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation's** Preservation Award winners. On the flip side, Carilion Clinic was cited with a Golden Bulldozer Award for the destruction of the 10-story, 60-year-old Carlton Terrace Building in downtown Roanoke.

*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.

The winners included:

- Big Lick Junction/Community School
- Meridium
- Catawba Sustainable Community
- Patrick Henry Hotel
- City Market Building
- Salem Historical Society Museum
- Gazebo at Lake Spring Park in Salem
- A Book on the Deyerle family builders by Michael Pulice

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# FRONT Notes

Big Lick Junction was built in 1925 as a three-story dry goods distribution warehouse downtown. Community School—employing Lucas Thornton, son of founder Linda Thornton, as its builder—renovated the building for its use recently.

Meridium renovated a nearby building for use as its world headquarters. The software company is in a building that has often been at the center of attention because of the bizarre color it was painted in the past.

The Catawba Sustainability Center (part of Virginia Tech) is using 400 acres for environmental practices research. A community group helped secure the land and buildings for preservation and for use.

Ed Walker's renovation of the Patrick Henry Hotel is just the latest in a string of downtown renovations that have brought considerable

acclaim to him and those who have worked closely with him. This is his second straight preservation award.

Roanoke's City Market Building renovation—though controversial from the standpoint of the city using an out of town architectural firm—is the latest effort to preserve the building, built in 1921 after the original building burned.

Salem's museum is a former home in downtown Salem, built in 1845 and the new renovation has been hailed for its green features. Lake Spring Park's gazebo, near the museum, was damaged by a truck last year, but renovated and restored to its 1909 beauty.

Michael Pulice wrote *Nineteenth Century Brick Architecture in the Roanoke Valley and Beyond: Discovering the True Legacy of the Deyerle Builders*.

## Health plan expands

**Carilion Clinic Medicare Health Plan (CCMHP)** has signed agreements with LewisGale Regional Health System and Jefferson Surgical Clinic to become participating providers in the CCMHP network and provide health care services to members of the Medicare Advantage plan. The LewisGale agreement, which includes more than 100 employed physicians, is effective January 1, 2012 and the Jefferson Surgical agreement is already in effect.

With the addition of LewisGale Regional Health System and its employed physicians and Jefferson Surgical, the CCMHP network now includes all Carilion Clinic hospitals, the four regional LewisGale hospitals and more than 1,100 physicians and other licensed professional providers. CCMHP plans to recruit other physicians affiliated with the LewisGale Hospitals.

## Company recognized

Roanoke-based **Interactive Achievement's** flagship product, onTRAC (online Teacher Resource and Assessment Community) has been recognized by the education community as one of the Top 100 Products in District Administration Magazine's annual Readers' Choice Awards.

## Select Group merges

McClung Companies of Waynesboro and **Select Group** of Salem, which prints Valley Business FRONT, have merged print services division and will operate from Waynesboro. Select Group will continue to operate its contract division in Salem.

## Land Trust ranks

The first census of land trusts in five years found 10 million new acres conserved nationwide since 2005, including

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1.1 million acres in Virginia, according to a press release from the **Western Virginia Land Trust**. Virginia ranked fifth nationally in acres conserved and first overall in the southeast.

*City picks coordinator*

The **City of Roanoke** Department of Economic Development has named Marc Nelson as Special Projects Coordinator. Nelson previously served as development services liaison with the City of Savannah, Georgia, Development Services Department. City Manager Chris Morrow came to Roanoke from Savannah.

*Tech-Wake studies*

Of four new research projects by Toyota's Collaborative Safety Research Center, two

include the Virginia Tech-Wake Forest University School of Biomedical Engineering and Sciences. Toyota launched its research safety center in January 2011 with an initial investment of \$50 million.

At Virginia Tech, one of the new Toyota projects will focus on abdominal injuries. The study will look at the relationship between age and abdominal injuries caused by automobile crashes in the United States, to determine if a specific population, such as senior drivers, is more vulnerable to abdominal injuries during these events.

The second project involving Virginia Tech is a partnership with George Washington University. The project will upgrade a frontal impact test dummy,

initially developed by the National Highway Safety Transportation Safety Administration, that allows automotive manufacturers an advanced tool to assess the injury risk of drivers and passengers in vehicles using crash tests.

*SpeedDee award*

**SpeedDee Oil Change & Tune-Up** has named its Vinton franchise the winner of the Franchise of the 3rd Quarter Award, chosen from among 18 SpeedDee shops located throughout the Mid-Atlantic region.

*Access wins awards*

**Access Advertising & Public Relations** of Roanoke received eight Summit Awards at the 10th Annual Blue Ridge

Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) Summit Awards Gala, in November at the Hotel Roanoke.

*Contractor charged*

Salem contractor **Gary Johns** has pled guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud and making a false tax return, according to published reports. Johns could receive a long prison term for conspiring to steer money back to him for maintenance and repair contracts for nursing homes owned by Medical Facilities of America, a Roanoke-based company. Earlier, a father/son plumbing team pled guilty to paying kickbacks to get work at MCA properties.

*Compiled by Dan Smith*

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“ ”  
Some people seem to  
command attention

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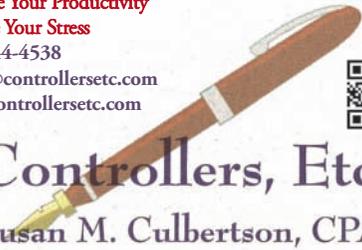
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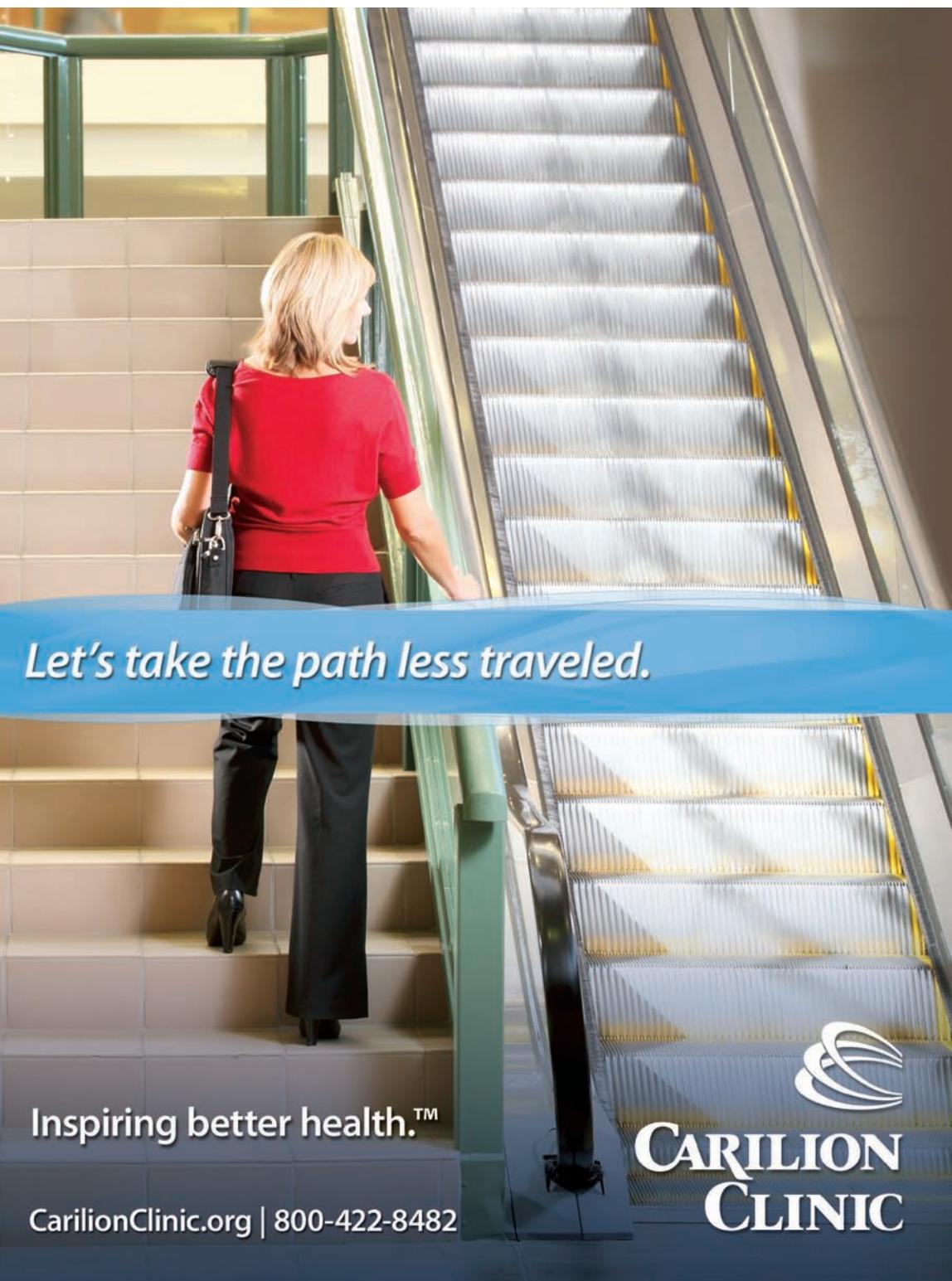


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