

Valley Business FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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Flying out of Roanoke

Melinda Payne,
Planning and Development Director,
City of Salem

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WELCOME to the FRONT

The first issue of 2013 is one of the few in our history that won't have a column by the estimable Anne Clelland, who has written Business Advice since the beginning. It was a splendid column, mixing the common sense of Ann Landers, the coaching ability of a business Nick Saban, the psychology/sociology of Dr. Phil and Anne's superior writing style (which came from her journalism background). We're going to miss her, but we have a new "find" for you (we're good at "finds"; when Janeson Keeley left, we came up with Michael Miller in Technology).

Writing her first column for FRONT this month is Samantha Steidle, who owns Roanoke's Business Lounge, a central clearing house for startups and other businesses who don't need a whole office, but appreciate the convenience of a place to go for business. It's a fascinating and popular concept that has already grown from one building to two. Meanwhile, Sam, who completely lacks the ability to sit still, has just announced another small business assistance organization, StartUp Virginia, which is something of a self-mentoring program. This is a group of entrepreneurs in a variety of disciplines getting together and talking about how they do it.

We're sad to lose a columnist of the quality of Anne Clelland, but excited to have Sam step in with her own ideas about what makes small business special. We know she can't wait to hear from you with your opinions and our guess is that she'll be calling on a lot of you.



Tom Field



Dan Smith



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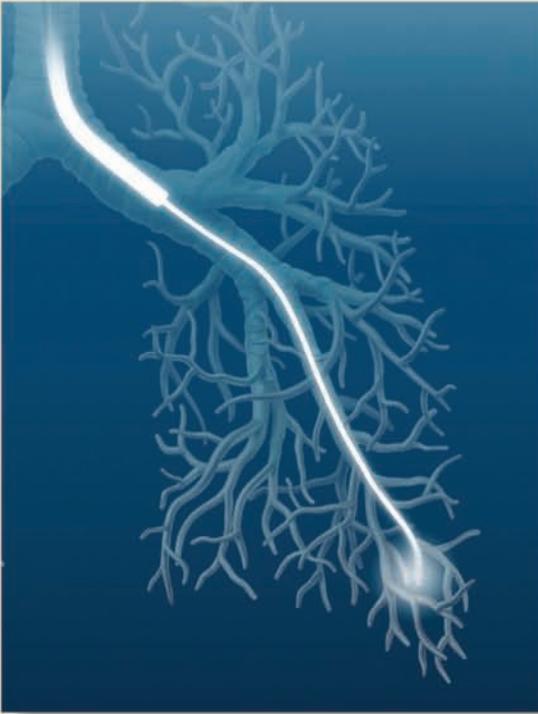
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8 *Our Airport*



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Art direction and cover photography of Melinda Payne by Tom Field.

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JANUARY



Michael Abraham



Jane Dalier



Michael Miller



Anne Piedmont



Randolph Walker



Alison Weaver

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

Editorial Advisory Board

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

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

CONTRIBUTORS



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Sarah Beth Jones



Rebekah Manley



Laura Purcell



Dan Smith



Samantha Steidle



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen



Joel S. Williams

“Leadership done well is about everyone but the leader

— Page 43

2013 Members

Nancy Agee Carilion (Wellness)
Laura Bradford Claire V (Retail)
Nicholas C. Conte Woods Rogers (Legal)
Warner Dalhouse Retired (Seniors)
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Ellis Gutshall Valley Bank (Finance)
Nanci Hardwick Aeroprobe (Tech/Industry)
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John D. Long Salem Museum (Culture)
Nancy May LewisGale Regional Health System (Wellness)
Stuart Mease Virginia Tech (Education)
Mary Miller IDD (Tech/Industry)
Ed Walker Regeneration Partners (Development)

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.

“Begin, be brief, and be seated

— Page 23

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Roanoke Regional Airport



A good little airport, but ... >

Executive Summary:

Which came first, the flier or the flight? Seems that whichever one was first, Roanoke still has high fares and not as many flights as many would like. But it remains a surprisingly popular little airport that serves the community with lots of income and high employment.

By Dan Smith and Alison Weaver

Some would call it “the Walmart effect.” They’d be wrong, but their point—that price is the chief determinant—has some street cred when the topic is the Roanoke Regional Airport. It’s a popular little airport in other respects, according to a 2011 survey, but that cost thing is like the Sword of Damocles hanging over every flight, every boarding, every decision about where to embark on an overnight business excursion to Chicago.

Frequent international flyer, Bonz Hart, the CEO of Roanoke-based tech company Meridium, calls it “silliness” that one “can often fly to China from Roanoke Regional less expensively than to Atlanta.” Roanoke City Manager, Chris Morrill, after giving a litany of reasons to fly Roanoke, says, “The problem is that it’s expensive and we have no low-cost carrier.” Likewise, Mary Miller, CEO of IDD in Blacksburg: “I just wish I could afford to fly out of Roanoke more often.” Beth Doughty of the Roanoke Regional Economic Development Partnership says that other things “I’d improve would be equitable fares across the board.” Jeanne Bollendorf of the History Museum of Southwest Virginia: “When I fly, I generally go to Dulles or BWI because I get a better deal.”

Getting the drift yet?

Roanoke Regional Airport—the one so popular with just about everybody when we’re not talking cost—is the 150th largest airport in the USofA and it’s the sixth largest in the Commonwealth with 320,961 “enplanements” a year. That compares to 11 million at Dulles and 9 million at Reagan



Dan Smith

Airport

National, both D.C. airports. More realistically, it compares to 516,789 in Newport News and 73,821 in nearby Lynchburg.

Nationally, flights are being cut. There was a 14 percent cut in flights between 2007 and 2012, according to the Department of Transportation, most of those in mid-sized or small airports. Heartland hubs lost 40 percent of their flights.

Roanoke has a popular airport with locals and visitors, at least

“”

The airlines seem to use older planes here and that causes delays [because of failures].

— David Wiley, Roanoke Symphony Orchestra

Virginia's Primary Commercial Airports >

| Rank* | Name | Location | Enplanements |
|-------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 23 | Washington Dulles International | Dulles | 11.04 million |
| 26 | Ronald Reagan Washington National | Arlington | 9.05 million |
| 68 | Norfolk International | Norfolk | 1.61 million |
| 69 | Richmond International | Highland Springs | 1.57 million |
| 115 | Newport News/Williamsburg Int. | Newport News | 516,789 |
| 150 | Roanoke Regional | Roanoke | 320,961 |
| 176 | Charlottesville/Albemarle | Cville/Albemarle | 216,957 |
| 241 | Lynchburg Regional | Timberlake | 73,821 |
| 384 | Shenandoah Valley Regional | Weyers Cave | 12,033 |

(Source: Federal Aviation Administration, 2011; * National ranking in size)



John Reburn

Dan Smith



The simplicity of the airport makes it remarkable.

— John Reburn, Appalachia Press

partly because it's gorgeous, convenient and has some decent flights to big hubs. John Reburn of Appalachia Press and CityWorks (X)po moved here from L.A. a few years ago and was knocked out immediately with Southern charm at the airport: "The simplicity of the airport makes it remarkable. I remember when I was first visiting here, my family had picked me up at the airport and it had taken maybe 15 minutes. On the way out, the woman at the booth looked at our ticket and said, 'Honey, you haven't been here long enough to pay, so go ahead.' I was here from L.A., so you know how impressed I was." Smitten, maybe.

Melinda Payne, Salem's development director, says, "The Roanoke Regional Airport suits my needs as an infrequent user. Most of my flying is pleasure; seldom do I take trips that are business related. I fly about three to four times a year and have received good service. However, as the director of economic development and planning for the City of Salem, I come in contact with business leaders whose stories are quite different. Their concerns deal



Melinda Payne

Dan Smith



We need to do whatever is needed to make Roanoke attractive to carriers who could provide the discounted rates.

— Melinda Payne, Development Director City of Salem



Drawings of the airport renovations

Managing the airport >

Executive Summary:

Jacque Shuck's days are full of the mundane and the vital, but the new renovations have her hopping

By Alison Weaver

Executive director Jacque Shuck is nursing a cold during one of the busiest weeks at Roanoke Regional Airport.

A small, private plane en route to Blacksburg made an emergency landing midmorning, closing the runways for three hours and delaying seven flights on an already hectic day. "No injuries, thank goodness," Jacque says with a loud sigh of relief, "but it blocked both of our main runways."

She has just signed a contract to purchase 400 chairs, replacing seating original to the airport when it was built 23 years ago and other seating purchased secondhand when Richmond re-did its airport. "We save a dime wherever we can," she notes.

As she walks briskly toward the main concourse, she waves to construction

workers across the way, giving a "thumbs up" gesture, stoops to pick up nearly invisible specks of paper from the waiting area carpet and deftly nudges a chair back into place with her hip.

She braces herself as she rounds the corner to the main concourse, where the first color of the airport's new palette has been applied to some columns. "It's supposed to be a red, but when I saw it yesterday, it looked orange. Oh, I hope it's not too, too orange ..." she pauses to take a peek.

In the late afternoon sunlight, the columns are a soft reddish hue, perhaps terra-cotta. She visibly softens. "OK. Not orange." Another sigh of relief.

Jacque admits that changing the airport's signature "Blue Ridge blue" color scheme causes her to wake up during the night with palpitations. "I lie there thinking, 'What if everyone hates it?' What if they want the blue?'"

The new colors are more reflective of the region's autumn colors, with reds, golds and neutrals featuring prominently. Five years of planning have gone into the \$128.5 million of improvements, many of which are behind-the-scenes upgrades to HVAC, Wi-fi and the electrical system.

continued on Page 13



Dan Smith

Cynthia Lawrence



I'd like to see the business community come together with [Virginia Tech-Carilion] to create a single voice in helping the Airport Commission make our case to the airlines to increase the number of flights to major hubs and lower fares.

—Cynthia Lawrence,
Airport Commission



We all need to commit to use the Roanoke Regional Airport whenever we can so that we will get even better service. It really is that simple.

—Aric Bopp, New River Valley Alliance

with limited flights to major cities and the inability to get out of Roanoke cost-efficiently. These same business leaders say that makes it hard to conduct business and therefore to attract new businesses and sometimes skilled employees to the valley.”

Aric Bopp of the New River Valley Alliance calls the airport “a tremendous asset to the region. It is a beautiful airport that is very well managed and extremely easy to use.” Cynthia Lawrence of Design Marketing and a member of the Airport Commission, says, “The airport facility and staff are extremely well-run.” Wayne Strickland of the Roanoke-Alleghany Planning District puts it in business terms: The airport “is tremendously important to our economy in the region. Our current businesses need good access to various regions of the country and our airport provides that access.”

Landon Howard of the Convention and Visitors Bureau finds



Dan Smith

Landon Howard



The perception is that it's very expensive [but] our connections are with seven hubs and international air travel is one stop away.

—Landon Howard,
Roanoke Convention &
Visitors Bureau

continued from Page 11

Managing the airport >

Travelers are already enjoying the upgraded Wi-fi, which is provided free. New outlets at table-height and charging stations will abound. According to Jacque, "Our goal is to get passengers up off the floor. They won't have to crawl around looking for an outlet."

Phase I, scheduled for completion in July, calls for re-doing the gates, renovating the restrooms and replacing some of the tile floor with terrazzo specially designed for Roanoke. "The restroom changes are required by new accessibility laws," Jacque says. "We're adding a family restroom downstairs and hope to find space in the concourse for a second one."

Family restrooms are for use by a parent traveling with opposite sex children, as well as for adult caregivers who need space to accompany elderly relatives in the bathroom. "Times have changed since the airport was built; parents no longer feel comfortable sending a child into a restroom alone, or asking

a stranger to escort the child."

The often-problematic revolving front doors have been replaced—"Someone was always whacking himself in the head when the person in front stopped abruptly," Jacque explains—and the escalators will be replaced.

In fact, the decision to replace the revolving front doors stemmed from construction issues. "In order to reduce the down-time while replacing the escalators, we decided to have them largely manufactured off-site, but the components wouldn't fit through the revolving doors," Jacque says.

While the escalators are out of service, the elevator will be pressed into higher service. Engineers determined that the extra usage would overly tax the existing equipment, so the elevator has to be replaced, too. "Nothing is simple with any renovation, especially at a commercial airport," Jacque says. "That's why it has taken more than five years of planning."



Dan Smith

Wayne Strickland



Beth Doughty



It's easy to say what I'd improve, but in the end it's mostly based on demand.

— *Beth Doughty, Roanoke Regional Partnership*

a real responsiveness at the airport: “The CVB worked with the airport on customer service training and I was impressed that the airport executives would request that. I see it as a distinct positive.”

Morrill insists that “I have friends in the suburbs of Atlanta who take far longer to get where they're going than we do. We have easy access, close to downtown and short waits.”

Beth Doughty was more specific: “Just this week, I met with a prospect who is looking at the region. One of the first questions [he] asked was about the airport. [He was] perfectly comfortable with the ‘one stop to anywhere in

End of the line? No >

In August 2012, Scott Lilly, a writer with the Center for American Progress, speculated that as many as 106 airports could lose air traffic service if automatic spending cuts kicked in Jan. 2, 2013. As we know, they didn't, but it's interesting to consider the possibilities. The center bills itself as an independent, nonpartisan educational institute.

Lilly's theory was based on a possible \$1.35 billion cut to the FAA budget, representing a 9 percent across-the-board cut called sequestration. It is estimated that Virginia's benefit from its commercial

airports is \$28.8 billion a year overall.

In a provocative post titled, “Oops, I Lost the Airport,” Lilly theorized that the FAA would simply cut air traffic service at smaller airports to make ends meet. He caused a stir, to put it mildly.

Airport managers responded quickly and loudly, calling Lilly and the report “alarmist” and “incredulous” and accusing Lilly of pushing an agenda. Roanoke Regional Airport's response was to paraphrase a quote from Mark Twain: “Reports of our demise have been greatly exaggerated.”

Airport executive director Jacque Shuck



Dan Smith

Thomas Becher

the world' explanation. The perspective of visitors really depends on their own experience (usually: Are they from a big market and used to a kind of big airport).

"The airport is absolutely important to the region. It saves time and money. I think the airport staff and commission understand that and want to do whatever they can to make the service the best it can be within their control."

Thomas Becher of Neathawk Dubuque & Packett, a Roanoke ad/PR agency, had a long and varied 10 years in the flight industry before landing in Roanoke. He has the background to understand a good deal when he sees one. "The airport



I can be from airplane seat to driver seat in literally six minutes (without checked bags). I actually timed it—six minutes.

—Thomas Becher,
Neathawk Dubuque &
Packett

notes, "This was a report by a single researcher at a think-tank. The FAA never issued a statement. It's about as relevant as if I sat in my living room and said here's what I think is going to happen."

6th District Congressman Bob Goodlatte said, "Reports relating to specific interagency cuts under sequestration are merely speculation and speculation that the Roanoke Airport would close are not well founded." He pointed out that the cuts "would be up to the individual agencies to make" and elimination of the Roanoke Regional Airport was highly unlikely.

Shuck said it appears that the report examined data in a "simplistic way," by eliminating airports

below a certain size. "He [Lilly] didn't consider the impact of closing airports that are the only gig in a large geographical area," she says. "Even if the FAA pulls our controllers, we're hampered, but we're not closed."

Lilly posted a second story 10 days later acknowledging the uproar and saying that his analysis was "more of a warning than a proposal." He said other scenarios were possible, such as closing airports on certain days or reducing the number of flights, but concluded by stating that a nine percent cut to the FAA budget "would heavily impact aviation in this country."

—Alison Weaver



Bonz Hart of Meridium

The flight of Bonz Hart >

Bonz Hart, the CEO of Meridium in Roanoke—a high tech company with clients all over the world—flies a lot. Executives like him generally board airports in hubs, but he has chosen to keep his company in Roanoke at least partly because of and in spite of its airport. He is a man with a strong opinion about air service in this region and there's enough executive in him to toss bouquets where warranted and propose solutions when necessary.

Following are his responses to a series of questions:

1. What are the major issues facing the Roanoke Regional Airport?

Overall, I think we have a good airport. Nice

folks work there and it provides decent air service for our size city.

I think the major issue for Roanoke is the impression we give travelers to Roanoke by making them use the emergency exit stairs for boarding and de-planing. So many years after 9/11 and we still use (very often) dark cramped exit staircases as the "Front Door" to our beautiful valley? I've heard complaints from clients, potential new hires and when I'm in the stairway. Lynchburg has a much better solution when not using "jetways." We should reconfigure part of the terminal to accommodate airlines that don't want to pay the jetway fees and leave some gates for those that do.

We are fortunate to be within driving distance of Charlotte, Dulles and Raleigh hubs. We can all hope that the commuter airlines will become more reliable, but at least we have options, albeit inconvenient and frustrating ones.

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doesn't control what most people may complain about—fares, schedules, etc.,” he says. “However ... Roanoke has outstanding air service for a market of its size. Any metro area like ours would be grateful to have non-stop flights to nine or so cities on numerous carriers. You can get anywhere in the world with one stop—to five continents. And we even get mainline jets (Allegiant to Florida and a daily Delta flight to Atlanta), which again doesn't happen everywhere.

“Many markets our size, particularly in the Midwest, are beholden to one carrier, which drives up airfares. I know ROA is talking to airlines on a regular basis to update them on the latest developments in our region (new companies, growth of the med school, etc.) but so is every airport in the country.”

Becher tempers the praise: “There is room for improvement. One aspect is being addressed—the concourse is showing its age. I've seen renderings of what the upcoming renovations will do. I'm excited about that. Particularly providing more amenities for travelers with gadgets, including more plug-ins and areas to work. I know from my airline background that carriers will pay attention to demand. Unfortunately, our region just doesn't have enough people to justify much more service and too many people are heading elsewhere to fly. If we can get more of them to fly from ROA, our community would show strong demand, which leads to more options and even less expensive fares. I'd like to see, for example, some of the 50-seat regional jets (which are often packed) replaced by 70-seaters with first class cabins and a bit more leg room.”

The renovations about which Becher speaks will cost \$4.1 million and will be primarily aesthetic, though there will be some additional amenities for business travelers. It will be the first major upgrade in the 23-year history of the building. The renovations should be completed by early July.

Jacque Shuck, the airport's executive director, says a lot is being addressed in order to upgrade an airport that has 91 percent approval for its location, 95 percent who say the airport is important to the community's future, 77 percent who believe it compares well to other airports, 93 percent who insist it is average or above. She can't do much about the 67 percent who complain about cost or the 18 percent who'd like more flight availability, but for business fliers (56 percent of passengers) and leisure passengers (39 percent), she wants to make the experience pleasant. So, improvements are underway.

The problem Roanoke's and other airports face, she says, is that “airlines have found that making seats scarce generates higher fares” and that “they are not always providing enough seats to meet demand.” That means cancellation and frustration. Compounding that is that



Jacque Shuck



The number of passengers is always directly related to the health of the economy, so the unknown economic outlook is an issue to be watched.

—Jacque Shuck, Roanoke Regional Airport Manager

The flight of Bonz Hart >

2. How realistic is price structuring at the airport for businesses?

Those that have produced the airline pricing algorithms will have a special “seat” in the very hot section after they die [insert smiley face emoticon]. Everyone knows it makes no sense except when viewed across the whole network and from a competitive eye. Sometimes you can fly to China cheaper than to Atlanta. Competition is the only hope to break this silliness and Southwest Airlines is proving that travelers are getting sick of weird pricing, baggage fees, change fees and the like. Roanoke isn’t at a big disadvantage compared to Greensboro and others if you consider the cost of time and mileage. We need to fight to keep at least three carriers in our market that can get you to the same destination, otherwise the pricing algorithms will force us to drive to cities with competitive carriers, like Raleigh.

3. Do you or your staff use other airports (Greensboro, Washington, etc.) instead of Roanoke? Why?

Yes, sometimes because of fares, but mostly because of reliability. We fly internationally a lot and missing the connection can ruin a schedule, so we either drive or book a long layover so we could drive from Roanoke if the flight is cancelled. Direct flights have a higher probability of success, but Charlotte is a great hub (not to big, not to small), so we are fortunate to have many flights there.

4. How would you improve the airport for business users?

Fix the gates (above), run a canopy over the center sidewalk. Nothing like many long flights to arrive home and then get soaked on the way to your car. At least it wakes you up.

5. Are there any good points to be made in defense of Roanoke's airport?

Yes, having flown millions of miles, starting in the old terminal, we have

much to be thankful for:

- Roanoke Regional Airport offers more than 50 scheduled flights daily, providing nonstop service from Roanoke to nine major cities. Not bad for a small city, we should never take the travelers from New River Valley or Lynchburg or Shenandoah Valley for granted, without their flying out of Roanoke I think the number of flights would have to be cut in half.
- It’s fast. I can leave our office in downtown Roanoke and be on a flight in ... well I shouldn’t say [six minutes], but try working in Atlanta or D.C. and ask when you need to leave for the airport. It often takes an hour or more to get there with traffic, then 45 minutes to get through security and 20 minutes to get to your gate. Time is the most precious currency we all spend every day. I can connect through a hub (when the flights are on-time) faster than passengers can get to their flights in a major city.
- The cost is lower. When flying out of a “captive hub” where one airline dominates (like Charlotte) local fares are often more expensive than when we connect through Charlotte (flying to the same place). It’s all about competition.
- The airport is attractive. Aside from staircases built for emergency exits, we have a nice airport and when arriving and walking out the front door (on a nice day) the view says it all.
- People are helpful. Sure we have a few that don’t understand what customer service means and would prefer that you serve them, but overall we have concerned, helpful folks working at the Roanoke Airport. The lack of cynicism and workers acting like neighbors helping neighbors really stands out.



Dan Smith

Tony Pearman

small jets “are reaching the age when they are going to need major overhauls ... They are not cost-efficient, so the airlines are actively working to retire them.” The bright side is that “Roanoke will ... be seeing larger aircrafts in the future.”

Schuck adds that “the Airport Commission and its tenants employ more than 550 people, airport operations support an additional 1,000 jobs, and the annual economic impact of the airport is approximately \$225 million.” Not chump change. So getting the airport used is a priority.

She says, “An on-going issue remains the limitations for raising funds for capital projects placed on airports by federal law. Local user fees, called passenger facility charges (PFCs), are limited to \$4.50 per passenger and have been so for a number of years ... This financial need is particularly critical at the largest airports; however, it impacts us as well when our passengers are delayed or flights are reduced because there is inadequate capacity at the hub they are flying to or through.

“A short-term issue is continuing to keep passengers calm and happy as they move through the many construction areas involved in our terminal rehabilitation and modernization project.”

With all the pros and cons, it still comes down to personal perception. Tony Pearman of Access, the company that prepared the airport’s survey of passengers, says, “One of the things people who criticize the airport fail to do is



Companies that require their employees to use other airports because of a higher price in Roanoke are not figuring in lost time, travel, expense in getting there.

—Tony Pearman, Access



Dan Smith

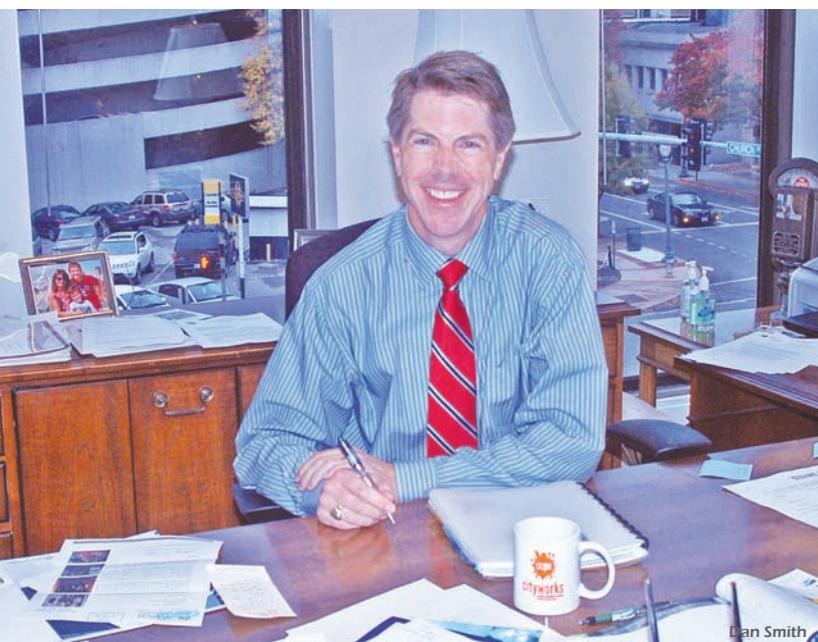
Vickie Bibee

compare and contrast it with similar facilities. We have among the best service in a challenged industry. I have never not travelled from here, except once when I used another airport for a vacation. Never again. It simply didn't save that much and [I strongly favor] local support. People use Greensboro as if it hurts anybody but us. The lower [passenger] leakage we have [would help solve] the [cost] problems. Companies that require their employees to use other airports because of a higher price in Roanoke are not figuring in lost time, travel, expense in getting there."

Meanwhile, Vickie Bibee of the Roanoke office of Scott Insurance (which is based in Lynchburg) says, "I use the airport a lot for work. Recently I had to go to Tampa and it cost \$485. I could have left from Lynchburg for about \$210. I'll pay \$100 more for the convenience, but that difference was too much."

The CVB's Landon Howard says, "For the size of our community and our area, we have good air service. The perception is that it's very expensive [but] our connections are with seven hubs and international air travel is one stop away."

The Brookings Institution's Clifford Winston writes that a solution to problems in the industry "is to take a half-



Dan Smith

Chris Morrill



We have no low cost carrier. But then, nobody our size has one.

—Chris Morrill,
Roanoke City
Manager



Nancy Hardwick: "Like any business, if we want it in our community, we have to support it."

step toward opening up domestic markets and allow foreign carriers to serve any midsize and regional airport in the United States that has lost service in the past few years. New entrants would be able to integrate those markets with their international routes, something that could put many smaller American cities on the global business map." Can you say "dysfunctional Congress?" That's where decisions like that get made—or don't.

Nanci Hardwick, CEO of Aeroprobe in Blacksburg, says, "Like all travelers, I wish for more frequent flights, bigger planes, and more destinations out of Roanoke. However, I recognize that we must show demand to get these things, so I try to fly out of Roanoke whenever possible to support the business. Like any business, if we want it in our community, we have to support it."

Melinda Payne says, "We need to do whatever is needed to make Roanoke attractive to carriers who could provide the discounted rates."

Maybe that's the bottom line: support of the facility by customers. If you build it, will they fly? If they fly, will there be more flights to more destinations? We'll see. 

What the numbers say >

The following statistics are from research conducted for Roanoke Regional Airport from 2010-2011 by Access Advertising & Public Relations in Roanoke.

Why Do Flyers Choose Roanoke Regional?

- 1.4% Flight Availability
- 2.0% Cost/Affordability
- 1.2% Other
- 4.1% Arrangements were made for the flyer
- 91.3% Convenient location

Why Do Flyers Not Choose Roanoke Regional?

- 2.2% Arrangements made by someone else
- 5.7% Convenient location elsewhere
- 7.0% Other
- 18.1% Flight availability
- 67% Cost

Roanoke Travelers Agree

- 96.5% say having a regional airport is important to the future of the community
- 97.4% say the community benefits from having a regional airport close by
- 88.9% say Roanoke needs another low-cost airline
- 77.3% rank Roanoke Regional Airport as favorable compared to others its size
- 93% say Roanoke airport parking is average or above

Who's Flying out of Roanoke?

- 56.08 % fly for business
- 39.23% fly for leisure
- 4.69% give other reasons

Trips per Year

- 34.6% make 1 to 3 trips
- 31.7% make more than 12 trips
- 23.4% make 4 to 7 trips
- 10.3% make 8 to 12 trips

Major Customers at Roanoke Regional

- Virginia Tech
- Carilion
- Advance Auto
- Norfolk & Southern
- Radford University
- Allstate
- Homestead
- MeadWestvaco
- Kollmorgen

Numbers

- 48:** Average daily arrivals/departures
- 1,251:** Average number of seats departing each day
- 64.44%:** Flights of jet seats vs. turboprop seats
- \$470:** What the average visitor arriving by ROA spends per trip
- 21.28 %:** Lynchburg Regional Airport saw this decrease in passengers from 2010 to 2011 when it lost one of its major carriers. (Source: FAA)

—Compiled by Alison Weaver



The purse: Necessity or art form? >

Almost every woman carries a purse and most men wonder, “Why not just use pockets?”

The modern purse has its roots in a bag carried first by Neolithic men, then later medieval men, to carry valuables and tools. In the 17th Century, menswear began to incorporate sewn-in pockets, and purses for men declined.

Women didn’t carry purses until the late 18th to early 19th Centuries when it became problematic to sew pockets in their Empire-style garments.

As a result, the reticule, a dainty bag, was designed to carry necessities. Then, in the Victorian era, much larger satchel-type bags were carried as women became more free to travel.

Today the purse comes in tiny wallet-sized bags with long shoulder straps to large valise-sized bags. Materials range from cloth to inexpensive man-made fabrics to luxurious leathers, feathers and sequins. Prices vary wildly, too, from just a few dollars to a month’s rent for an “It” bag by Fendi. Chanel, Fendi, Hermes, Prada and many other designers have created not just luxurious handbags for their customer base, but a burning desire to own one of the scarce bags badly enough to place their name on a waiting list to buy one. Genius.

Indeed, over the years the purse has taken on a function greater than carrying necessities. Most women buy a purse because they love the way it looks and makes them feel when they carry it, as if the bag is wearable art.

Winifred Gallagher, author of *It’s in the Bag*, notes, “Each [purse] is a beautiful container that marries form and function, a kind of generic art object that its owner personalizes and regards almost as a body part. It is a small package that delivers a lot of information about its owner and the 21st Century metropolitan way of life.”

Catering to this love of purses has become a big business internationally, earning millions for handbag companies. Although a small percentage of women carry no handbag, most women love this cultural icon and collect them even when they obviously don’t need another.

As previously noted, many men find this incomprehensible and skirt the purse issue at all costs. My husband even avoids looking in “the purse” for the checkbook, claiming it to be a dangerous area. Good, my plan is working. 

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

This carry-all has not always been here, but it has become an important part of a woman’s ensemble and something that still puzzles men.

A toast to you >

2013 rang in with cheerful toasts of “Happy New Year!” Like many customs, the history of “toasting” goes back to ancient times. Some think the practice began with the Greeks—when it was not uncommon to poison one’s enemy. Thus the host would be the first to drink the wine to demonstrate its safety.

Then there is the theory that a piece of toast was placed in the bottom of a goblet, and when the challenge “Toast!” was shouted, one had to drain the vessel quickly right down to the toast. Today it would be considered rude to drink that fast. In olden times, toasts were made to “good health.” Nowadays, all social occasions, including weddings, promotions, and other special events, are considered appropriate times for “raising the glass.”

Business dinners, especially those with an international flavor, are occasions that call for a toast. Whether the toaster or the toasted, the smart professional will learn a few of the basics, in order to offer or receive a toast with poise and assurance.

- Be aware that the armed services have many superstitions surrounding toasting. We’ll address those another time.
- Always remember: it is rude and disrespectful to refuse to participate in a toast. Putting your glass down before the toast is ended or refusing to raise your glass is considered impolite.
- If you are a non-drinker, go through the motion of raising your glass.
- Although wine and champagne are the usual libations, today it is perfectly acceptable to toast with water.
- Inverting one’s glass is not done in polite society.
- The first toast is made by the host to welcome the guests.
- The toast to the guest of honor is given by the host after dessert is served.
- If you are a guest, do not make a toast until the host does.
- The person giving the toast always stands.
- The guest receiving the toast remains seated, and does not drink to the toast. That would be akin to toasting oneself, and is bad form.
- After the toast, the guest of honor stands and thanks the others who have honored him, and may or may not offer a toast in return.
- If you are required to make a toast, remember the three “B’s” of toasting: Begin, Be brief, and Be seated.

Good health, happiness, and prosperity to you in 2013. 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
Here are a few basics—and a little history—to make your next toast a memorable one.

Grant funding for your business >

Small Business

By Samantha Steidle

Executive Summary:

Free money is always a lure and for small business it's especially welcoming. Here are a number of places that offer it up.

Startup businesses have several options for raising the capital they need to make a strong launch. Investors, bank loans and SBA loans are common sources of funding. Grants are often favored because repayment is not an expectation. So, where is a small business owner to start when it comes to finding grants?

Here are some tips:

The first step is to find out what grants are available for your industry. A great place to start is your local Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which in Roanoke is online at www.rrsbdc.org/small_business_services/. The Roanoke Regional SBDC offers free services to businesses, including assistance in finding local, regional, state and federal grants. An advantage of starting your grant search at the SBDC is that you will meet professionals who know the local market, inside and out. They will do whatever they can to help your business thrive.

Technology and manufacturing companies have the best shot at securing today's grant money. These websites can help you find technology grants:

1. **Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)** and **Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR)** grant programs (www.sbir.gov).
2. **The SBA** (www.sba.gov/content/search-business-loans-grants-and-financing). Tip: Leave the selection criteria blank and select only a state to see the list of these grants, which are typically awarded to larger businesses and small businesses partnering with large institutions.
3. **U.S. Federal Government** (Grants.gov). Tip: Look for specific funding programs, as general grants are not available to small businesses through this route.

The best bet for non-technology companies is to start researching at the local level, which often provides grant opportunities for

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both technology and non-technology businesses. Here are some good places to start for Virginia firms:

1. **City government Economic Development Agencies** (www.ecodevdirectory.com/Virginia.htm).
2. **State of Virginia Business Incentives** (www.yesvirginia.org/whyvirginia/financial_advantages/business_incentives.aspx).
3. **Virginia Department of Business Assistance** (www.dba.virginia.gov).
4. **The Virginia Tourism Corporation** (www.vatc.org/grants), which offers matching grant programs for marketing our beautiful state.
5. **Non-profit organizations promoting entrepreneurship in the Roanoke Valley**, including Total Action for Progress (www.tapintohope.org), the Workforce Development (westernvaworkforce.com), Foundation for the Roanoke Valley (www.foundationforroanokevalley.org), the Council of Community Services (www.councilofcommunityservices.org), and the Department of Social Services (www.roanokeva.gov).

A cautionary word: Scammers have entered the grant writing market. One recent scam entailed businesses paying to be incorporated in Nevada as a condition of receiving a grant. Nevada has set up a Web site to prevent further grant scams: fightfraud.nv.gov/GrantScams_new.htm.

Many grants require you to come up with 50 percent of the project funds on your own. You will have to report regularly to the government about how the funds have been used and to what effect. Accountability is a factor but still, it's a small price to pay for the chance to grow your business and make your mark on the local economy.

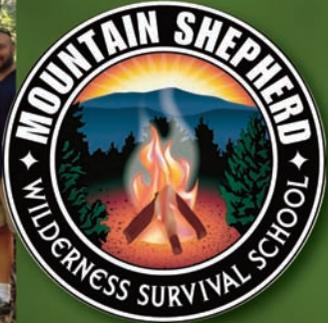
Are you ready to go grant hunting? 



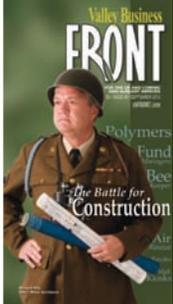
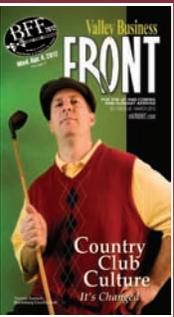
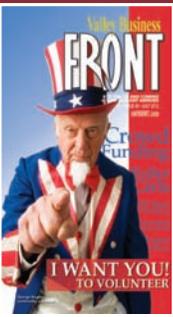
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Coming Up...

February 2013

Meeting Places

Where are you going to host that next conference? Where do you hope the next tradeshow will be? Got a favorite hotel? Banquet facility? Workshop venue? Showcase place with breakout rooms for your next out-of-town group? In February we visit the places where business happens. The spots in our region where people meet to network, learn, report, strategize, and perhaps experience a little R-n-R. Get your room key and join us. We'll meet you in the FRONT lobby.

March 2013

Not Calling in Sick

Overcoming physical adversity is our cover feature for March. It's our special report on people with serious injuries or illnesses who have continued to work through those adversities and even excelled. You won't want to miss this story, one that we hope will inspire people at a time when we need it.

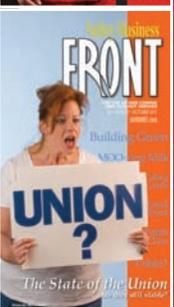
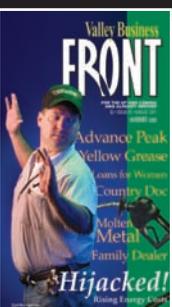
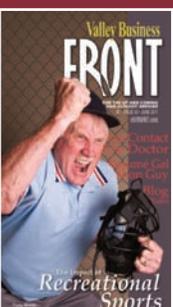
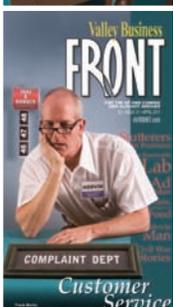
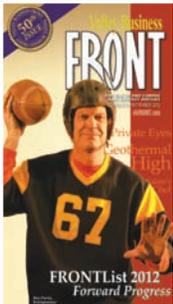
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Financial Matters

A terrible thing to waste >

Executive Summary:

Just because it sometimes feels like our financial underpinning is slipping away beneath us doesn't mean there aren't some good investment possibilities awaiting you.

By Joel S Williams

Here we are after a divisive election that followed the most tumultuous financial crisis in generations. To quote economist Paul Romer, however, "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste."

That's because great investment opportunities exist when things are bad.

I write this with the assumption that FRONT readers have a consistent investment process that includes a defined income distribution schedule and documented personal risk profile.

Investors have been stressing over the last four years and the election period certainly increased that anxiety. Now is not the time to be in the bond market or equity market without experience, knowledge of fundamentals and the discipline to execute your plan.

So what should you keep in mind as you evaluate your portfolio for the new year as uncertainty continues?

- The inflation rate is not going up anytime soon. Until job growth occurs general inflation will not budge.

- Federal monetary policy at this stage of the crisis actually makes things worse because it specifically inflates commodity prices like food and energy costs in the short term. This makes it even harder for struggling individuals and economies. So investors should look to invest in companies with a commodity growth bias.

- More opportunities will be found in stocks of overseas economies because a larger portion of their GDP is affected by food and energy. Small companies are affected more than large companies. Look for small cap international companies in northern Europe, Australia, Hong Kong and some of the more stable emerging markets.

- There are opportunities in fixed-income investments. If you insist on bonds, go with the muni market and individual bonds, not mutual funds or ETFs. These cannot protect from sudden jumps in interest rates. Keep in mind that negative real returns will eventually occur as inflation becomes higher than fixed income returns. Consider international bonds too.

- Finally, large companies with increasing dividends and strong free cash flow yields are the more stable income plays in this environment, in my opinion. But investors should not make the mistake of focusing on merely price movement but rather the reinvestment of dividends.

Regardless of who's in the White House, disciplined austerity measures and fiscal policies will be required to successfully stabilize the economy. To be a successful investor one needs to lock down on this and design your portfolio accordingly.

Opportunities abound as the crescendo of this crisis expands. 



Randolph Walker

U.S. Attorney Laura Day Rottenborn and Ben Rottenborn of Woods Rogers: "I'm looking forward to ... bringing that experience to locally owned businesses in Western Virginia."

The new legal power couple >

Executive Summary:

She prosecutes for the U.S. Attorney, he litigates with Woods Rogers. It's all about white collar law and they're good at it.

By Randolph Walker

Laura Day met Ben Rottenborn when they were first-year law students at Stanford.

"We were study partners," says Laura. That was in 2003. In 2006, they graduated. A week later, they married.

"We spent our first two months of marriage studying for the bar exam," Ben says.

Still hand in hand on the path of life and law, Laura and Ben are now in Roanoke. Laura Day Rottenborn, 31, started as an assistant U.S. attorney in October. Ben, 32, joined Woods Rogers as an attorney of counsel, a title customarily used for an experienced lawyer who joins a firm from out of state.

The Rottenborns moved to Roanoke

from Chicago, where Ben was a partner in Kirkland & Ellis, and Laura served in the financial and securities litigation division of Sidley Austin.

Several factors led to the move—Roanoke's family-friendly atmosphere; the proximity of Waynesboro, Ben's hometown; and attractive job offers for both of them.

"I'm thrilled to be practicing at what I consider to be the premier firm in Western Virginia," Ben says (woodsrogers.com). "It was a combination of the offer I received and also the opportunity to come back home to practice."

Ben received his bachelor's degree at the University of Virginia. At Kirkland & Ellis, his career highlights included representation of a large manufacturing company in a suit stemming from a \$15 billion merger. He also represented a national private equity firm and its portfolio companies in cases attempting to hold the firm liable for judgments rendered against third parties.

"My experience has taught me the importance of learning what your client's goals are from the very start of the case, and incorporating those goals into a global strategy that guides the day-to-day events of the litigation," he says.

Ben represented Fortune 50 companies, among other clients, in Chicago. "One of the things I'm looking forward to here is bringing that experience to locally owned businesses in Western Virginia." He expects to represent companies in civil suits ranging from breach of contract to securities issues to product liability. Or, as Laura puts it, he'll be "a full service commercial litigator."

Ben expects admission to the Virginia bar in early 2013.

Laura grew up near Buffalo, N.Y. At Sidley Austin's Chicago office, she was one of more than 500 lawyers.

She joins a district that reaches from Lee County at Virginia's western tip to Frederick County at the state's northern extremity. The headquarters is in Roanoke, with branch offices in Charlottesville, Harrisonburg and

Abingdon. The U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Virginia is Timothy Heaphy. The office is divided into criminal and civil litigation divisions. Laura works in the Roanoke office, serving in the criminal division with a focus on white collar work including fraud.

"I made a big change. I went from civil defense work to criminal prosecution," she says. "Much of my background maps on very nicely to what I'll be doing in the U.S. attorney's office here. My background in complex financial litigation gives me a solid foundation for white collar prosecution."

Pleased with the jobs they've found in Roanoke, the Rottenborns also like the city as a place to raise their son, Bradley. "We have wanted to get invested in a local community," says Laura. "We're looking forward to planting roots here. We're excited to raise a family here and feel like this is our home." 



WR WOODS ROGERS
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

SOLUTIONS START **HERE.**



Randolph Walker

Carilion's Eric Earnhart and Dr. Thomas Kerkering in Roanoke Memorial's microbiology lab.

Crisis managed >

Executive Summary:

Hospital media specialists at LewisGale and Carilion worked closely with doctors to manage information during the meningitis epidemic.

By Randolph Walker

Eric Earnhart first heard about it on National Public Radio. A tainted steroid produced by the New England Compounding Center was suspected in an outbreak of meningitis, a potentially deadly inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord.

"I started thinking, 'I wonder where that's going to go?'" recalls Earnhart, Carilion Clinic's director of media and public relations.

Earnhart contacted Carilion pharmacy director Karen Lowdon to find out if any Carilion facilities had administered the tainted injection. The answer was "no." But as patients infected elsewhere began to seek treatment at Carilion, Earnhart realized that Carilion needed to get a message out to the public.

Publicity during a medical crisis is a team effort, says Earnhart, who reports to Shirley Holland, vice president for strategic development.

"The team may start with me because I get



the first media phone call, but from that point my job is to expand the team to include as many people as necessary to appropriately answer the question, up to and including Nancy Agee, the CEO."

Others on the informal meningitis team included Dr. Thomas Kerkering, infectious disease section chief, and Dr. John Burton, chairman of emergency medicine.

"All of this happens by e-mail," says Earnhart. "Typically we're spread out, we can't grab a room. You have an ongoing virtual meeting. My role is to help facilitate the operation of that team."

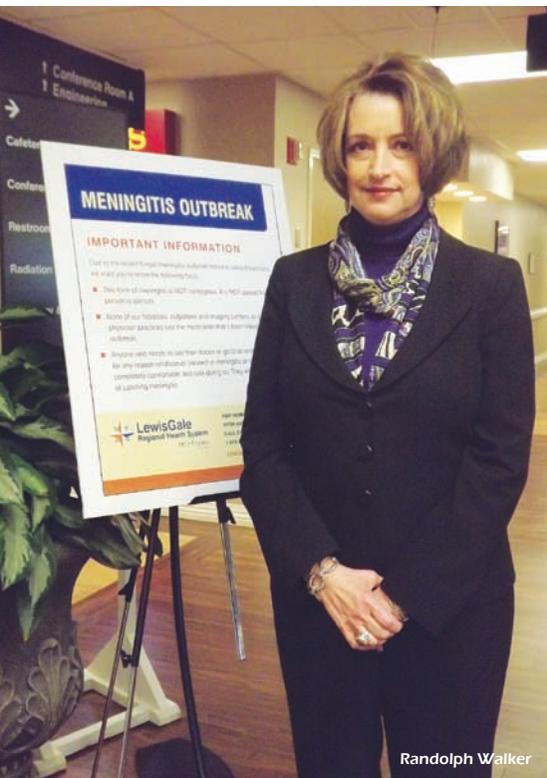
As doctors have patient care responsibilities, Earnhart's job is to help them get accurate

information to the public, in a way that doesn't disrupt patient care.

"I would not necessarily be the one speaking to the media in a crisis," says Earnhart. "When we had media questions I was trying to get Dr. Kerkering in front of the media. He's the expert; I'm not."

Carilion didn't just respond to queries—it decided to actively promulgate several key points. Says Kerkering: "The first message was that it's unfortunate that these individuals came down with meningitis, but it's not transmissible—to calm any kind of public hysteria."

Carilion was able to head off an influx of unnecessary ER visits by spreading accurate



Randolph Walker

LewisGale's Nancy May in the lobby of the LG Medical Center.

knowledge about the symptoms, and by stressing that patients who had received injections at Carilion facilities had no reason for worry.

"If you get too many people showing up at the emergency room who aren't sick, you affect their ability to care for the people who are sick," Earnhart says.

The message went out through several channels, including a hotline manned by infection preventionists, Kerkering says. "To date we've had over 500 calls. For

those who had received the injections, if they were having symptoms they were told to see their physician or come to the emergency department."

The hotline was a rare response to a crisis as was the joint press conference held by Carilion, the Virginia Department of Health, and LewisGale Regional Health System on Oct. 5.

LewisGale did not administer any of the tainted steroid; however, 45 patients received a heart drug manufactured by New England Compounding, says Nancy May, vice president of marketing and public relations at LewisGale Regional Health System. Following FDA warnings, LewisGale notified the patients "due to an overabundance of caution. It has not been confirmed that that particular drug is tainted."

Like Carilion, LewisGale treated meningitis victims who were infected elsewhere, and took an active role in disseminating information through multiple channels, including web announcements, flyers, and posters sent to its hospitals, physicians' offices and affiliated clinics.

"One of the things we learned was that there was a lot of misinformation about meningitis," says May. Some people thought it was contagious and were afraid of catching it at a hospital. "We wanted to make sure patients who needed care, whether it was related to meningitis or not, should not be afraid to come to the emergency room." 

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ENTRE

Tech Scoop

Seeing red and paying for it >

Executive Summary:

If it's red, they'll pay, if it's puce ...

By Michael Miller

My insurance agent, perhaps anecdotally, once told me that police pull over red cars more than any other color, presumably because red equals (too) fast. I never really put much stock in that sort of thing, but I have avoided red cars ever since. Now it turns out that maybe there was more to that theory than I thought.

In a paper soon to be published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, Dr. Rajesh Bagchi of the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech describes how some shopping behavior is influenced by the color of backgrounds in stores and even on web pages. In particular, Bagchi's study describes how red and blue backgrounds affect a shopper's willingness to pay.

For example, if I am bidding on an item in an eBay auction, red backgrounds in the product description will induce aggressiveness in my mood, which translates into more willingness to continue bidding up. In other words, red colors have increased my willingness to pay—I want that item at any cost. If I am the high bidder, I win!

On the other hand, if I am negotiating a price for an item, that same red-induced aggression has the opposite effect. My aggressiveness will be focused on getting the best deal I can, which means the lowest price. In other words, I "win" by forcing the other guy to accept my terms.

And, as you might suspect, blue has the opposite effect on aggression and behavior.



Michael Miller

Being endowed, for good or ill, with guy genes, I have no problem understanding this and even recognizing it may be true. However, when I got a copy of the paper from Bagchi and read it, I found the sample in his study was 60 percent women.

I don't want to push a gender bias here, but anybody who has raised children knows that, as far as aggression goes, while girls are probably clustered around the lower side of the bell curve, boys are located off to the right, somewhere in the next county. So, the fact that the study results were predominantly reflective of adult female shopping behavior has me stumped, and frankly, a little worried.

My wife spends significant time dueling on eBay for certain types of items. In the past, I have not really paid much attention to her fist-pumps and shouts of "YES!!" when she won an auction, but I think now I will have to pay a little more attention.

Oh, and I wear a lot of blue shirts these days. 



CCC has plants in Roanoke, (shown here); Winchester; Tennessee and North Carolina.

50 Years All Boxed Up >

Executive Summary:

Corrugated Container Corp. began in Roanoke in 1963 and retains its family enterprise status today.

By Tom Field

It was 1963. D.J. and Harriett Higginbotham opened up a business to supply boxes and packing material in a shop off of Apperson Drive in Roanoke. Maybe D.J. knew the business had a real shot at making it. After all, everyone needs boxes, right? One thing was certain, the business would keep him busy.

His father worked in boilers and steam (used in corrugated box fabrication) and D.J. understood the operations first hand from jobs he had in Omaha, Neb.; Savannah, Ga.; Philadelphia, Pa.; and Richmond.

As he stepped into the role as founder of Corrugated Container Corp., D.J. relied on two principles: knowledge and hard work.

"Dad didn't really have any clients lined up when he started this," says Dave Higginbotham. "But he quickly began getting jobs from local businesses like Graham White" and eventually expanding to Celanese, Maid-Rite, Home Shopping Network and Elizabeth Arden.

Today the account list has exploded, the company employs 200, operates four large plants (Tennessee, North Carolina, and two in Virginia), and the business has evolved to a more diversified product offering, serving both traditional supply lines (retail, grocery, product packaging) and specialty markets (display and branding, custom fabrication).

What hasn't changed is the structure of the business: it remains a family enterprise; and the company philosophy: it retains its original intent.

D.J. and Harriett Higginbotham had five sons. All of them shuffled their feet right



CCC graphic / structural production (left); Company truck used in the early 1960s (right)



All photos: Tom Field



The Higginbotham brothers (left to right:) John, Jerry, David and Ronnie.

on into the plant from an early age, helping their father out even as the brothers began to sort themselves into the core components of the enterprise. Today, the four of them (one retired), oversee the four principal units from their offices at the company headquarters (160,000 square foot facility on 11 acres in the Penn Forest neighborhood of southwest Roanoke County).

Ronnie is in charge of maintenance, engineering and equipment; Jerry oversees production; Dave runs the accounting and administration; and John directs sales.

Through the years, Corrugated Container Corp. has collected boxes full of experiences, but perhaps the most interesting story is simply the accomplishment of all the boys working together... brothers at that.

"Well, I'd say the craziest thing [to report about our 50th anniversary] is that we're still working together," says Jerry.

If there are special challenges when four brothers run a business together, you don't notice it at CCC. The separation of each man

into the distinct operations may alleviate potential conflict, but closer observation reveals a stronger bond than just blood.

The Higginbothams republished a positioning statement a few years ago entitled "Free Enterprise Isn't Free." The message calls for a renewed attention on responsibility. We all need to "stand up and do our part," from companies like CCC as it creates new ideas and jobs; to employees and consumers and yes, the government.

One gets the sense the philosophy echoes the mission and vision of something that was set in motion back in 1963. If the boys are just "doing their daddy proud," that might be the best way to do business — in any economy.

John says about half of the business is the "creative" end (point-of-purchase, custom fabrication, graphics, etc.) which signals a major shift from the mainline "interpacking" product that characterized earlier days and what box companies are known for. To make it 50 years, you have to be able to adapt. And know that it's always more than a box. 



CCC mixes its own inks to create colorful displays of all shapes and sizes.





Kim Bratic, communications director



Sondy Shiplett, personal trainer

Work Spaces

The Happy Place >

Executive Summary:

The staff at Roanoke's downtown Kirk Family YMCA agrees: working at the Y is quite enjoyable. That's putting it mildly.

By Tom Field

Going to work can have its ups and downs. But if there ever was an "office" that appears to have ups all the time, maybe it's in the big brick building on Church Avenue in Roanoke. If you want an office with a window, this one

has a whole wall where you can look out for miles, as far as Tinker Mountain. If you want to be close to your water cooler, this one has not one, but two swimming pools, just down the hall. And if you don't mind traveling on your job, this one lets you run or bike to exotic destinations all over the world (on video screens).

But there is something more here at this YMCA than the amenities. There's an energy from the people here that's rather catching. Everybody is just so dang happy.

"It's a lot of fun," says Andrew Raymond, a youth and family coordinator, who watches over kids in the fitness arcade today. He says "it's never the same thing," from one day to the next. And as far as the arcade itself, he likes how it combines wellness with technology.

"The kids get the video games, but they are active... not sitting in front of a TV vegetating."



Andrew Raymond instructs children in fitness arcade



DEVELOPMENT FRONT



All photos: Tom Field

Lynda Calkins, aquatics coordinator

Step on down to the pool area, and the resident cheerleader jumps out at you.

"This is the best place to be in the entire building," Lynda Calkins proudly exclaims. The aquatics coordinator says working at this Y is "truly great."

"Where else do you get to be with fantastic people all day, play, have fun, laugh, and have a good time?"

Equally fanatic is Sony Shipllett, a personal trainer supervising the wellness center today.

"I've been here 15 years, and it's like family," Shipllett says. "There's variety, and the membership reflects that. Everybody's so happy and always in a good mood."

When asked about the latest approaches in training, Shipllett says the people and the programs may change often, but trends have a way of coming back.

"It's like clothes. There was the slider and jazzercise and zumba... but we have everything from yoga to crossfit [low to high intensity], and we're equipped to keep up with the changes."

Communications director, Kim Bratic hardly apologizes for the exuberant overly enthusiastic staff who work at the Kirk Family Y. She says her job provides a great place to work. And she feeds off the energy even as you walk around the different areas.

Among other improvements, the wellness center expanded, and a great deal of attention was placed on the look and utility.

"We like to think of it as the Starbucks of wellness centers," Bratic explains.

"Our goal is to make being healthy, fun."

There's little question the Kirk Family YMCA figured out how to do that. They even threw in a little happiness with it. 





Sarah Beth Jones

Bobby Martin: “I think they call it redneck ingenuity now, but then it was just what you did.”

Faith, family and friends in C’burg >

Executive Summary:

At Blue Ridge Heating and AC, the family’s the thing. The business revolves around that fact.

By Sarah Beth Jones

While other small businesses have been feeling the pressure of the economic downturn, Blue Ridge Heating and Air in Christiansburg has done nothing but thrive and grow.

“My family credits our success to our faith,” says Bobby Martin who currently heads BRHA. “Faith, family and friends—and our customers are all our friends.”

When Bobby speaks of his family, he’s also referring to his co-workers. The Meet the

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Team page on the company website reads like a roster from a family reunion, starting with Bobby's parents, company founder Robert and current company president Brenda. It includes Bobby's wife and their daughters, as well as his brothers and their wives.

There are names that aren't from the Martin family tree, too, but they're still part of the family to Bobby. "We like to hire family-oriented people," he says, "because I think we have something to offer them," including a safe work environment with no badgering, yelling or screaming.

This team of extended family staffs BRHA's showroom and sister company, Crab Creek Country Store. The team members also fill the fleet of work trucks and vehicles wrapped with the BRHA logo, seen en route to installing, repairing and providing maintenance for heating and air conditioning systems for homes and commercial properties throughout Southwest Virginia.

"One of the nicest things about being a family run business is that people are not

In Brief

Name: Bobby Martin

Age: 44

Business: Blue Ridge Heating and Air and sister company Crab Creek Country Store

Location: Christiansburg

Type of Business: Commercial and residential HVAC

Founded: 1989

Background: The Martin family can trace branches of its family tree in the Montgomery County area back to the 18th Century. Bobby has always worked with his dad Robert, first on construction sites and then when his father opened BRHA in 1989. He attended Christiansburg High School and New River Community College because, as he says, "not every kid fits into the four-year-college mold. I didn't. My dad didn't. My brother's didn't. We're very hands-on and intelligent; we just didn't fit the mold."

a number here," says Bobby, who could just as easily be talking about his co-workers as his customers.

It is because of this philosophy, passed onto

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the family from Bobby's father, that the family makes decisions based on the kind of business it wants to run rather than earnings goals. For example, unlike most HVAC businesses, BRHA sells parts and shares expertise freely to those looking to fix their own system.

It's a kind of resourcefulness Bobby recognizes with pride in his family, saying that he learned it as a kid when he and his brothers could either fix the motorbike or walk everywhere.

"I think they call it redneck ingenuity now, but then it was just what you did," says Bobby, relating to those who enjoy doing their own tinkering. "My philosophy is that if I answer—truthfully and honestly—a person calls in asking a question about a system that we didn't install, chances are they'll use us next time they have a serious problem."

Of course, for extraordinary customer service to be effective, people have to call and come in. For that, Bobby and his family advertise in a variety of media: paid and free, online, print, television, radio and any other venue

that seems worthwhile. "When it comes to promoting your business, never settle for simply good enough," says Bobby.

He believes the key to successful promotions are discounts steep enough to "make it hurt a little for the business." As he and his family see it, the lost profit from a discounted first sale is an acceptable expense for making a new friend and laying the groundwork for a second sale and maybe a third, or a 10th.

"Our business model is a fairly simple philosophy of three wins," says Bobby. "When the customer wins, the employee wins, and when the employee wins, the business wins."

When Bobby isn't working or answering midnight HVAC emergency calls, he likes the solitude of hunting and the company of his family—yes, that very same family that he works with all week. One thing's for sure, though: in this family, business stays at the office. There are more important topics at home. 



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Tom Field

Ray Fisher: "I was always focused upon continual improvement and was an agent of meaningful change."

Change agent >

Executive Summary:

Ray Fisher's background includes a lot of change. A lot of it. He brings that resume to Richfield Retirement Community in Salem.

By Rebekkah Manley

Ray Fisher, the new Chief Executive Officer of Richfield Retirement Community in Salem, knows his residents. In fact, he lived among them for the first six months as their Chief Financial Officer. At 56, this experience in one of the campus apartments, teamed with his extensive business background is expected

to help take Richfield to the next level.

As a "railroad guy," Ray spent 18 years with CSX Corporation, most recently as director of corporate strategy, and held the position of VP of corporate development at Cadmus Communications, a provider of marketing and print services. Fisher served as Chief Financial Officer for two of Virginia's premier continuing care retirement communities, Fort Norfolk Retirement Community's Harbor's Edge and Westminster Canterbury Richmond.

His extensive resume includes time at Westminster Canterbury when he oversaw a \$160 million expansion and how this effort increased revenues from approximately \$30 million to over \$55 million. With his

experience in mind, he says, "There was no steady state in any of those positions. I was always focused upon continual improvement and was an agent of meaningful change."

Therefore, it helps to look at a common career thread and according to him it is "... the ability to identify the need for and effectively manage change."

As CFO, Ray propelled change last year when he led Richfield's management team and board of directors through the development of a five-year strategic plan. Part of this plan includes a stand-alone rehabilitation center that will be opened in February. After that, the focus will shift to building a new skilled nursing facility with all private rooms by 2015, and expanding services both on and off campus.

Going forward, Ray plans on leveraging the Richfield brand, "because it has a great reputation for service excellence," he says. "Additionally, we are going to leverage the competencies of the organization—which are our employees. At the end of the day, they are at the core of Richfield's competitive advantage, and its various care levels which will be more effectively integrated to provide a continuum of care. We are going to create competencies where we don't have them. There is a lot of value that has yet to be tapped."

According to Susan Williams, Richfield's VP marketing and community relations,

In Brief

Name: D. Raymond Fisher
Age: 56
Company: Richfield Retirement Community
Title: CEO
Location: Salem
Background: Strategic and financial management
Business Philosophy: "It's about everyone else —about helping others to be their best and to feel fulfilled."

Ray is the one to help set the tap. "He is an expert in strategic planning and is leading our team through a visioning and tactical process," she says.

He waxes philosophical: "It isn't about the CEO at all. Leadership done well is about everyone but the leader and done very well people don't know they are being led. They just see you as an active partner."

The move was a natural for him. He says, "The long and short of it is I lost a son and I decided to go into non-profit arena because I wanted to do something for someone else."

Susan Williams says, "The passion, the heart, the skill set and the knowledge is all here and having Ray join us to help map the future successfully is key." 

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Integrity Windows recently held a gathering in its lunchroom in support of its veterans.

A bump up for veterans >

Executive Summary:

Vets are getting a little help in re-entering the job market in this region.

By Melanie Huber

Although our society seems to view those who serve their country with the highest regard, in 2011, according to a study done by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, 14 percent of our nation's homeless were veterans. In other words,

last year, over 60,000 men and women who served their country were literally left out in the street.

Veterans under 30 are most at risk for homelessness because the poor economy and high unemployment rates have added to the stress of making the transition from active duty into civilian life. The Labor Department has reported that 21 percent of all veterans under the age of 24 are jobless. The post-9/11 veteran jobless rate is at 12.1 percent, higher than the national average of about 8 percent.

Rather than sitting on the sidelines waiting for someone else to solve the problem, several Roanoke Valley businesses are rolling up their sleeves and getting involved.

Roanoke County-based Integrity Windows

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has been working through the Veteran's Program that TAP has implemented. According to veteran's program head Lin Roberts, this program is designed to help homeless veterans reintegrate into society by providing them with connections to employers. The company has a Welcome Home Fund that helps vets obtain the tools they need to be competitive in the civilian workforce. At Integrity Windows, helping veterans is a commitment HR Director Kim Carte takes personally.

"Daddy was the 14th of 14 kids," she says. "He grew up dirt, dirt poor in Kentucky. When he left home he had an eighth-grade level education, but the Air Force gave him a chance. He rose through the ranks and eventually retired at the highest level."

Since implementing the TAP program two years ago Integrity Windows has helped a dozen veterans obtain secure long term employment.

"Some companies were using the grant money and [companies] weren't hiring the veterans at the end of the program." Kim says. "That's the wrong message to me, for us, if we're going to use them and train them and work with them ... they deserve this. It's the least we can do, they've done what they've done for the country. So, for us, this has been a great opportunity to give back to the veterans."

Kim insists that hiring veterans is in no way a deterrent or a risk to their company. "Their

Resources: >

Department of Veteran's Affairs,
1-800-827-1000

TAP Veteran's Program, Lin Roberts:
(540) 283-4908

Funding for Veteran's Programs,
<http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/state/jvsg.htm#.UKO630foRbo>

Trust House, 344-8060

Office of Veterans Services Virginia Tech,
Christy Lowe, 540/231-7762 or
cslowe@vt.edu

work ethic and their discipline is tremendous," she says. "Because many veterans may be dealing with transition issues, like PTSD, there's a stigma attached, employers might think that they aren't stable, that they might go postal or something, but I found the opposite to be true." Kim says she has found that those who have served in the military have a sense of pride, and that sense of pride is translated into a sense of pride in their job performance.

Wayne Johnston, a veteran who has benefited from the TAP program and who is now working at Integrity Windows is looking forward to his future. Previously homeless, he started on the job over a year



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Wayne Johnson with Kim Carte at Integrity Windows: "All I can say is keep trying."

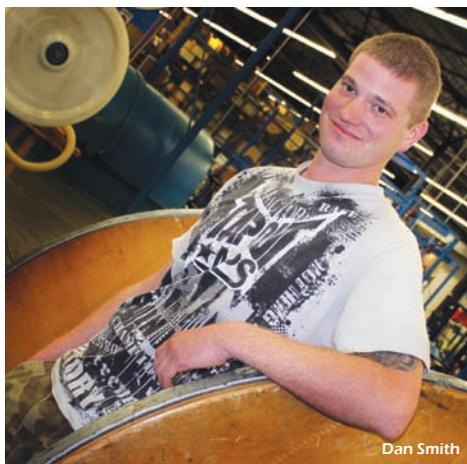
ago, back when his first transportation to work was a five mile journey on a bike.

To those veterans who are struggling now Wayne says: "All I can say is keep trying. If you see something you want—go for it, just grab a hold of it and don't let go."

Virginia Tech, recently named one of the Top Military Friendly Schools in the country employs around 300 veterans. Tech earned this recognition by going above and beyond simply offering jobs to veterans. Human Resources Director of Staffing Curtis Mabry and Recruiting Specialist Christy Lowe have helped returning soldiers move into the workforce by implementing a program they call "Vet to Vet." Veterans in the program receive one-on-one assistance as Christy often works with Vets to help them navigate the job application process. At the same time, the veterans are assigned to one of two volunteers, T. O. Williams III and Carl McDaniels, both veterans and Virginia Tech retirees, who provide counseling, assist with resumes and cover letters, and provide direction with interviewing and networking skills.

"Virginia Tech is making a difference by making veterans a priority," said Michael Frye, who works with the VEC and often refers the disabled veterans he works with to the veterans program at Virginia Tech. Frye served in the United State Air Force for 21 years.

Since the program was established, Lowe, Mabry, Williams and McDaniels have helped more than 100 local veterans with their job searches. They would like to be able to help



Dan Smith

Optical Cable's Brandon Robinett: "It's important for me to keep busy."

many more veterans and are looking for a few good volunteers to assist in the effort.

"These are real people coming out of the military with a lot of skills and good experience and they're not being welcomed into the civilian labor market," McDaniels says. "They deserve something in return for giving of their service, limbs, and lives. We have an obligation to these folks."

OCC (Optical Cable Company) is another Roanoke County business that recently implemented the TAP program.

Brandon Robinett, who served in the Army and who was deployed in Iraq, found employment at OCC through the TAP program after he was discharged. Suffering from PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder), Brandon describes his attempt to reintegrate often "very difficult." Brandon, a soft spoken soldier, says, "It's important for me to keep busy." He says the job has been a "blessing" and OCC feels like "a home away from home."

Tonia Hackett from HR, says that after implementing the TAP program, "The older veterans really stepped up. They took the younger guys under their wings."

More help is needed though, according to Kim Carte: "I look forward to starting some type of monthly support group for the vets, a safe place for them to just come and talk." She insists it's a misconception to think that the government is taking care of these things. It's not. "It's up to us to do our part." 



“ ”

We're coming to the conclusion that our music is so important to us and the people around us that we are willing to not be 'successful' in the traditional sense.

—Erica Sipes

Michael Abraham

Erica Sipes: “I work without a boss, free to pick and choose jobs as I wish.”

Cobbling together a living with music >

Executive Summary:

Erica Sipes of Blacksburg has worked hard to earn a living freelancing with her music.

By Michael Abraham

San Francisco reared and Eastman School of Music educated, Blacksburg's Erica Sipes plays to the beat of a different drummer, so to speak. A pianist and cellist, Erica considers herself a freelance musician, working in a difficult market to piece together a living educating and performing.

“We had an upright piano in the basement when I grew up, and in my earliest memories

I sat at my mother's feet and listened to her when she practiced,” says Erica. “I started lessons when I was five.

“San Francisco is an incredible town to be trained as a musician. I became a regular at the Conservatory of Music's Saturday children's program. I studied choir, [music] theory, ear training, and chamber music. Watching chamber music and the interaction of the players thrilled me. By age 12, I was performing chamber music on piano. Also by 12, I started playing the cello.”

She was accepted to college at the Eastman School in Rochester, N.Y., “a dreary place, but in retrospect good for me because there were few distractions. I was hostage to my practice room. The concert hall is a jewel box, just exquisite.”

Erica moved to the New River Valley in 2005 when her husband, Tadd, got a teaching job in Virginia Tech's Music

Department. She found work where she could, accompanying music students, doing performances, and teaching. Last year, Tadd failed to achieve tenure, leaving them without that income and benefits. This put more pressure on her to remain busy.

"I work without a boss, free to pick and choose jobs as I wish," says Erica. "I have work now at Radford University as an adjunct professor. I accompany lots of their students and do performances with faculty there. I charge \$45 an hour for accompaniment and \$50 an hour for performances and other higher-stress work, but Radford (University) pays me less than that.

"I work for Virginia Tech to accompany faculty members at recitals. I work for students to help them. I do special

events, playing music often with a trio." Busy, busy, but that's not all.

"I've also started my own practice coaching business called 'Beyond the Notes' where I help folks refine how they approach practicing their instruments and plan out how to prepare for a recital or auditions," she says. My fees for those services are \$60 an hour."

A small woman with piercing blue eyes, Erica exudes enthusiasm for her work, regardless of the challenges.

"I love what I do," she says. "I play music all the time, and it doesn't get any better than that. I work with people at all ages and musical abilities. It's hard in that it is piecemeal. I never know if I'm working enough, making enough. My hours are crazy. I often work from nine in the

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

morning until nine at night. I have few weekends free.”

Tadd has a private studio now, generating some income. And he does some teaching at Radford University.

Many of her contemporaries play full-time for orchestras. But, she says, they are facing their own challenges because major orchestras are having funding problems. “Some of them are on strike. Not only are they not getting paid, they’re not performing,” she says.

“When I work with young people who show some real promise, the advice I give them has changed in the last year. I used to heartily encourage them to pursue their dreams. Nowadays, I’m more reluctant, more honest about the rapidly changing nature of professional classical musicianship. Music education is less prevalent in the

schools and music is taking a diminishing place in American culture.

“Tadd and I continually evaluate whether we should stay in music. We’re coming to the conclusion that our music is so important to us and the people around us that we are willing to not be ‘successful’ in the traditional sense. It’s a different definition of success. I see lots of people here who are happy without being wealthy. There’s a sense of community and satisfaction that one person can dramatically impact that community.

“Given the chance, I’ll play music even when I’m not getting paid. It helps restore music to what its original purpose was, to bring people together and entertain. If I won the lottery tomorrow and never had to work again, I’d stay here in Blacksburg and I’d keep playing. I love what I do.” 

Dr. Guy Sims



- *Assistant VP of Student Affairs, Virginia Tech*
- *Graduate of Lincoln University*
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My View

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

Excutive Summary: *With so many kids out of work, maybe we'd be better off teaching them differently.*

There is a lot of data in a new Annie E. Casey Foundation report that is disturbing on a number of levels, but leaves me screaming, "Why the hell aren't we teaching kids to work for themselves?"

The survey tells us, briefly, that almost 6.5 million kids and young adults aren't working and aren't in school. It says that those young people are facing the most serious set of barriers since World War II and that only half of those between 16 and 24 had jobs in 2011. Teenagers' unemployment rate is up 42 percent in a decade and 21 percent of young parents are without a job. There are 1.4 million young adults who aren't in school, don't have a job and have children. That often means the perpetuation of that situation to the next generation.

Older workers are staying on the job longer—mostly out of necessity—keeping many of those jobs tied up and diminishing the trickle-down effect. Kids are dropping out of school at an alarming rate (3.8 million who start high school this year won't finish and will earn \$200,000 less over their lifetimes than high school grads and \$1 million less than college graduates). About 90 percent of the jobs in the U.S. economy require a minimum of a high school diploma. Dropouts, according to the Casey report, cost taxpayers between \$320 billion and \$350 billion a year.

All of that is the traditional way of looking at education. You go to school to learn how to do a job.

I don't much like that way of thinking. Never have. It has been my experience that the best employees have been people with a broad general interest, some of it educated formally, most of it not so much. Curiosity—sparked by good mentors, good family and an atmosphere of learning—counts for a lot in my world.

That's why I celebrate when I see high schools and colleges with entrepreneur classes, entrepreneur clubs. This is where some of those potential dropouts begin to see the relevance of education, to revel in its practical application, to think in terms of making a living while pursuing their bliss.

This bleak economy has taught many people who've been in the workforce for a long time some of those lessons. They lose a job they count on, but don't especially like, can't find another and are forced into the initially uncomfortable position of self-examination. That means looking at what they're good at, what they like to do, how it can be packaged and sold to consumers.

FRONT has a story a month or so about these people and

continued on Page 52



Table for three >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

We walked into the Pancake House, Lauren and I. As is often the case, Saturday mornings there isn't an open table. Lucky for us we were first in line. A couple in their 60s who followed us in, positioned themselves second in line, right up against us in the tight space. Seconds later, an elderly lady walked up in position number three. The Pancake House on Apperson Drive is a popular draw. It's one of those places that's the same as it ever was. Three of the waitresses I see have been here two, maybe three or four decades.

I don't know how this always happens, but the first diners to get up to leave are sitting in the big corner booth, the booth that seats seven or eight.

"That's ok," I tell a beckoning waitress, "we'll wait for a smaller booth instead of taking up the big one."

Sure enough, a regular booth opens, as does a table for six. Lauren and I wait beside our booth as it is bused, and the waitress tells the couple behind us to take the longer table. She then asks the couple if they would mind if the elderly lady sat at the end of the long table—an empty seat between them.

The couple's answer wasn't what I expected.

"Did you see what just happened?" I asked Lauren.

I told her the couple said "no" to the old lady. In my indignation I pointed out how the couple didn't even have to talk to the old lady. She could just sit there at the end.

But then I offered my profound insight.

"I should go to her and tell her we will move to the big booth, and she can join us."

"Oh, Daddy, do it," Lauren exclaimed. "Go tell her."

I looked up, as the old lady was ushered to another booth that just opened up.

I didn't intend for this little shuffle of patrons and seats at a Pancake House to be a teaching moment, but the story wasn't finished. Moral superiority can be an equally bad lesson as inhospitality.

"You know, Lauren," I said, "I shouldn't have been so harsh. Maybe that couple needed to be alone for some reason. Maybe they had something important to talk about."

"But this is our Christmas shopping date," Lauren said. "This is our

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Smith / My View

from Page 50

we're not necessarily looking for them as a conscious exercise. They're just there and they're fun to write, fun to research. Happy people are delightful to talk to.

It would behoove our educational system to help kids find out what they're good at, what they love to do and then help them find a way to market it, if that's of interest to the youngsters.

I was one of those lucky few who was able to avoid college, but still find a career that I've loved for nearly 50 years. It's never been as lucrative as many other fields, but that couldn't concern me less. Happiness is a commodity that isn't sold on the open market, but we can earn it.

There's a lot to learn from how we've taught people in the past and what we probably should be teaching them in the future. My thought is that we need to offer the opportunity to these young people. They'll take it from there. 

Field / On Tap

from Page 51

special thing we only do once a year. I wouldn't have minded if she sat with us."

Lauren was right.

Whatever the couple across the aisle from us did or did not do—I had failed.

I thought the right thing. But I did not do the right thing.

Even a mediocre action is better than a great idea.

With all the strife facing us in these times of economic uncertainty and angry people on polar opposite positions shouting at each other, I have this feeling we need to do something. Even the smallest thing. Something instead of just thinking and talking about it all.

While we're thinking our big ideas about saving the world, a little old lady eats her breakfast alone in a booth. 



She didn't even realize that running a blog could become a career — Page 61

Read the FRONT online

vbFRONT.com

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

Letters

Dressing for success

Thanks so much (to Kathy Surace, December "Business Dress") for acknowledging that it is okay to be in the technology field and dress in something other than blue jeans and T-shirts. I thank you. I dress in Mary Miller clothes and they are just right for me. You hit the nail on the head when you referenced comfort. I need to be comfortable in my own skin and while I can enjoy casual dress, it is just not right for me in the work place.

I think many women in the tech field feel challenged—they think to look "with it" they need to fit in with the "over the top" casual dress that is common in many tech companies. Thankfully, when I was an undergrad at Virginia Tech, I knew a wonderful female professor who was a mathematician. She was so smart and demanding, but she always looked stunning. I loved her toughness and her beauty and style and she really gave me permission that it was okay to go into a male dominated field and still look feminine. She influenced on my life in many ways and I am still very grateful to her.

Thank you for your column—you address many important issues and today's column was no exception.

Mary Guy Miller
President, IDD Inc.
Blacksburg

Deserves a whistle

I hope your readership continues to skyrocket. The publication is well written, well designed and has a wonderful editorial focus.

Whoot! Whoot!

Peg McGuire
Director of Marketing and Special Events
Virginia Museum of Transportation
Roanoke

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

“ ”
I actually timed it—six minutes — Page 15

Reach Out!

There's no better audience than readers of the **FRONT**. Reach the region's most-engaged, progressive, informed buyers right here—each and every month and online 24/7.

Call or email us for more information.

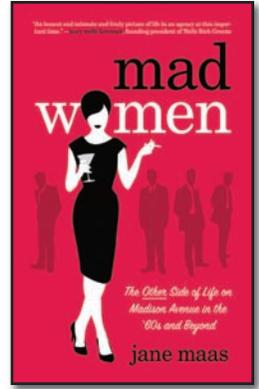


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Books @ the FRONT >

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



A Drink with Peggy Olson

This memoir of being a young female copywriter on male-dominated Madison Ave. in the 1960s promises tales of sex, drugs, and drinking to top the reputation of television's "Mad Men." In *Mad Women* [Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press], Maas—a "real-life Peggy Olson"—regales readers with enough sordid stories to ensure a page-turner. There's the one about the ad exec who bought a copy of *Screw* to find a "date" for his client. The one about the typing pool ingénue who lost her virginity to the account man for Jell-O. And the never-ending stories of smoking and drinking—although Maas, tongue in cheek, insists the agencies she worked for were more conservative than Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce. They never drank before noon.

Despite the overt emphasis on sex and booze, this book is really about the struggles of women to be taken seriously in the workplace. Maas, who calls herself the "mother" of the 1970s "I Love New York" campaign, has forged a love letter to women everywhere, whether they work in an office or in the home.

—Jill Elswick

Bad hand dealt

If *Canada* [Harper Collins] was the name on a crayon, the color would surely be gray. And not 50 shades of it, either. Gray setting. Gray characters. Black and white exists, but all of humanity is in that mixed zone in between, teetering on the edge of what

some arbitrary force has defined as good or bad. Richard Ford's singular narrator recognizes a destiny that is bleak and never under your own control. The boy doesn't give up, but neither does he strive, as he's convinced "every situation in which human beings are involved can be turned on its head." He knows "no matter ... who you believe you are ... anything at all can follow anything at all." This is the constant tone of this wonderfully written ugly novel.

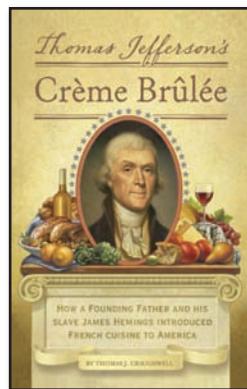
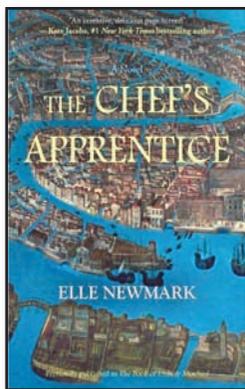
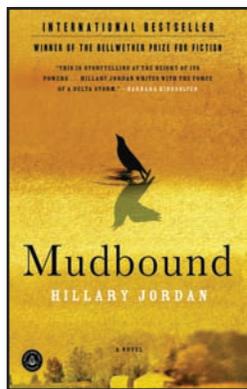
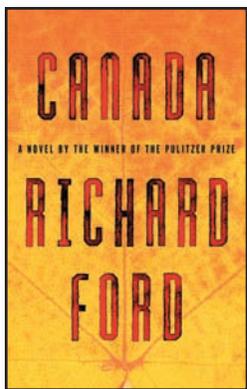
Canada is as much a painting as it is a book. In gray, of course. Everything is there to look at—all at once. The most incredible thing is that the entire work is full of "spoilers"; everything is divulged at all moments. We have no clues, no surprises, no climaxes. We know everything that is going to happen from the very beginning—and yet we keep reading and we hang on. Better yet, we press on—which is the only virtue you have in a bleak gray landscape that has been thrust before you.

A case study for existentialism in its purest state, readers can possess sympathy, but our characters here will quickly dispel the notion that fairness counts for anything.

—Tom Field

Unlikely friendship

In Hillary Jordan's *Mudbound* (Algonquin Books), two sons return from World War II to work the cotton farm. Jamie McAllan is a young white man suffering from post-traumatic stress and abuse from his father, come home to shelter on his brother's farm. Ronsel Jackson is a young black man,



suffering from heartbreak and prejudice, back home at his sharecropper father's household. In the midst of ignorance and blind hatred in their small southern town, the men become friends, a habit more dangerous than the war they'd just left behind. Racism though, is subtle and bold at the same time, from the innocent ignorant mouths of babes to the raucous deliberate actions of the Klan.

Mudbound, winner of the Bellwether Prize for fiction, is a suspenseful, emotionally seductive story of two families full of love and rage and about what happens when it becomes too much to survive.

—Heather Brush

Cooking up a story

Historical fiction writers love a book that exemplifies our craft. *The Chef's Apprentice* by Elle Newmark (Washington Square Press) is such a book. An orphaned street urchin in 1498 Venice is yanked from the streets to be the apprentice to the chef of the Doge. Naturally, the story is filled with mouthwatering descriptions of foods like soufflés, cheesecake, gnocchi and exotic roasted quail, that allow the reader to savor each word.

Woven into her tale, is also plethora of proverb-like lines and insights about the importance of handing down knowledge. Set at the dawn of the Renaissance when Gutenberg's printing press is about to change the world, the author beautifully illustrates how being open-minded to alternative views is the best defense against fears that ruling leaders and religions often

use to suppress the masses. It's a mysterious and intriguing read.

—Karen Chase

TJ in the kitchen

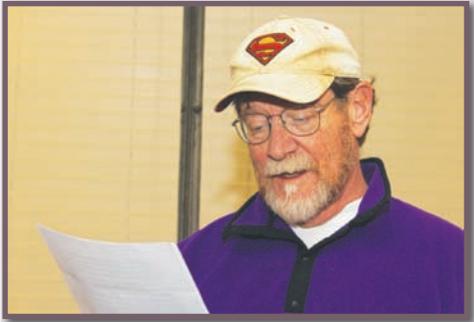
As if we'll ever get enough of Thomas Jefferson. Now comes *Thomas Jefferson's Crème Brûlée: How a Founding Father and His Slave James Hemings Introduced French Cuisine to America* (Quirk Books) by Thomas Craughwell, a former academic and book editor with a wildly varied writing background.

Jefferson, the book recounts, gave James Hemings (Sally's older brother) his freedom for traveling with him to Paris and learning French cooking. Pretty good deal all around. Meanwhile, TJ was studying how the French cultivated their foods with an eye to replicating that at Monticello. They came home with pasta, Champagne, macaroni and cheese, crème brûlée and a lot more.

A lot has been written about Jefferson's gardens, his vineyards and his table, but this is a good story—if nothing else—and it contains recipes. That's good enough for me.

—Dan Smith

(The reviewers: Jill Elswick is a Roanoke-based freelance writer. Tom Field is FRONT publisher. Heather Brush is a writer and artist, living in Rocky Mount and working in Roanoke. Karen A. Chase is the author of *Bonjour 40: A Paris Travel Log* and owner of 224Pages.com. Dan Smith is editor of FRONT.)



Reading >

Amanda Cockrell of Hollins University and FRONT editor **Dan Smith** read from their recent works Nov. 29 at the **Limnal Reading at Community High School**, a monthly event featuring area writers reading from their works. The theme of this event was "coming of age." Smith read from his memoir *Burning the Furniture*.



Preservation Awards >

Broaddus Fitzpatrick takes a **Roanoke Valley Preservation Award** from George Kegley of the RVPF Nov. 29 at the Virginia Museum of Transportation in Roanoke. Here all the winners pose for a team picture. See the story in FRONTNotes and a complete version in MoreFRONT.blogspot.com.



Toast >

Officials of **Homestead Creamery** and Franklin County join Gov. Bob McDonnell Dec. 17 in toasting the announced \$1.1 million expansion of the Homestead business and the addition of a line of cheeses to its other dairy offerings.

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



Tom Field

Minstrels on market >

The City Market Building in downtown Roanoke launched its **City Market Sundays**, where musicians perform for free in the afternoon. Above: Singer-guitarist Cheryl Lunsford entertains a small crowd on Christmas Eve eve.



Tom Field

Trees on parade >

An annual tradition, **Fashions for Evergreens** at Hotel Roanoke is a Christmas tree competition where guests and visitors can see and vote for their favorite displays. 2012 marks the 14th year, with more than 27 entries, including the striking ones shown above.

CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Abraham is the owner of The Threshold Center, a shell center in Christiansburg and co-owner (with wife Jane) of publisher Pocahontas Press. He has written several books, the latest of which is the novel Providence, VA. [bikemike@nrvnwired.net]

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Anne Clelland

December 2012 >
Contributor of the Month

Anne Clelland has been writing the Business Advice column for Valley Business FRONT almost from Day 1 and that column helped set us apart from other business publications in important ways. First, we recognized that there is a very real psychology in the office and that it needs to be addressed and, second, Anne has been exemplary in dispensing that advice. Her background in counseling, coaching and small business made her acutely prepared for answering some extremely difficult questions and Anne was always direct, concise and clear with that advice. Her December column was her final contribution in this cycle and we wanted to recognize that by naming Anne the Contributor of the Month. This time, it is a collective award, but just about any of her columns in the past would have qualified as a monthly contender. She was special in that role and now she gets to be extra special as a small business person. Congratulations, Anne, and good luck with Handshake2.0. You can read Anne's back issue articles at vbFRONT.com

“ ”
We like to
hire family-
oriented
people

— Page 39

The wage gap in crucial employment areas >

In the November Census Column, we looked at median income and the difference between median earnings for male and female full-time workers, as reported in the 2006-2010 American Community Survey. This month, we dig a little deeper into three occupations—management, health and education—and find significant median earnings gaps between men and women, even in occupations where women hold the most jobs.

These figures are based on where people live, not necessarily where they work. Botetourt County, which does not have a large healthcare presence, may be home to higher paid members of that field, while in Roanoke City, home to Carilion Clinic, lower paid healthcare workers may be taking advantage of more affordable housing closer to their jobs.

Franklin County offers the most equitable income split, in management, even though almost 62 percent of the men report holding those jobs. In all three occupations, the earnings differential in Franklin County is below the average for the Roanoke

Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Median earnings for women working in education in Montgomery County, home of Virginia Tech, are almost 40 percent lower than what their male counterparts earn. Employment in that occupation is fairly evenly divided among county residents: 52 percent male/48 percent female. An obvious conclusion could be that the men dominate the higher levels of the field, with higher salaries.

In the Roanoke MSA, 69.1 percent of those employed in the health diagnosing and treating occupation are women, yet their median earnings are 48.9 percent below the male median earnings.

While it should be cold comfort to note that similar pay differentials exist in these occupations at the state level, it also should be of concern to the government and business leaders of a region that has tied its fortunes to the twin anchors of education and healthcare. Better career and economic opportunities for both genders will surely benefit the future of the Roanoke and New River Valleys, and the families that live here.

—By Anne Piedmont,
Piedmont Research Associates

Difference Between Median Earnings for Male and Female Full-time Workers

| | Management | | | Education, Training, Library | | | Health Diagnosing & Treating | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | Male | Female | % +/- | Male | Female | % +/- | Male | Female | % +/- |
| Botetourt Co. | \$79,175 | \$65,291 | -17.5% | \$62,604 | \$40,139 | -35.9% | \$140,625 | \$54,083 | -61.5% |
| Craig Co. | \$61,689 | \$51,250 | -16.9% | \$0 | \$55,804 | -- | \$0 | \$41,528 | -- |
| Franklin Co. | \$58,429 | \$58,427 | -0.03% | \$46,953 | \$36,602 | -22.1% | \$80,087 | \$56,299 | -29.7% |
| Roanoke Co. | \$74,762 | \$49,741 | -33.5% | \$55,523 | \$40,153 | -27.7% | \$122,222 | \$60,140 | -49.1% |
| Roanoke City | \$51,188 | \$47,114 | -7.9% | \$54,400 | \$37,270 | -31.5% | \$67,237 | \$51,731 | -23.1% |
| Salem | \$90,536 | \$39,000 | -73.3% | \$53,594 | \$34,265 | -36.1% | \$111,188 | \$44,799 | -59.7% |
| Roanoke MSA | \$70,343 | \$49,938 | -29.0% | \$54,127 | \$37,964 | -29.8% | \$105,313 | \$53,821 | -48.9% |
| Giles Co. | \$47,692 | \$32,235 | -32.4% | \$52,026 | \$36,806 | -29.3% | \$104,625 | \$58,021 | -44.5% |
| Montgomery Co. | \$56,111 | \$49,194 | -12.3% | \$68,594 | \$41,303 | -39.8% | \$72,318 | \$53,599 | -25.9% |
| Pulaski Co. | \$52,222 | \$51,464 | -1.5% | \$47,850 | \$36,129 | -24.5% | \$185,694 | \$52,212 | -71.9% |
| Radford City | \$43,750 | \$39,167 | -8.7% | \$61,250 | \$56,250 | -8.2% | \$0 | \$48,375 | -- |
| Blacksburg MSA | \$52,519 | \$45,887 | -12.6% | \$62,371 | \$41,292 | -33.8% | \$111,063 | \$53,297 | -52.0% |
| Virginia | \$87,369 | \$63,046 | -27.8% | \$53,231 | \$43,328 | -18.6% | \$107,833 | \$60,396 | -43.9% |



Susan Whetzel prepares cupcakes at the Greenwich Food and Wine Festival.

across a cooking blog written by the friend of a friend, she started tinkering in the kitchen. The funny thing was, she had never been interested in cooking before. “We ate out all the time,” Susan says.

The 37-year-old started taking photographs of her concoctions and posting her experiments on her personal blog. Friends and family complained when the recipes interrupted her baby updates, so she decided to put them on a different blog, Doughmesstic.com.

Today, Susan’s blog has become more than a stay-at-home mom distraction. It is a full-time job. In fact, this past September she spent more time on the road than she did at home. She consults with brands like Nestle, Hershey’s and American Crystal Sugar.

The blog’s the business >

Executive Summary:

When the travel industry tanked, Susan Whetzel started blogging. Little did she know it would be able to pay the bills with it.

By Laura Purcell

Susan Whetzel was a travel agent for many years and owned her own agency. But news of her pregnancy, after suffering infertility, coupled with a slowdown in the travel industry, Susan decided to step back and focus on her family.

She knew, however, that too much time at home would make her crazy. After coming

Susan lives with her husband, Jon, and son, Steven, in Pearisburg. She graduated from Radford University with a double major in English and art history. A former travel agent, Susan started her blog, www.doughmesstic.com, after her son was born in 2006. Her blog has been a springboard into a career as a food writer, recipe developer, and consultant. Some days she is just mom, cooking at home, other days she is wined and dined on in high style.

“When I’m at home, I’m a mom, I cook, I try to do some work on the Internet,” Susan says. “When I travel, I’m riding in limousines and dining on Rodeo Drive.”

It is the community that blogs create that first attracted Susan. “Blogging is more than just posting recipes,” Susan says. “Bloggers

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

interact with each other in an exciting way. It was more than someone just coming and then going away (from the blog). It is a conversation among friends."

Susan's blog has more than 21,000 likes on Facebook and 40,000 followers on Twitter. Webstatsdomain.com measures that some of her posts have gotten millions of hits (brownie recipes seem especially popular).

Initially, Susan says she didn't even realize that running a blog could become a career. "I was part of a weekly cooking group (on the blog) through a site called Tuesdays with Lori. Someone would pick a recipe and everyone would make it, and put his or her own twist on it. It was a big community, and I made good friends there," Susan says.

"I saw people had ads on their sites, and I didn't like it at first. I didn't realize that the ads paid money. I asked a friend about it, and she says she made about \$50 a month. I thought, I'd love to make \$50 a month! I got myself set up on an ad network through Blogher and Amazon. It took a while to learn the ins and outs of it, but

(blogging) really does pay the bills now."

Susan says that the key to continued success as a blogger is staying visible. "If you disappear, people will forget about you. Stay consistent and real, but don't promote your site all the time. Just be a human being. Ask questions, comment back. It is common courtesy," Susan says.

This fall, Susan was host of her own food blogging conference at Mountain Lake. Called Mixed, the conference featured celebrity guests like Duff Goldman, owner of Charm City Cakes and star of the television show "Ace of Cakes," and many celebrity food bloggers. The conference included sessions on recipe development, photography, videography and food styling. But there were also lots of fun events, like pajama parties and midnight movies, which allow attendees to relax, connect, and have fun.

"I didn't go into blogging to make money," Susan says. "People don't realize there's so much to be done at the back end to create a blog of quality. It pays off, and I love it, but it isn't easy." 🍷



Susan Whetzel chats with Duff Goldman, owner of Charm City Cakes and star of Ace of Cakes, at the Greenwich Food and Wine Festival.

Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT



Richardson

Banks

Wells Fargo & Co. has named **Jonathan Richardson** as regional vice president for its Western Mid-Atlantic Regional Commercial Banking Office in Roanoke.

Franklin Community Bank has named **Todd Hammock** vice president of business lending.

First Bank & Trust has named **Allan Bookout** vice president and commercial lending officer. **Maggie Jones** has joined the management

training program.

Financial Advice

Ameriprise Financial in Roanoke has named **Stewart Barnes** of Barnes and Associates in Roanoke a private wealth investor.

Insurance

Thomas Via of Brown Insurance in Roanoke has been named chairman of the Independent Insurance Agents of Virginia.

WELLNESS FRONT

Hospitals

Debbie Potter of LewisGale Hospital Montgomery County has been named director at large of the National Association of Medical Staff Services.

The Medical Carrier Advisory Committee has appointed **Dr.**

Roger Hoffard of Carilion Clinic-Virginia Tech Carilion Family Medical Residency to its group.



Dalhouse

Organizations

Retired banker **Warner Dalhouse**, director emeritus of the Carilion Clinic board of directors, has won the Excellence in Governance Award from the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association.

Awards

The Southern Medical Association has awarded its Distinguished Service Award for 2012 to **Dr. Mark Kilgus** of Carilion Clinic's Psychiatry and

Behavioral Medicine division.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Kidd



Graczyk

Real Estate

Cathy Kidd and **Melanie Graczyk** have joined Primary Residential Mortgage in Roanoke as senior mortgage consultants.

Walter Grewe of

Read the FRONT online

vbFRONT.com

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

Have a career announcement?

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

Roanoke's Long & Foster Realtors has been awarded the Certified Residential Specialist designation.

Lichtenstein Rowan Realtors in Roanoke has named **Alan Nolan** associate broker and licensed instructor.

Callie Dalton of Callie Dalton & Associates in Roanoke has earned the Certified Residential Specialist professional designation. **Sally Wesley** has rejoined the firm.

Poe & Cronk, a Roanoke commercial

real estate firm, has hired **Jessica Gauldin** in sales and leasing services.

Coldwell Banker Townside in Blacksburg has hired **Bill Linkenhoker** and **Rob Jones**.

SENIOR FRONT

Facilities

The following people have been added to the staff of Good Samaritan Hospice in Roanoke: **Wendy Downey**, director of patient services; Dr. Chris Pile, associate medical director.

EDUCATION FRONT

Colleges

Radford University has named **Ebenezer Kolajo** assistant vice provost.

Schools

Chris Moore has been named director

Joy Sutton



- Former WDBJ TV Anchor/Reporter
- TV Host, "The Hour of Joy"
- Howard University and Virginia Tech graduate
- Vibe Radio Listener

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100.1 FM LYNCHBURG

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Career FRONT

of development at North Cross School. Other advancements include **David Lake** to associate director of development; **Jeff Kennard** to publications and web manager; **Whitney Campbell** to assistant to the headmaster.

OTHER FRONTS



Godsey

Economic Development

Tyler Godsey has been named Communications Manager for the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission.

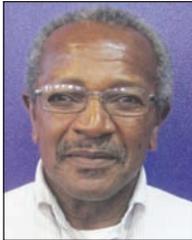
Media

Nadia Singh has been named anchorwoman

for weekend evening newscasts at WDBJ7 television in Roanoke. The station has named **Kris Kietzmann** and **Lauren Breakell** account executives.

Organizations

Division 2 of the Capital District of Kiwanis International has named **Andree Brooks** of the Roanoke Kiwanis Club as its lieutenant governor.



Sparrow

Roanoke's YMCA has named new officers and board members at Salem and Gainsboro facilities. The Gainsboro officers are **William Sparrow**, chairman (Verizon, retired), **Charles Withers**, vice chairman (political activist) and



Withers



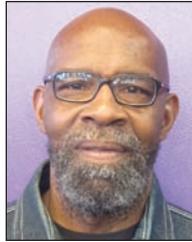
Kemp



Avalon



Phillips



Reed

Mark Hudzik, financial chairman (Member One). New board members are **Dottie Avalon**, Office of Community Service-Commonwealth of Virginia; **Tony Reed**, Conmed Healthcare

and **Brendan Vigorito** (Money Management International). The Salem YMCA officers are: **Mike Kemp**, chairman (Meridian Wealth Management at USB); **Charlie Phillips**, vice chairman (Phillips & Phillips, Attorney) and **George (Skip) Zubrod**, finance chairman (Retired, President & CEO Virginia Lutheran Homes). New board members are: **Martin Misicko** (Roanoke County Schools); **Tom**

“Power To The People”

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

Rife + Wood ARCHITECTS
Roanoke, Virginia 540.344.6015





Misicko



Smith



White

LewisGale Medical Center)

Lori Mullen has been named chief administrative officer for Family Serices of the Roanoke Valley. **Jenny Lee** is the chief development officer and **Karen Pillis** is director of youth development.

“ ”
I wear a lot of blue shirts these days

— Page 33



Robertson



Weidner

Robertson (Robertson Marketing); **Miki Smith**, (community volunteer);

Charles Weidner (General Electric) and **Paul White** (retired),

“ ”
It's up to us to do our part

— Page 46

So much more.

vbFRONT.com

- > Betsy Parkins: PRSA's Illuminator
- > Expansion Set at Homestead Creamery; 20 New Jobs
- > Women's Foundation Presents Record Award Amounts
- > Seven Montgomery Winners Among Gap 50
- > Sarah Beth Jones Cited as FRONT's Top Contributor for 2012
- > Preservation Foundation Issues 2012 Awards
- > Startup Virginia Starts Up Tonight in Roanoke

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- > EventZone, Roanoke End Long Affiliation
- > Localities to the Rescue of SPCA in Roanoke Area
- > Roanoke Hires Economic Development Director
- > FedEx Breaks Ground for Roanoke Facility
- > Novozymes, Syngenta Reach Distribution Agreement
- > Anne Clelland To Present in D.C.
- > Surprising Findings in Higher Education Center Survey

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



Ann Miller: VEDA president

Tech ranks second

Virginia Tech's School of Architecture + Design, part of the College of Architecture and Urban Studies ranks second in America's Best Architecture & Design Schools 2013. Both the undergraduate and graduate landscape architecture programs were second. In addition, Professor Robert Dunay was listed among the 30 Most Admired Educators for 2013.

Buys cemetery

Evergreen Development Company of Roanoke

has purchased Mountain View Cemetery Company in Vinton. Evergreen has been in business in the Roanoke Valley since 1916. The Vinton cemetery is 30 acres and was owned by Hilda Basham, who is retiring.

Employees recalled

The 50 employees of **Southern Coal Corporation** in Roanoke just got a little job security when the company announced a multi-year contract to supply coal to AEP. System-wide, about 500 jobs will be saved. Southern Coal's owners include Jim

Justice, who owns the Greenbrier resort. The headquarters were moved recently from Beckley, W.Va., to Roanoke in the Bank of America Building (where it spent \$2.1 million on the purchase).

Projects get \$\$\$

The Radford Visitors Center, Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce and The Crooked Road are among 37 Virginia tourism projects that will share in \$543,000 that will be awarded as part of **Virginia Tourism Corporation's Marketing**

Leverage Grant program. The grants will be used in to get the word out about the programs.

New president

Ann Blair Miller, director of project management for the Roanoke Regional Partnership, has been elected 2013 president of the Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA). She joined the Roanoke Regional Partnership as an economic development specialist in 2002. She has served as vice president of the VEDA. Miller is a graduate of Radford University.

Goodlatte heads Judiciary

Sixth District **Congressman Bob Goodlatte** has been elected to serve as Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. The committee covers a lot of ground, including Constitutional issues, civil liberties, Homeland Security and oversight of the Justice Department, anti-trust laws, immigration reform and terrorism. Goodlatte has been an active Member of the Judiciary Committee since arriving in Congress, serving in a variety of leadership positions.

Preservation awards

Restaurants, a renovated service station, downtown lofts, a restored locomotive, a garden club and the Fitzpatrick family are among the 11 recipients of awards presented by **Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation**

at its 2012 annual meeting in late November.

The 11 awards recipients:

- 16 West Marketplace, 16 W. Church Ave.

- Carlin's Amoco Station, 1721 Williamson Road

- Woolworth Building, 24-28 Campbell Ave., SW

- River House, 806 Wasena Ave., SW

- River and Rail Restaurant, 2201 Crystal Spring Ave., SW

- Lofts at West Station, 357 Salem Ave., SW

- 1222 Campbell Ave., SW

- Habitat for Humanity, Hurt Park, Old South-west neighborhoods

- Chesapeake Western diesel engine 662, Virginia Museum of Transportation

- Mill Mountain Garden Club, Mill Mountain Park

- Helen Fitzpatrick and sons Beverly Jr., Eric and Broaddus

Award for Public TV

Blue Ridge PBS in Roanoke has received

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.

a national award for community engagement, for programming and events connected to the 2011 PBS series "Women, War and Peace." The award comes from the National Educational and Telecommunications Association.

Best family city

Blacksburg has been named the Best City to Raise a Family for 2011 by Homes.com, a national real estate website. The town was singled out for its educational system and economic opportunities.

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FRONT Notes



Dan Smith

The Natural Foods Co-op will move to this spot on Roanoke City Market.

Co-op expanding

A March expansion of Roanoke's **Natural Foods Co-op** is planned. The new location will be on the site of the former Thomas Market on Roanoke City Market. Thomas did not sign a new lease following the closing of his store for Center in the Square's renovation. The new Co-op, which will be in a 1,225-square-foot space, will carry much of the same product lines as the main store, but it ready-to-eat foods will be prepared at the Grandin Road store.

Global address

Virginia Tech has established a **Global Landing Pad** to provide "a low-cost, high-quality workspace experience

for businesses desiring to set up a home office in the USA." The Global Landing Pad is in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center.

Some of the services included in the Global Landing Pad are an official U.S. mailing address, wi-fi, copy/print/fax machine, preferred access to VTKW affiliates (legal, finance, tax, etc.), introduction to and inclusion in regional business networks and organizations, counseling on doing business in the USA, and housing and travel assistance. For more information contact Jim Flowers, Executive Director of VT KnowledgeWorks at 540-443-9100, extension 1.

Bike tour to Roanoke

The Roanoke Region has been selected as host the 2013 **Bike Virginia Tour**, scheduled June 24-26. The tour is expected to attract 1,600 cyclists from around the nation, Europe and Japan. The second leg of the tour will be based at Botetourt County's Greenfield Recreation Park.

The Bike Virginia Tour, headquartered in Rockbridge County for the first half and Botetourt County for the second, will run six days. Riders range in age from 6 to 88. The tour has operated for 26 years, providing participants with memorable riding experiences on more than 7,000 miles of rural Virginia roads since it began. Riders either

camp at headquarters sites or stay in local hotels nearby in Lexington and Troutville. In the evening, they'll enjoy music, exhibitors and other activities.

PR award

Blue Filly Productions, a public relations, graphic design, and marketing agency in Roanoke, has been awarded the Lin Chaff for Creativity Gold Summit Award and a Silver Summit Award in Public Relations from the Public Relations Society of America.

Phoenix expansion

Pulaski County will get an infusion of about 100 new jobs and a \$20 million investment when **Phoenix Packaging** adds to its North American headquarters. The company is based in Colombia and its expansion will include R&D. The company employs 350 in Pulaski.

StarTek expanding

StarTek, a call center in Lynchburg, recently began hiring an additional 200 people at its Lynchburg facility where 250 people work. The new employees are customer service "agents," handling billing.

Norberto's closes

Yet another long-time Roanoke restaurant—citing increasing food costs as part of the reason—is closing.



Women's foundation grant winners included (from left) Mark Powell and Duane D'Ardenne, Roanoke Community Garden Association; Kathy Chittum and Mary Jean Levin, Grandin Theatre Foundation; Jenny Neel and Denise Yopp, Bethany Hall; Tonia Drewery and Ana Smith Goller, Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley

This time it's **Norberto's Italian Ristorante** in Grandin Village, a restaurant that has been operating for nearly 30 years. Most recently it has been run by Kevin Jarvis, who took over a little more than a year ago. Recently, Tudor's Biscuit World, The Library and The Little Chef, all with a long history in place, have closed—food prices being blamed at least partly in every case.

Research rankings

With more than \$450 million in research expenditures for fiscal year 2011, **Virginia Tech** continues to rank in the top five percent of research universities and colleges in an annual survey of more than 900 institutions conducted by the National Science Foundation (NSF). Rising three places to No. 41, Virginia Tech remains the top university in Virginia

for funds expended in pursuit of science, engineering, and other scholarly activity, and the only Virginia institution in the top 50.

SunTrust realignment

SunTrust Bank's West Virginia president and CEO Barry Henderson plans to leave the bank at the end of January without a specific job in mind, at least partly in response to a management restructuring. SunTrust is moving from a structure that gave Henderson oversight of its business lines in this region to one concentrating on statewide business segment leaders, according to published reports. It will retain a top executive in Roanoke.

Record grants awarded

The Roanoke Women's Foundation (RWF), a

component fund of Foundation for Roanoke Valley, has announced four recipients of its grant awards, at \$262,000 the largest total given to date. The latest grants presented in December, bring to \$1,506,000 the total in grants funded since the organization's inception in 2004.

The grants were awarded to:

Bethany Hall, Inc. - \$60,000 to support its "Kitchen Renovation" project for the women in its residential and day treatment substance abuse program.

Grandin Theatre Foundation, Inc. - \$95,000 to upgrade its 35 mm projection equipment to digital equipment.

Roanoke Community Garden Association - \$70,000 to provide funds to design, build and start the Association's fourth

garden, The Mountain View Garden.

Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley - \$37,000 to partially fund a staff attorney designated as the domestic violence specialist.

Hotel Roanoke renovates restaurant

The Regency Room at **The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center** will undergo a renovation in January in conjunction with the restaurant's 75th anniversary. Dining operations will temporarily relocate to the Shenandoah Ballroom and Pine Room Pub during the construction, which is expected to be completed by mid-February.

Compiled by Dan Smith

Additional FRONT Notes posted online at moreFRONT.blogspot.com. Read extended versions of items listed above, plus photos and many more current listings each day on the [moreFRONT](http://moreFRONT.com) blog, also available by link at vbFRONT.com.

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“”
They never drank before noon

— Page 54

“”
I see lots of people here who are
happy without being wealthy

— Page 49

Happy New Year

From the FRONT



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- **FEBRUARY 23: ADDY AWARDS**
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