

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

\$3 • ISSUE 75 • DECEMBER 2014

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841

Railroad Ties

Chuck Sloan,
Norfolk Southern

Audi
Truth in Engineering



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WELCOME to the FRONT

I simply can't believe we have reached a point in this country where we actually debate the greatness of the United States. So many of us are standing on the tracks, looking into the tunnel, and seeing nothing but darkness apparently.

I'm not so sure about that. I'm pretty sure I see a light. In fact, I'm going to step out of the track, because I think I even hear it coming.

There's no doubt we could use some reassurance. In 1955, Otto Whittaker wrote "I Am the Nation" for the Norfolk and Western Railway, which was later published on the cover of the company magazine in 1976 and read and performed by Johnny Cash in chilling and spine-tingling fashion.

Go online, find it, and listen. You just have to.

There's no debate. Just a belief.

"May I possess always the integrity, the courage, and the strength to keep myself unshackled, to remain a citadel of freedom and a beacon of hope to the entire world."

We actually believed that.

And we need that train to come around the bend once again.



Tom Field

“”

Two hours after his release, he was at a job interview, appropriately clothed and prepared. That's hours, not weeks

— Page 39

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ON THE
RAILROAD**

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Restored** Page 30



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Cover photography of Chuck Sloan by Tom Field.

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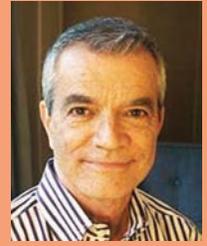
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DECEMBER



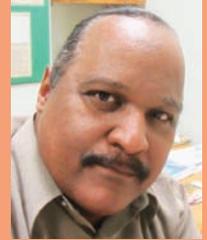
Sarah Cox



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Anne Piedmont



Keith Pierce



Randolph Walker

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.

This board has been given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. "Members essentially have a red telephone at their hand," says publisher Tom Field. "The can inform us best on what is important, what is new, what impacts the greater community. Of course, our red phone reaches right back to them as well, for assignments and insight on our coverage. Although the members are encouraged to keep FRONT updated on their own industries and the key players, they aren't limited to their area of specialty, as all commercial enterprises ultimately collaborate to impact our quality of life here in this part of Virginia." An additional contribution by the Editorial Advisory Board involves direct input on the various FRONTLists we present throughout the year.

CONTRIBUTORS



Tom Field



Kathleen Harshberger



Ariel Lev



Gene Marrano



Anne Sampson



Samantha Steidle



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen

“”
It’s about not having a muffin-top when all around you people decades younger have them spilling over the waistbands of their jeans — Page 20

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 50.

2014 Members

Nancy Agee Carilion (Wellness)
Laura Bradford Claire V (Retail)
Nicholas C. Conte Woods Rogers (Legal)
Warner Dalhouse Retired (Seniors)
John Garland Spectrum (Development)
James Glass JG Co. (Development)
Nancy Gray Hollins University (Education)
Ellis Gutshall Valley Bank (Finance)
Nanci Hardwick Aeroprobe (Tech/Industry)
George Kegley Retired (Seniors)
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.

“”
These guys are proud of this project

— Page 35

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NS
NORFOLK
SOUTHERN

C.H. Sloan

841

WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD



Take everything you think you know about a railroad man, how he looks, how he moves, what he says, and how he says it... Put it all in a box. Now, throw it out the window.

It's a good thing I told you to put it in a box first. Because you're going to have to go out there and put it all back in the box and bring it back inside.

Chuck Sloan is a railroad man.
No doubt about it.

Your preconceptions were correct.

MEET THE SHOP GUY

Name:	Chuck Sloan
Position:	Manager, Roanoke Locomotive Shop
Company:	Norfolk Southern Corporation
Age:	56
Family:	Married (Carol); no children; cats
Background:	35 years with the railroad; started at East Roanoke Shops, field ops in Pittsburgh, mechanical ops in Knoxville, back to Roanoke (2009); family from Back Creek; lives in Botetourt
Personal Mission:	"Do a better job today than you did yesterday"
Outtake:	"My granddaddy used to say, 'you treat a man right, he might tell ten; you treat him wrong, he'll tell a hundred.'"

Shop Work at Norfolk Southern Rolling Along >

Executive Summary:

One way to gauge the production level of Norfolk Southern is to ignore the reports, go past the gates into the inner workings, and talk to the shop guy.

By Tom Field



NS Corp.



It's a brisk morning as I pull into the Norfolk Southern "East End Shops" and try to find Chuck. "He said to drive between two red buildings," I tell myself. Hell, they're all red. Or, most of them. Red brick everywhere. I feel as if I'm inching my way into the set of an old movie about the Industrial Revolution.

And inching along is precisely my speed. I know I look conspicuously out of place as I roll over track after track. Here a track, there a track, everywhere track track. Men in hardhats walking all over the complex, ignoring the alien visitor in the white Durango, who's frankly, a bit intimidated. Not so much because of the confusing routes and alleyways and warning and safety signs (though that would be adequate). But because there are towering locomotives also inching along throughout the labyrinth. A horn blasts every few seconds. At every crosswalk or opening in a building or blind spot.

I've entered Roanoke's East End Shops (actually, named East Roanoke Shops, but natives and old timers say East End). A hallowed place, but mostly viewed by roadside. Slowly—from the creepy, narrow Salem Avenue side, or very quickly—from the I-581 interstate overpass. It's a bit of a different perspective on the inside.

It's another world.

But not to the 800 men (and a few women) who work here on one of the shifts for the 24/7 operation. It's pretty much home for them. As familiar to them as anyone else's job. They work and move with ease, and don't seem to act at all like tiny figures among the monsters all around them.

COVER STORY





The “triton” looking object on top of the building? That’s the famous “Old Gabriel” whistle all of downtown Roanoke hears at 7am, noon, and 12:30.

Brick and steel and walls and bridges and pipes and rails
and equipment and huge parts.

The railroad is alive.

And it’s not just the panoramic calendar scene of a
gleaming train sliding smoothly over a trestle aside the
colorful Blue Ridge Mountains.

It’s the grit. The underbelly and gut of a major American
sub-industry known simply and unceremoniously and
unglamorously as: the shops.

Of the 800 scurrying and scuttling workers here, 265 of
them are Norfolk Southern employees at the shops. The
others work for “lessors” of the facility, companies like
Chicago-based FreightCar America and Caterpillar
Company subsidiary Progress Rail Services.

The bustle I see is a direct reflection of recent headlines
in the local news:

Railroad Operations Highest Since Pre-Recession Level

It’s certainly busy here. And though operations are at high
level and the renewed energy is noticeable, railroad folk
tend to be a pragmatic sort, even as they answer to one
of the largest trade conglomeration of stakeholders in the
country. Perhaps because they build and work with such
massive equipment and systems, they have little need to
exaggerate. So when it comes to blanket assessments
regarding the economic state of the company, Norfolk
Southern’s Chairman and CEO Wick Morman was more
modest, recently quoted in *Progressive Railroading* as

WHAT'S UP WITH INTERMODAL?

In addition to the track systems that transport trains from point A to point B all over the country, including Norfolk Southern's 20,000 miles, railroad freight operators also operate terminals (for changing out cars, equipment maintenance, and other transportation operations) and intermodals (for transferring shipments from rail to road, principally via trucks, or at ports, via air and waterways). For years now, Valley Business FRONT has been following the proposed site build of a Roanoke Region Intermodal facility in the Elliston area of Montgomery County, just across the county line at the western end of Roanoke County. As would be expected, there are proponents and opponents of the project. Proponents cite jobs, economic stimulus, and transportation improvements while opponents cite environmental impact, loss of rural amenities, and transportation disruptions.

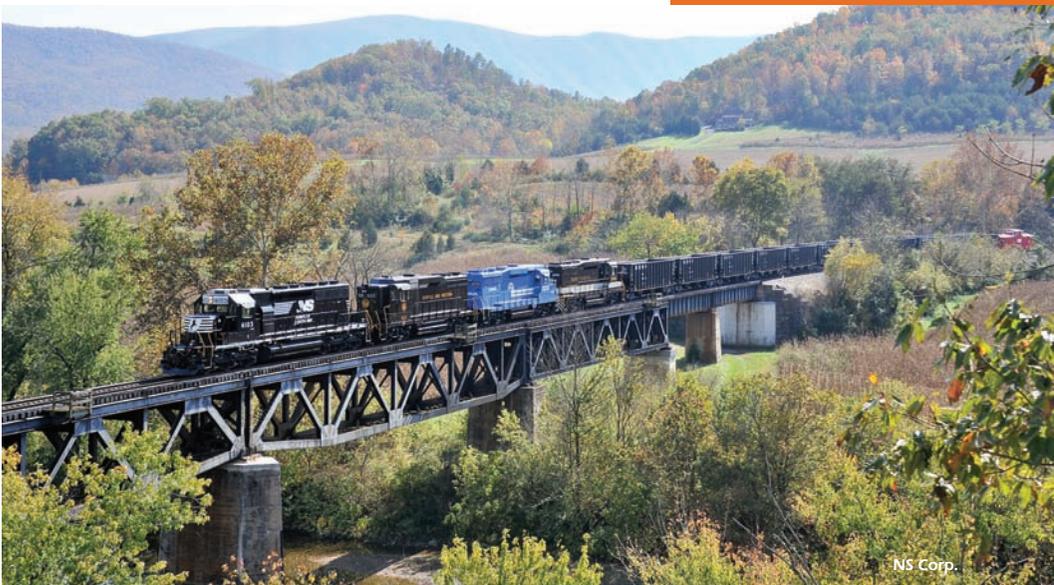
The response from the railroad, Norfolk Southern being the primary benefactor, has been surprising in several ways. First, in the timeframe of simply reviewing the possibility of such a site, NS has opened other intermodal facilities—some in very short turnarounds. There are more than 50 NS sites classified as intermodal, from Atlanta to Pittsburgh, Dallas to Jacksonville, Detroit to Savannah. Virginia's intermodal facilities include Chesapeake, Front Royal, Norfolk, and Portsmouth.

Second, Norfolk Southern's response to the Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (now called Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization; see FRONTnotes, this edition) study produced by AECOM indicates less than optimistic projections than what the report presented, particularly in regard to the financial commitments.

Is this intermodal site even needed?

That's the million dollar question. Actually, \$70 million in public capital subsidies to get started.

At this point it is still unclear if the Elliston site project is about to elevate to serious contender status from undisclosed workings behind the scenes by vested stakeholders—or if it has simply lost momentum.



NS Corp.



saying “we have seen encouraging growth in some of the products we transport, but we are still not back to pre-recession levels elsewhere.”

In any case, it’s still a promising outlook here in Roanoke. For Norfolk Southern. And here at the shops.

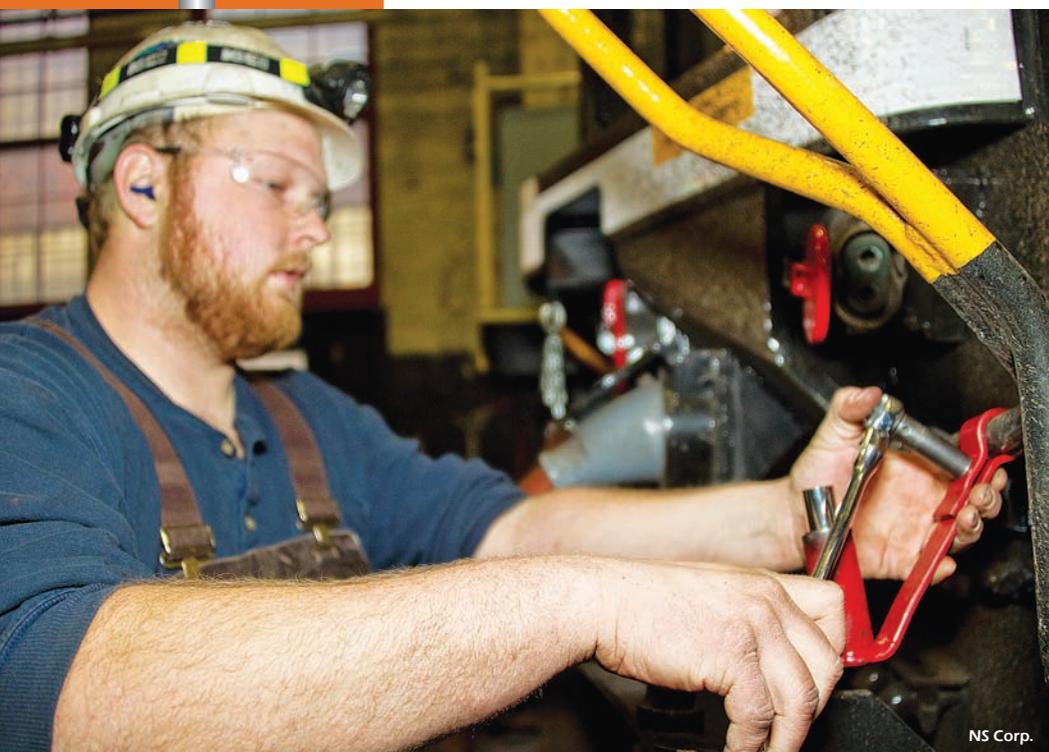
After my clumsy and not so grand entrance, I finally find the building with its plain little door. The opposite extreme from the huge gaping holes where tracks and locomotives inject their way in. A call box inside gets me my escort, we shake hands, I slip on the goggles and hardhat, and make my way into the inner sanctum.

It’s the guts alright.

Chuck Sloan is Shop Manager. That’s it. That’s his title. And his office is an enclave. Kind of like a man cave, really. A built-out section within the shop that takes you back to yet another movie set when you enter. A Spaghetti Western this time, maybe? Brown wood paneling is everywhere. Outside windows are nowhere. There’s somewhat of a “lobby,” though I kind of want to flop on the couch and pop open a beer. Railroad relics (especially bells) are everywhere. There are interesting photographs, most are rather crumpled and old. And then there are the certificates and awards and plaques. Yep. Pretty much a man cave.

Safety. Safety. Safety.

That’s the other big locomotive of an elephant in the room. Safety signs are everywhere. Why there’s even a “Safety Monument,” if you will. A raised platform with safety



NS Corp.

COVER STORY





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COVER STORY

records and performance awards for all shop workers to see. In the sea of gray and black that makes up the picture that is the East End Shops, there are splatterings of reflective red and yellow markings everywhere. "Be Safe!" screams out at you at every corner in visible form, just like the train horns do in audible form.

Chuck-the-railroad-guy-Sloan is ready to talk railroad. That is, after we find him. It takes a few minutes to track him down, and I wonder if he forgot my appointment.

"Oh, no," says my guide. "He's here. He always here."

"Let me show you," Chuck Sloan begins many a sentence as he answers my questions or describes what exactly goes on here at East End Shops. He starts by telling me this site is known as a "back shop" in railroad speak, principally overhauling locomotive engines. And he rattles off numbers and stats like the clickity-clack sound of a freight train passing by. It's all I can do to simply scribble them down on a list:

- 265 craft employees (he also calls them "artisans")
- skills: machinists, pipefitters, electricians, boilermakers, laborers
- 77 acres; 24/7 operation; 3 shifts
- currently 10 GE locomotive overhauls monthly
- ongoing maintenance, component repair (especially cooling fans), cab refurbishments



NS Corp.



- drive evolution and shop retool from steam to diesel to electric
- historical significance of Class A, Class Y, Class J models
- 1883 founding of the original “Roanoke Machine Works” (servicing the Norfolk & Western and Shenandoah Valley Railroads) and dubbed “the greatest locomotive manufacturing facility in the South”
- more than doubling employment (100 in 2007) and throughput productivity
- support of peripheral local businesses such as Vista / Graham White, Precision Steel and Steel Services

“The railroad gets in your blood,” Chuck says. He says the majority of people here in the shops are “horsepower junkies”... a collaboration of motorheads. Many of them race bikes or rebuild hotrods or cruisers and are auto enthusiasts. They can’t get enough of the quest for more horsepower and less carbon footprint.

“I’m surrounded by the best team I’ve ever had.”

Chuck says the best way to describe the locomotives they service and rebuild is that each is “a self-contained power generation station.”

If the numbers didn’t support it, the shop guy’s enthusiasm alone is convincing proof of the high output and increased productivity at the NS East End Shops in Roanoke.

He should know.
He’s always here. 

SAVE OUR TOWNS

Big Stone Gap exploits the big screen >

Executive Summary:
Persistence leads a small town to a motion-picture bonanza.

By Keith Pierce

Last year, Big Stone Gap got a taste of Hollywood when a film crew set up shop. But it likely took less time to write the book *Big Stone Gap* than it did to attract filmmakers to this small Southwest Virginia town.

"We worked on this effort for almost ten years," says Pat Murphy, town manager. "But we persisted because we knew it



In a leafy neighborhood of Big Stone Gap, the crew prepares for filming in front of the house pressed into service as the home of fictional character Ave Maria.

would be a good boost to our economy."

The film premiered at the Virginia Film festival Nov. 6 in Charlottesville with stars Ashley Judd, Jenna Elfman and others in attendance.

Randy Rose of the Virginia Tourism Corporation touts the Virginia Film Office as "the starting point" for towns attracting moviemakers. Lay the groundwork ahead of time, he advises, "so when there is an opportunity, they're ready to go."

Business owners were ecstatic during the shoot's duration. Murphy and others will be pushing to ensure that those film-generated profits remain more than a fly-by-night boost. 



Carmine's, the old diner, was resurrected to become a movie set; Town Manager Pat Murphy is at right

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Age appropriate >

Okay – it’s not about impressing other people, although that’s nice if it happens. And it’s not about competing with younger workers for attention. Which is nearly impossible and not advisable.

No, it’s about feeling good when you put on your clothes in the morning. Having them slip on without a struggle. It’s about shopping for clothes you desperately need and feeling not-too-bad when you gaze at yourself in the full-length mirror. It’s about *not* having a muffin-top when all around you people decades younger have them spilling over the waistband of their jeans.

It’s about having your kids say that they’re proud of the way you look. It’s about being attractive to someone special who’s seen all your physical faults and still says you look good.

Gone are the days when you needed nothing more than a quick shower and a little mascara (if you’re female) to look fabulous. Now your skin needs a generous slathering of cream – but which one? If you’re like me, you want the answer to be quick, simple and not too expensive—and somewhat natural, please.

Furthermore, clothing styles are very youth-conscious, skimming the body more than ever. To look relevant in the workplace, we have to look fit, fresh and current.

Becoming physically fit and dressing to show it—from here it looks like such a long road. How do we get there?

- Diet – Eliminate bad foods, add good foods, eat less, and notice what foods increase energy.
- Exercise – Essential to keep muscles toned, metabolism up and maintain youthful posture.
- Grooming –
 1. Hair – Rethink the color and update the cut.
 2. Nails – Keep them trimmed and healthy.
 3. Skin – Occasionally revisit the products you use to ensure your skin looks it’s best.
 4. Teeth – Keep teeth healthy and moderately whitened to look younger.
 5. Beard – Keep it well trimmed. Scraggly is only sexy on the young.
- Wardrobe –
 1. Dress as young as your body type allows, while *still looking appropriate*.
 2. While dressing appropriately, don’t dress too matronly or old-fashioned. It kills the young-and-fit vibe. Men might try a slim-cut suit and surrender their outdated pleated trousers. Women can try narrow-legged slacks – but avoid leggings in the office. Balance is key – be comfortable, but *look sharp*. Use flattering clothing to accentuate your new, youthful appearance. 

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

You can look good, despite your age; it just takes some extra attention.

Send comments or questions to Kathy@peacockimage.com

Picking up the tab >

It's no secret that taking an associate or client for a meal is a successful way to increase your business. As my mentor and founder of The Protocol School of Washington® observed "More business deals are done at the dining table than at the boardroom table. They may not sign on the dotted line, but you can be sure the decisions are made there."

So who pays the bill? Who picks up that check? There's nothing complicated about this: if you do the inviting, you do the paying. I heard from a colleague recently who was baffled by the following scenario. He was invited by businessmen to lunch, the purpose of which was solicitation. In other words, those doing the inviting were requesting help in promoting their business. After the meal the waitress asked "separate checks or together?" After an awkward pause, my colleague said "I'll get mine."

In business, it is a given that if you invite someone to lunch or dinner to discuss business you should always expect to pay. Failing to do that can, and usually will, ruin a business transaction.

When a businesswoman hosts a male client, it can become problematical if the man is uncomfortable with a woman picking up the check. Often I make it clear to the staff at the beginning of the meal that the check will come to me. Or I prearrange payment. I arrive early, give my credit card to the appropriate person, tell them the gratuity I wish to add, and receive the processed bill when I leave. Caution: that tactic is not as easy as it used to be because of portable payment methods at the table, not to mention the rise of credit card fraud.

When all is said and done, though, the best way to handle the bill for a business meal is to use the words "...be my guest" *ahead of time*, as in, "Let's meet for dinner to discuss this topic, and of course you will be my guest."

There are always exceptions to most rules. Some companies and governmental agencies have strict policies against gifts, including meals. In that case, just ask the server to divide the costs. Sometimes people who meet regularly for a meal agree to go 50/50. That usually works well. The important thing in all of this is to make the arrangements, and your intentions, very clear ahead of time. All of this is black and white. There are no gray areas unless we create them! 



There's nothing complicated about this; if you do the inviting, you do the paying



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:

When it comes to paying the bill at a meal where business happens, there should be no confusion—especially when clarified up front.



Small Business

By Samantha Steidle

Executive Summary:
Entrepreneurs are by nature, independent leaders; so delegating activities to others can be a challenge—even when it's a necessity to succeed.

Entrepreneurs: Don't hesitate, delegate! >

If you're a business owner, you probably think that nobody can do it like you can do it. You may be right about that. No doubt you have some special skills. Otherwise you wouldn't have the confidence to go into business on your own.

But not all skills are equally important. Some skills can be replicated by others, whether people or software programs.

If you aren't delegating some of your tasks, your business will never grow beyond your own physical and mental boundaries. That's a guarantee. It's time to at least think about what you might be able to hand off to someone else. And, by the way, this doesn't necessarily mean hiring a new employee. Your spouse could do some of this work or a free productivity program you get on the internet could do it.

Ready to think about it?

What to delegate

When preparing to delegate, first take an inventory of all your strengths. What are you best at doing? These are the things you want to retain as the business owner, because they serve your strategic purpose.

Next: Figure out the other things you do that are less part of your strategic skill set. How many hours a week do you spend on them? These tasks might include checking and answering routine emails, paying bills, handling customer service inquiries, and many other types of critical but "delegate-able" tasks.

In my business, Virtual Marketing, I always say it's worth "more than gold" to pay for a telephone answering service to take customer phone calls 24/7. I pay \$200 a month to make sure that a "robot" does not greet my customers or potential customers. Of course, I answer calls in house as much as possible, but you can't be everywhere.

Why my assistant is the best!

Two years ago, I decided I needed help with my business. I learned to overcome that common entrepreneurial fear of delegation. But I had no idea that I would find someone so amazing that it would clearly be worth hiring her full-time.

Taylor Ricotta joined me as Director of Communications of Virtual Marketing in May 2013. I have been able to focus on sales and strategy while Taylor takes care of following up with phone calls and managing the business on the back

end. Those are things I could also do, but there's always not enough time to do both as effectively as I'd like. So, we're a great team. Together we accomplish much more than we would apart.

Taylor is personable, articulate, intelligent, and she "gets" entrepreneurship. She's polished and solution-oriented. She seems to know when I need help, and she takes initiative before I even ask.

Wow! I'd like her to know that, because of her great attitude and work ethic, she will get everything she wants in life, and I will do all I can to help make that happen.

Entrepreneurs reading this, understand that "delegation" can be as simple as using a productivity application to send you keep you on track or send your bills out. Or, it can lead to creating a new job for someone, if the circumstances are right and if doing so provides a positive return on investment to you.

But you have to give it a try to see where it leads. It might take your business toward unexpected growth. 



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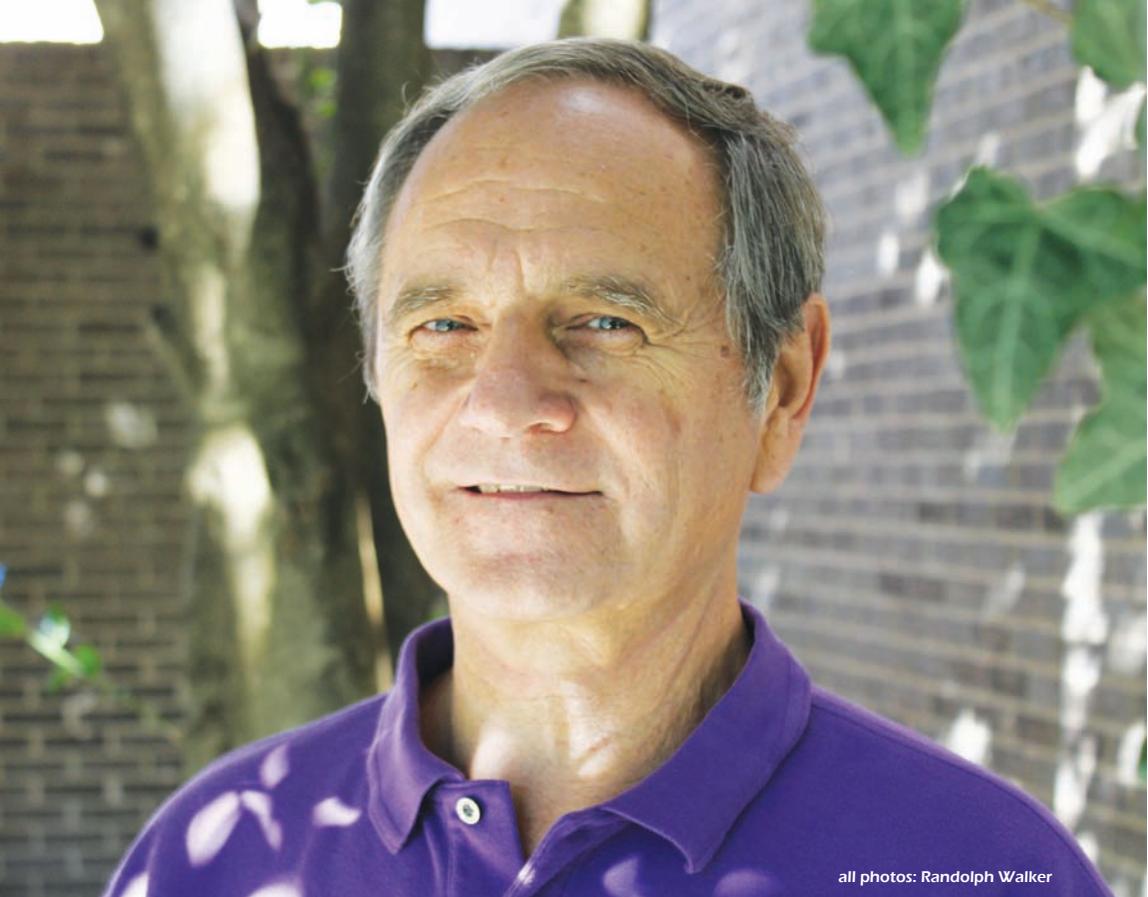


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all photos: Randolph Walker

Roanoke County attorney Paul Mahoney: “So much of the ordinance is based on being a good neighbor”

Shut Up! >

Executive Summary:

Businesses should follow their locality's noise ordinance in order to avoid angering the neighbors.

By Randolph Walker

Noise can be irritating. People do not like it, especially if it's 3 a.m. and they are trying to sleep.

The president of one Roanoke County industry, with a history of noise complaints—as well as efforts to address them—declined to be publicly identified for this story. “It was a sore subject for many years and I'd really rather not reopen a can of worms by making comments in a public venue,” he said.

And yet, we live in an industrial society and noise is almost unavoidable. In an effort to balance the needs of industry with reasonable expectations for peace

and quiet, localities pass noise ordinances.

“It is hereby declared to be the public policy of the County of Roanoke to promote an environment for its citizens free from excessive noise that jeopardizes their health or welfare or degrades the quality of life within Roanoke County,” according to the County Code.

The entire ordinance can (and should) be read at roanokecounty.gov. Click on Government, then on County Code and Ordinances, and then search for Noise. It is about two pages of online text.

In general, quiet hours are supposed to rule between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., unless a business is in a zone exempting it from the ordinance, or has a waiver from the Board of Supervisors.

In October, the Board of Supervisors granted a waiver allowing Turner Long Construction to place concrete slabs starting at 5 a.m. at Friendship Health and Rehab Center South. The slabs are about 13,500 square feet, says Jim Garst, Turner Long's manager for the project.

The process has to be done in one day and requires as much as 12 to 14 hours, with as much sunlight as possible to help dry the concrete.

Construction projects are limited in duration, but other noise sources are ongoing.

Noise is especially problematic in the county, says county attorney Paul Mahoney, due to the county's cheek-by-jowl mix of residential and commercial/industrial areas. "The 18-wheeler backs up and they're unloading back in the loading dock. The front of the building is maybe facing [highway] 419 or 460, and back right over the fence is the residential subdivision. A lot of times their shipments are coming in at midnight or 2 in the morning. Typically that's where most, not all noise complaints arise."

Another example is the 24/7 industrial operation that abuts a neighborhood.

"Citizens may be unhappy about that, but at the same time the exception [in the ordinance] is intended to address that kind of business activity."

Perhaps surprisingly, complaints against businesses are relatively rare, occurring perhaps once a month or less.

So, how loud is too loud?

"In the past, many localities had amorphous ordinances, which prohibited unreasonably loud noise," says William Shewmake, an attorney with LeClairRyan in Richmond. "The Supreme Court of Virginia held that such vague standards are unconstitutional because a reasonable person needs to be able to discern if he is complying with the law."

Communities with noise ordinances rely either on human judgment or a decibel

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Turner Long was granted a waiver to begin construction at 5 a.m. on a limited number of dates at the Friendship South site.

meter, according to Robert Chanaud, an acoustics expert based in Arizona.

“Meters provide clear evidence of a violation if the ordinance has level limits,” Chanaud says. However, “in many situations, a meter is not needed, particularly with identifiable sounds such as voice or music.”

Roanoke County typically does not use a meter, Mahoney says. Rather, county

staffers or police judge whether a noise is “plainly audible” at a specified distance or under conditions specified in the code. Aggrieved residents can also swear out complaints in front of a magistrate. Cases are heard in General District Court.

Many conflicts can be avoided by putting yourself into the shoes of adjacent residents. Says Mahoney: “So much of the ordinance is based on being a good neighbor.” 





Sarah Cox

The hard work of hospice >

Executive Summary:

As the need for hospice care has expanded, the regulatory environment has tightened; Good Samaritan is one example of navigating the challenges.

By Sarah Cox

Hospices officially got their start when Congress created a Medicare hospice benefit in the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982. The number of patients served by hospices in the United States has grown exponentially – in 2008, 1,250,973 were seen; in 2013, 1,535,919

were hospice patients – a 23 percent growth in five years. In contrast to the early years, today the top four non-cancer primary diagnoses for patients admitted to hospice in 2012 are 63.1 percent, and are unspecified (14.2%), dementia (12.8%), heart disease (11.2%), and lung disease (8.2%). The Medicare hospice benefit is the predominant source of payment for hospice care, as the percentage of hospice patients covered by the Medicare hospice benefit versus other payment sources was 83.7% in 2012.

All was well and good. Then in 2010, along came the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which mandated that its Hospice Quality Reporting Program require hospices to begin collecting consistent quality data and reporting on it in 2014. The determination of prognosis has tightened up, and subsequent paperwork has expanded. If a patient enters his third

Medicare benefit period, “we must have a face-to-face visit with the patient by one of the hospice physicians or a nurse practitioner to determine if the patient still meets eligibility requirements,” explained Sue Ranson, MSN, RN and president/CEO of the non-profit Good Samaritan Hospice in Roanoke. If Good Samaritan doesn’t file the correct paperwork, it will be denied payment. In the past, says Ranson, Medicare “took our word for it, but now they require documentation.” Ranson says that hospices have grown in importance – they are a means for a patient to be seen on a regular basis, someone to call at 3 a.m. “Our intention is to make sure our services continue and that we have skills to make that happen.”

Good Samaritan is one of two non-profit hospices in this area, and Ranson is quick to point out that this does not necessarily mean that they are better. A recent Washington Post series (2014) pointed out that “more

than one in three patients are dropping the service before dying, new research shows, a sign of trouble in an industry supposed to care for patients until death.” This, emphasizes Ranson, is not necessarily due to luring patients in and then dismissing them when Medicare runs out, as the article indicated. “There are good hospices and bad hospices,” said Ranson. She quoted J. Donald Schumacher, president and CEO of National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) as saying, “If you’ve seen one hospice, you’ve seen one hospice.” The Washington Post articles, says Ranson, “were not fair to the vast majority of hospices. There are bad apples everywhere, and there will be horror stories.”

The profile of hospice patients has changed drastically since 1992, when Good Samaritan was established. At that point, 75 percent of the patients had terminally-ill cancer; now, that percentage has changed to 35 percent.



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But the Good Samaritan patients are sicker and die quicker, says Ranson, who mentions that “one third dies in seven days.” Some of this is due to their reluctance to sign up for hospice – Ranson says the blame can be assigned to lack of knowledge, a denial of death, and the way the message is delivered by the physician. “We try to educate healthcare workers and clergy to bring it up in a positive way, but until we see hospice as a continuum of care, this will be hard to do.”

Despite being non-profit, Good Samaritan must make ends meet. In order to receive Medicare payment, correct paperwork and adherence to restrictions must be done, plus it relies on a good 1 percent above that through donations. Staffing has grown at Good Samaritan, and a good thing it has – Ranson pointed out that 80 percent of us will die of a long-term chronic illness. “And who better to take care of those people than these people here?” Currently, Good

Samaritan has two offices, one in Roanoke and one in Christiansburg. While there is the same patient-to-nurse ratio, there now are between 20 and 24 social workers, 13 fulltime nurses plus two on-call nurses, 150 volunteers, two fulltime and one part-time chaplain, one dietician, one fulltime physician, and two associate medical directors serving about 130 patients. The electronic patient record system, while efficient as far as tracking patients is concerned, takes more time for nurses to fill in and can be complicated. That, added to the increased requirements from Medicare, has put a considerable demand on worker load. “Our operating expenses grow every year,” said Ranson. She said the board of directors provides oversight – “they are the protectors of the integrity of what we do. And yes, there are hospices that need to go out of business. But I want Good Samaritan here if I, or someone I love, ever need them.” 



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Steeplechase >

Executive Summary:

Everybody was watching the steeple replacement job at Roanoke's most visible religious icon in its skyline.

By Anne Sampson

When the 112 year old wooden steeples came down from St. Andrew's Catholic Church in downtown Roanoke last June, they were a little worse for wear.

The new steeples which crown the church on North Jefferson Street are supported by structural steel frames manufactured by Blue Ridge Fabricators, located at 3 8th Street SW. Each steel armature rises 44







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feet, 6 5/16 inches from a 10 foot, 10 inch base, soaring up to 56 feet with the addition of a German-made Gothic cross.

Every angle had to be individually calculated, cut and welded. "It was a real challenge," said Bill Welling, a lead welder at Blue Ridge. "It feels pretty good to part of something so historic."

After new calculations were made to accommodate a change in the height of

the steeples, templates were created to help speed production. The actual fabrication took about 2 weeks.

Barry Hartman, who founded Blue Ridge Fabricators in 1997, watched as the steeples were lifted into place on a clear, sunny morning last July.

"The guys are very proud of this project," he said. "Their signatures are going up there with those steeples. They signed their work." 



Rod Rowan and Robert Lichtenstein enter their fifth year in business, along with 24 real estate agents.

How to Build a Successful Business

By Dan Dowdy

Two friends go to lunch. A couple of hours later, they emerge from the restaurant, appetites satiated, and a plan for a new business sketched out on a napkin.

As cliché as it sounds, that's exactly how Lichtenstein Rowan Realtors was created. Robert Lichtenstein and Rod Rowan worked together for 15 years at Long & Foster Real Estate (previously Boone & Company). Discussions about striking out on their own transpired over several years, during which the "napkin plan" eventually was hatched. They bought the building where their business is located as an investment and in anticipation of going on their own.

In December 2010, the time seemed right. In spite of being in the throes of a major recession, they started Lichtenstein Rowan Realtors with a collective 45 years of experience in

real estate between them. They comprised the total sales force at the time.

The company, entering its fifth year of operation in January 2015, has flourished and grown to a complement of 24 realtors. That a start-up business grew consistently during one of the worst economic recessions the country has experienced since the Great Depression is testimony to the business acumen of two savvy entrepreneurs and the strength of a business model that differentiated this company from the standard industry norm.

What distinguishes the way Rowan and Lichtenstein run their business? According to them, they kept the best of what they had experienced, improved on some things, and changed or abandoned prevailing industry practices they were not enamored with.

- From the get-go, Lichtenstein Rowan Realtors offered low brokerage costs to experienced agents. They speculate that their agents' fees are at least 60% lower than those at other firms. With options of a flat annual fee of \$10K for a private office and \$8K for a cubicle, agents take home more commissions. They are brokerage free much earlier in the year than is typical in this profession. The company also offers the customary no minimum brokerage, pay-as-you-go policy. Agents don't pay individual fees for transactions, technology, typing, administrative support, or YouTube advertising for homes on the market—a common industry practice. According to Rod Rowan, "Over the last four years, 85%

Stephanie Varney: "It's like a family here."



of our agents' earnings increased after their second year at the firm, and 50% doubled their earnings in this time frame." Impressive, considering the economic downturn and soft housing market during this time.

- Lichtenstein and Rowan have been and continue to be selective in hiring. Initially, they were overwhelmed with interest in their new business and soon ran out of space, the primary reason for accepting on average one out of five applicants. They've expanded and now have room to grow. They look for experienced and highly ethical agents. In Robert Lichtenstein's words, "Everyone here is hand-picked. We care about customers and agents."
- One-on-one training is provided to all agents as needed. A broker is always available to offer advice. Mentoring less-experienced agents with seasoned veterans is strongly encouraged. Continuing education for agents is free. These practices underscore the owners' overarching goal of helping all of their agents become more successful.
- A palpable spirit of collegiality permeates this business. Stephanie Varney, the first hire in January 2011, describes the environment as "like a family". When asked what attributes she most admires about the owners, she said, "their level of trust, being able to count on their leadership, and they are fun to work with." Coy Asbury and Erin Reed have been with the company for two years. Both echo Varney's characterization of the family-like atmosphere. Of the two owners, Asbury says there are "no two better men on earth; they are extraordinarily supportive". Reed says, "nothing is too small when it comes to asking anyone for help and advice". In her words, "brokerage is less, and hands-on management and support are more" at this company than where she used to work.

One of the results of this business model is an enviable retention rate. During the four years of operations, only five agents have left—four of whom retired.

How has the community at large regarded this company? For the past three years, Lichtenstein Rowan Realtors received first place as best real estate company in Southwest Roanoke County—awarded by SWOCO (Southwest

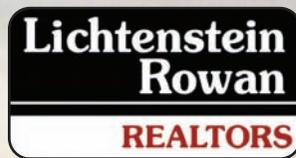
Success!

Elements of Success for Lichtenstein Rowan Realtors:

- Low brokerage costs resulting in more commissions for agents
- Leadership that nurtures and supports agents' success
- Hiring selectivity: focus on experienced and ethical agents
- Progressive training and development opportunities
- Excellent agent retention rate
- A working atmosphere of trust, support, and collegiality
- An award-winning business

County's weekly newspaper insert). And last year, *The Roanoker Magazine* presented the firm the best real estate company silver award.

Any four-year-old business that can boast this kind of growth and financial success after starting up during a deep economic recession has the makings of a solid enterprise. It certainly helps to have two leaders at the helm who complement each other in the expertise they bring to the firm; who genuinely like and admire each other; and who know how to hire and retain good agents and provide an atmosphere of trust, support, camaraderie, and fun in the workplace.



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Goodwill's interview attire



all photos: Anne Sampson

Arthur McDonald and Angela Cardwell discuss current cases

Trust regained >

Executive Summary:

Goodwill's Prisoner Re-Entry Program helps ex-offenders step back into the employment stream.

By Anne Sampson

As Arthur McDonald's prison release date approached, he felt some apprehension.

"You're afraid of everything," he says. "You're afraid of what's changed with your family, you're afraid of your reception in the community. You're going from being able to decide whether or not to go to breakfast to wondering if you will get breakfast."

A man or woman who has been incarcerated typically leaves prison with few resources. Clothes, transportation, food and housing are all iffy prospects. A job is out of the

question. The most accessible support may come from the culture which put them on the path to prison in the first place.

Goodwill Industries of the Valleys' Prisoner Re-Entry program makes it possible for ex-offenders to transition back to the community by "providing effective, comprehensive employment services." The program provides assistance with job readiness, resume development, interview coaching, job searches and access to community resources.

Through a pilot program called One Stop Behind the Wall, McDonald got support and training through the Goodwill program before ever leaving prison. Two hours after his release, he was at a job interview, appropriately clothed and prepared. That's hours, not weeks. Now he is a Case Manager in Community Work Adjustment Training for Goodwill.

Angela Cardwell administers the Prisoner Re-Entry program. She is a graduate



Angela Cardwell

of that same program, and she is a fierce advocate for its participants. She describes mentoring a man who had "never been out of prison for more than

6 months – a career criminal. He had grown up in the 'family business.'" After 18 months in the re-entry program, he slipped, and lost his job as a result.

"People mess up sometimes," says Cardwell.

She called him every day for a month until he came back into the program.

"This is not failure," she says. "This is a success story. This man stayed productive for 18 months for the first time in his life."

Cardwell finds that networking and word-of-mouth are the most effective means of reaching ex-offenders. Correctional centers like Bland, Fluvanna and Goochland host resource fairs where she can connect with

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people on track for release. She gets a lot of walk-ins at the office on Melrose Avenue. Or she might get a call from a case manager.

"We get the release date, and their clothing and shoe sizes, so we can get them started," she says. "It's important to engage them within the first 7 to 14 days of release. If it goes longer, you get an 80% increase in re-offense."

Cardwell and McDonald both emphasize the importance of trust, from the community at large and from within. McDonald once got a standing ovation from inmates when he showed them the keys to the Goodwill store he managed.

"It's about learning to trust yourself and self-forgiveness," says Cardwell. "I don't



Arthur McDonald

protect them from the natural consequences of their behavior. I just love them where they are until they can love themselves." 

Each year, professional advisors like Lee Osborne with Woods Rogers PLC, talk with their clients about their charitable interests and how they might make a real difference in the community.

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The Stories We Tell >

It's no secret the soul of the FRONT magazine is our collection of business stories. In the trade, the articles are called profiles—but essentially it's our way of pulling up a chair on the front porch with our readers, to sit for a spell and have a chat.

We don't just report. And we don't just repeat what can be found on the company website.

It's a story after all, a conversation, expressed in the writer's voice. Not a standardized formula (other than completing the assignment objectives).

I was reminded of our mission and the value of this approach on a routine meeting with a local business owner. A "front porch session" if you will, though we met in his office.

Did we have an agenda? Sure, if you say we had a specific reason for meeting. But any fly on the wall listening in would have had a difficult time determining that. Our "task" was wrapped up at the end, in less than five minutes. No, what we really did that afternoon was have our spell on the front porch.

Had it not been a blustery day, as Winnie the Pooh was fond of saying, it wouldn't have been out of place to see us as two ol' guys out on the porch, in rocking chairs, with thumbs behind suspenders, trying not to spill lemonade on our seersucker pants.

Okay, I'm getting carried away. But that's the picture I'm going with.

Our conversation covered a lot of things. In this day of abbreviating content and wrapping it up as compact a little package as you can (to facilitate consumption, we're told), our topics weren't all that different than what you see in these new, trendy infographics spilling over Facebook and PowerPoint presentations and now trickling their way into business reports. I love infographics, but our talk that day exploded the slide and sent all the quick facts into snippets and side stories and illustrations and anecdotes.

Among the stories, Bart and I talked about (and for the sake of this column, I'll call him Bart, as in Bart Wilner of Entre Computer Center in Roanoke), I noticed a copy of Beth Macy's *Factory Man* on his desk, so we chatted about the Vaughan-Bassett furniture story. Fifteen minutes later we were talking about another most interesting story, the Frantz family and Salem's Graham-White Manufacturing's one-hundredth

continued on Page 44

On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
Conversation is not a lost art if we will just set the blasted agenda aside for a few minutes and let it happen.

Young, Professional, and a “Young Professional” >

There are certain words and terms in our vernacular that have been used, overused, repurposed, abbreviated and misappropriated for long enough that they have become almost meaningless.

Take, for instance, the word ‘entrepreneur.’ Each person reading this article will have a different definition of this word. It might bring to mind a certain person, an action, a unique lifestyle. “Entrepreneur” might be an inspiring word, or it might be a word that evokes a sigh and a shake of the head.

In my work environment, that word gets used daily. We talk about entrepreneurs in reference to the night-owls who are designing apps and software, their fingers swollen from coding, their eyes manic and red from a combination of computer screen glow and extra-large Red Bulls.

There’s also the negative connotation: those who snub their noses at the corporate world because they are unable to function in a work environment. Maybe you know him: the coworker three cubicles down who is always threatening to quit because “I’ve got this amazing idea, plus I’m just not cut out for the 9-5.” His LinkedIn bio is “aspiring entrepreneur stuck working for the man.”

Whatever your definition, it is most certainly based on your experience with those who are called, or who call themselves, entrepreneurs. Shift one generalization over and we are confronted with another named demographic: the young professional. Two such general terms, lumped together to describe a person or group of people who may have nothing in common except their birth decade.

As of right now, I am younger than most of my colleagues and have a job. Therefore, I am a young professional. To me, this classification sounds a lot like “student driver,” only I don’t have a yellow sign attached to me warning other professionals to handle me with care and to not be alarmed if I step on the brakes or swerve slightly to the right.

The workplace challenges I’ve encountered due to my age are relatively few in number, but all spawn from the same arena: technology. I matured alongside social networks and cell phones. For better or for worse, they are a part of me and I, through my use of them, have influenced their growth in a miniscule way.

The technology issue is one that has the potential to make or break a young professional, depending on how he or she deals with the pressures and needs of the workplace. In my limited experience, I have witnessed emotions ranging from extreme resistance to infuriating apathy. The young

continued on Page 44



Ariel Lev

Guest Commentary

By Ariel Lev

Executive Summary:

Leveraging your generation's advantages may have more to do with collaboration than setting yourself apart.

Field / On Tap

from Page 42

anniversary this year. My favorite part of the story of this company (that makes compressed air drying components for railroad locomotives) is the part way back at the beginning: where the business was built by a shop guy who had an idea involving a better way to get sand on the rail for improved traction (the inventor; see our cover story this edition); a guy who knew how to get his hands on the money (the financier), and a guy who knew how to put it all together (the businessman). Bart had the who's who and the here's how. His interest in the details and the life that shaped all around the story is exactly why I do what I do.

Tell stories.

Even when I'm not wearing seersucker. 

“”
Our intention
is to make sure
our services
continue

— Page 28

“”
It's time to at least think about what
you might be able to hand off to
someone else — Page 22

Guest Commentary

from Page 43

professional has a choice when confronted with these emotions: ignore or engage.

Because of a lack of experience, young professionals are often the students, not the teachers. The opportunity lies in providing the space and time to switch that role; to learn from the younger workers' lifetime spent absorbing social norms and skills related to technology.

This advice is not directed solely at those outside of the named demographic. For this temporary role-reversal to be considered in the workplace, the young professional must present him or herself as knowledgeable, competent and patient. The information cannot be presented casually, quickly or in a disorganized manner. There should always be follow-up and the offer of one-on-one assistance.

Offering this service might not change everything, but then again it might. For example, adoption of new methods can positively impact efficiency and communication in the workplace. The young person who considers technology an important, teachable tool for success rather than a secret weapon for personal gain is one who can be trusted in the long term with other important concepts or projects.

Bridging that divide can decrease the distance between the young and seasoned professionals and strengthen a working environment regardless of age. 

Letters

Refugee support

I am grateful for the opportunity to share about the contributions refugees make to the local economy [FRONT November 2014]. Thank you for all you do to support local businesses and nonprofits, particularly for being mindful of our communities who are often overlooked or misunderstood.

Alison Hammond
CCC / Roanoke

Not fading

I was cleaning up my desk an hour ago and I came across the September issue of FRONT that I had not seen before. I think this issue just slipped through unnoticed, until today. I stopped what I was doing and read it. Loved the cover story with Scott [Scott Sink, Hethwood Market] and all the rest. I enjoyed the issue as always and wanted you to know, even if I am a few months late getting to it. I value all that you do with the FRONT — the magazine sure looks sharp.

Mary Guy Miller, Ph.D.
Blacksburg

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

“ ”

Students who come out [of school] with a solid STEM background are often more marketable... — Page 52

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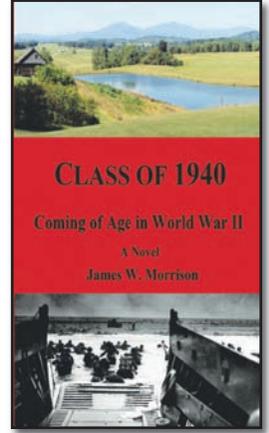
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Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our contributors and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit short 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 news@vbFRONT.com



War time on home front

Choosing books based on setting isn't a sound strategy; I've suffered many a poor novel in hopes of glimpsing a familiar locale. Happily, that's not the case with local author Jim Morrison's first novel, *Class of 1940: Coming of Age in World War II* (Createspace; 2014). Set in part in rural Virginia, *Class of 1940* traces the coming of age stories of young graduates and focuses on the impact of World War II.

Presented in dual narrative from present to past, the novel centers on Jeb Fletcher, a veteran who relays his story to his grandson. Currently, when war has little impact on public life, the contrast with WWII cannot be overstated.

Everyone was affected on the home front; from rationing and bond drives to the heartbreaking loss of loved ones. But no lives were shaped more than those of the young service men and women far from home. The unexpected love story between Jeb and his future wife Ginny, an Army field nurse, couples with historical detail to engage the reader. Morrison is no stranger to historical research. His 2004 history, *Bedford Goes to War*, describes the impact of WWII on the Bedford community. *Class of 1940* presents historical fiction done well and a love story well told.

—Josephine Clarke

A life that mattered

Liberty University English professor Karen Swallow Prior's newest effort, *Fierce Convictions: The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More—Poet,*

Reformer, Abolitionist (Thomas Nelson), is yet another impressive work by the young writer.

This is a biography of an enormously influential 18th Century British woman who used her pen as her sword in tackling major issues of the day from a religious stance. It follows the lyrical memoir, *Booked: Literature in the Soul of Me.*

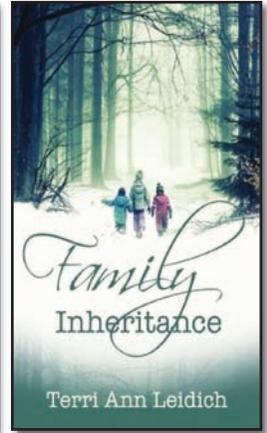
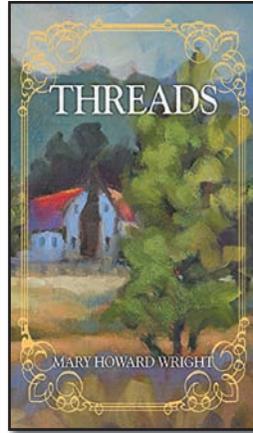
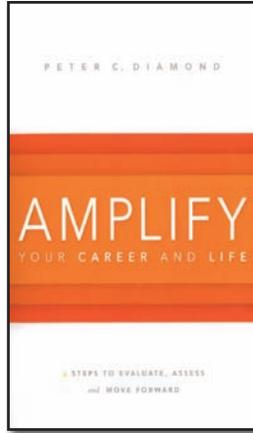
More was an evangelical author whose prime influence came during the American and French Revolutions and she made a large dent in the British efforts to ban the slave trade. Prior says she "stumbled upon" More's bio during efforts to pin down a doctoral dissertation and that work eventually became this book.

It is a fine piece of religious history and an impressive biography of a forgotten woman who should not be that.

—Dan Smith

Get to chapter 9

I'm ambivalent when it comes to self-help books. I think I'd rather just meet the authors and have a chat on the front porch with them than to read the narratives they write, since I believe all of them contain the kind of advice that can be condensed to a single PowerPoint slide, or better yet... a few bullets scribbled on a cocktail napkin. That said, I can't help but take note when someone addresses the self improvement question when it comes to either my profession or my personal state in life. *Amplify Your Career and Life* (River Grove; 2014) by Peter Diamond does both. Our author's



background is (was) in advertising—and his advice in this little handbook is for the middle aged (crisis sufferer or just slugging).

Thanks to the conclusion, I'm able to recommend *Amplify*. The book contains some pearls and nuggets, but up until the end, the "counseling" is a bit generalized, obvious, and share-a-smile-with-everyone-you-meet-ish. Perfectly fine advice, and hardly offensive like preachy Joel Olsten or workout bubblecake Richard Simmons (Diamond does provide tips)—but nothing you haven't heard before. The fictionalized examples were unnecessary, because the descriptions were contrived to fit the scenario; hardly realistic or personal (though the claim is that they were based on real people).

The real value of this book is Chapter 9: Thirteen Thriving Tips. This really is the good stuff. Now we get the amplification. The Diamond shines here, no preamble required.

—Tom Field

Family fabric

THREADS (XLIBRIS; 2014) by local Montgomery County author, Mary Howard Wright, is an easy read about the first part of a continuing saga of a German farming family who comes to Blacksburg after the end of World War I looking for a new start in America. It is a fresh look at the area economy and life of that time. This is a faith based book but done as a part of the life of the characters and flows naturally. Plot twists in later chapters would be the basis for good family discussions of current topics with teen

readers. Ms. Wright shows us that some issue are still challenging today after generations have grappled with them. THREADS is the first book in the TAPESTRY SERIES that will span a hundred years in the lives of this family.

—Jane Dalier

Revelation

Terri Ann Leidich of Christiansburg makes her living as owner of BQB Publishing getting other people into print. *Family Inheritance* (BQB Publishing) gives a strong indication that she knows what she's doing. This is her first novel, following two books of non-fiction.

Like her non-fiction books, this one centers on death and grief when sisters are reunited at the death bed of their mother.

It is a reunion that stirs bad memories and stark revelations about each of the sisters and their mother, forcing the facing of truths.

It is a strong read.

—Dan Smith

(The reviewers: Joesephine Clarke is the branch manager of Westlake Branch Library in Franklin County; Dan Smith is a freelance writer; Tom Field is a creative director and FRONT publisher; Jane Dalier is a former account executive for FRONT who now lives in Laurel, Mississippi, tending to her garden, dogs, and husband (not necessarily in that order).



Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce

Breakfast of chamberions >

HopeTree Family Services of Salem hosted the Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce Wake Up To Business breakfast on Oct. 17; along with announcing HopeTree's pending 125th anniversary in 2015.



CHIP of Roanoke

Chipping in >

Carilion Clinic donated the building at 1201 Third Street in Roanoke to Child Health Investment Partnership (CHIP) which had been leasing it for the last 12 years; the announcement was held Oct. 20.



Stocking up >

The Stocked Market, a holiday shopping show and fundraiser for **Junior League of Roanoke Valley** was held at the Berglund Center on Nov. 14, a preview shown before the swarm of crowds arrived.



You say tomato >

Red Sun Farms held its "Red Sun Virginia" ribbon cutting on Nov. 17 for the first phase opening of its 18 acre conventionally and organically grown tomato production site in Dublin.

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

CONTRIBUTORS

Sarah Cox writes articles for local, regional, and national platforms. She has an MA in writing from Hollins and a BA in English from UVA. She is currently the Coordinator of the Learning and Writing Center at Jefferson College of Health Sciences. [sccox1@jchs.edu]

Dan Dowdy is the business development director for Valley Business FRONT and owner of The Proofing Prof proofreading services (www.proofingprof.com). His background includes service in the U.S. Air Force and an extensive career in education, including teaching college-level writing competency and business courses, and working for a Fortune 100 company. [ddowdy@vbFRONT.com]

Tom Field is a creative director, marketing executive and owner of Berryfield, Inc. in Salem, and owner of Valley Business FRONT magazine. He has written and produced programs and materials for local and international organizations for more than 30 years. [tfield@berryfield.com]

Kathleen Harvey Harshberger is a graduate of Radford

University and the Protocol School of Washington. She conducts seminars in business etiquette, international business protocol, and dining skills. She has an international clientele in business, government, and higher education. She is a certified Protocol Officer. [harshbergr@aol.com]

Ariel Lev is the director of Grandin CoLab. She has a B.S. in communications and broadcasting from Appalachian State University, a M.A. in communications, culture and technology from Georgetown University, lives in Roanoke with her husband, and enjoys her work with CityWorks (X)po and other business development activities. [akleath@gmail.com]

Gene Marrano, a former sales and marketing executive in various manufacturing fields, is one of the most prolific journalists in the Roanoke Valley. He writes for several publications, and is a news reporter for WFIR news talk radio in Roanoke. [gmarrano@cox.net]

Anne Piedmont is the president of Piedmont Research Associates, a marketing

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

Keith Pierce is a communications coordinator for the Outreach and International Affairs division at Virginia Tech and a freelance writer, public relations and communications consultant with more than 20 years of experience. He is also owner of Pierce Entertainment, a "singing DJ" company. (Pierce Entertainment.com). [keithpierce793@hotmail.com]

Anne Sampson is a photographer and writer who has been active in local arts and events for 15 years. Her work highlights the sights of people of the Roanoke Valley. She specializes in fresh looks at familiar subjects. [sampsona7@gmail.com]

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

Nicholas Vaassen is a graphic designer with 13 years experience, specializing in publications. His design projects include FRONT, lifestyle, real estate, municipal, classified sales and cultural organization magazines in Roanoke and southwestern Virginia markets. [nvaassen@berryfield.com]

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



I kind of want to flop on the couch and pop open a beer — Page 14

By the Numbers

The local unemployment picture in September brightened from the previous month, and shows strength when compared to a year ago. Home prices and sales, both locally and nationally, continue to show some volatility, especially after the higher prices earlier in the summer.

Unemployment/Employment

Unemployment rates in the region fell in September after the local and state spike in August. Unemployment in the Blacksburg and Roanoke MSAs was down over the month and the year, and was back below 6.0 percent. Virginia's unemployment rate fell from 5.7 percent in August to 5.2 percent. The national unemployment rate fell from 6.3 percent in August to 5.7 percent. The national unemployment rate was 7.0 percent a year ago.



	Sept. 2013	Aug. 2014	Sept. 2014
Blacksburg	5.7%	6.2%	5.4%
Roanoke	5.6%	6.1%	5.4%
Combined	5.6%	6.1%	5.4%

The number of people **employed** in the region remained steady over the year, but rose 2.7 percent from August. Both the Blacksburg and Roanoke MSAs saw gains from August to September, but the Roanoke employment fell slightly (-0.7 percent) over the year from 149,775 in September 2013 to 148,770.

EMPLOYED

Sept. 2013	Aug. 2013	Sept. 2014
229,018	224,013	229,311

Initial unemployment claims in the region fell at a faster rate than the state's during week 44 (October 24-30). Virginia's initial unemployment claims fell by 37.5 percent, while the region's fell by 47.1 percent. Initial claims in the Blacksburg MSA fell by 50.8 percent, while the Roanoke MSA dropped by 45.9 percent. Initial claims are an indicator of future unemployment trends.

INITIAL UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS

Week 44 2013	Week 44 2014
255	135

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Real Estate

The average local **home price** in September, \$197,637, was lower than the previous month and the same month a year ago, though just by 0.2 percent over the year. Nationally, home prices fell from \$263,800 in August to \$255,000, but rose 3.7 percent from a year ago. The number of homes sold locally stayed flat over the year, but fell from August. Nationally, sales fell 1.7 percent from September 2013, but rose 2.4 percent over the month.

HOME PRICES



Sept. 2013	Aug. 2014	Sept. 2014
\$198,034	\$204,625	\$197,637

HOMES SOLD

Sept. 2013	Aug. 2014	Sept. 2014
360	398	361

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

—By Anne Piedmont,
Piedmont Research Associates



Gene Marrano

Dr. John Anderson

The STEM sprouter >

Executive Summary:

John Anderson gets to lead Virginia Western Community College's new STEM initiative, preparing students for middle skills job market expectations.

By Gene Marrano

The acronym STEM is bandied about plenty these days – it stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – and is often seen as a course correction the American education system needs. Students who come out of high school and then college with a solid STEM background are often more marketable when it comes to jobs requiring mechanical aptitude.

Virginia Western Community College certainly believes in STEM – the school is even planning on a new building where it can consolidate all of the related courses. President Dr. Robert Sandel is a big supporter of STEM-related curricula that can graduate students (or provide them

with a certificate), sending them off without an advanced degree prepared for “middle skill jobs.” For those that want to move on, VWCC has articulation with a number of four-year schools to make credit transfer a more seamless affair.

A nearly-\$800,000 grant from the National Science Foundation for VWCC’s Mechatronics program earlier this year pleased Sandel, who sees two-year colleges as a primary engine for workforce development: “We are thrilled that the NSF recognizes the college’s importance to the local economy and I believe this will continue to strengthen the region’s manufacturing industry,” he said when the grant was announced. A \$5 million endowment for scholarships from the Fralin family is geared towards STEM and health care.

John Anderson came to Virginia Western less than two years ago to head up the program. “The majority of the STEM [trained] people are baby boomers,” he says. “There’s a concern that we’ve been lagging behind in educating people in STEM. Some of it’s because ...it’s perceived to be hard. But that’s the way of the future – we have to be thinkers.”

Anderson speaks to local schoolteachers and faculty, even at the elementary school level, about the importance of STEM. That also means making sure youngsters learn an English vocabulary that includes related words, “integrated to where it becomes just homogenized.” About fifty percent of the students that arrive at Western need remedial math help notes Anderson.

A solid STEM background is part of a “stackable education,” where someone could come out of a two-year school, make a living – and perhaps return for more education down the road, Anderson says.

Everyone has to speak the same language on a factory floor; a mechanical engineer and a quality control technician or an assembly line worker need to be comfortable with the same technical jargon. “It’s a balance between the hands-on and the theoretical. Thinking before you do,” says Anderson. Errors can cost big money in highly competitive industries. Getting something right 99.9 percent of the time isn’t acceptable.

“STEM is getting us back to that perspective—wanting to be recognized in our global society,” says the western Ohio native. Anderson went to school with foreign students, but American-born ones as well; now he notes in many STEM-related majors “you’re lucky to get [someone] where English is their first language.”

In Brief

Name: John Anderson, Ph.D.

Position: Academic Dean for Virginia Western Community College's STEM program

Background: A geologist/paleontologist, Anderson (57) has been in higher education for the past 27 years. He taught geology and environmental science at two-year schools in Georgia. Married with two children; both have STEM-related degrees.

Education: undergraduate and master's degrees from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Anderson's Ph. D. came from the University of Pittsburgh. He earned a second master's in GIS technology at Georgia State University in 2010.

What he likes about his job: “We get to keep our fingers on the pulse ... and are meeting the [workforce] needs of the Roanoke Valley.”

What's missing in part he says is a goal – like when John F. Kennedy challenged Americans to aim for the moon in less than a decade. This isn't some short-term buzzword says Dr. Anderson: “as long as there are questions we have no answers to, STEM is going to be around.” 



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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Mark Cox has been appointed assistant vice president of Agricultural Lending Division; and **Lindsay Newman** has been appointed vice president at First Bank & Trust.

LEGAL FRONT



Jennings

James W. Jennings, Jr. of Woods Rogers PLC received the 2014 Excellence in Civil Litigation Award at the Virginia Association of Defense Attorneys.



Gilstrap

Sandra Chinn-Gilstrap of Woods Rogers PLC has been appointed member of the Virginia State Bar Harry L. Carrico Professionalism Course Faculty.

Herschel Keller has joined Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore as a partner and is also opening up



Keller



Paxton

the firm's new office in Lynchburg.

David Paxton of Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore, LLP has been elected to serve as a member of the ALFA board of directors.

WELLNESS FRONT

Dr. Phillip Wakefield has joined Dermatology Associates of Roanoke.



Weiss

Patrice Weiss, M.D., has been named Chief Medical Officer at Carilion Clinic.

Juliet Dadras has been appointed director of nursing at Warm Hearth Village's Cove; **Jamie Alderman** has

moved to director of risk management, quality and staff education; and **Angie Simpkins, RN**, has moved to Warm Hearth at Home.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Heather Baum has joined as director of member engagement; and **Rebecca Holland** has joined as director of marketing and communications at Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council (RBTC).

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

The Virginia State Claims Association announced the installation of the following 2014-2015 officers: **Roy Hinton**, president; **Jo Tomlin**, president-elect; **Jason Eagle**, vice president; **Paul Graf**, secretary; **Dawn Mulkey**, treasurer.



Mason

Brenda Mason and **Steve Lomax** have joined Long & Foster Real Estate as sales associates.

Mark Gliniecki has joined as vice president



Lomax

of sales; and **Manley Johnson** has joined as sales executive at Smith Mountain Building Supply.



Dooley

Carolyn Dooley has been named executive vice president for Devine Building Services.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT

Dan Dowdy has joined Valley Business FRONT as a senior account executive and business development director.



Karaboutis

Adriana "Andi" Karaboutis has been elected to Advance Auto Parts board of directors.

EDUCATION
FRONT

Haak



Walker



Hedrick



Leeth



Sridhar



Harden



Moore



Black



Slade



Watkins



Kraak



Li



Persia

Virginia Tech announces the following: **David Haak** named assistant professor in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; **Abby Walker** joins as assistant professor of English; **Samantha Harden** appointed assistant professor of human nutrition, foods, and exercise; **Brandi Watkins** appointed assistant professor of

communication; **Valisa Hedrick** named assistant professor of human nutrition, foods, and exercise; **Eric Moore** named testing coordinator at the Language and Culture Institute; **Vivica Kraak** named assistant professor of human nutrition, foods, and exercise; **Kiho Lee** named assistant professor of animal and poultry sciences;

Caroline Leeth named assistant professor of animal and poultry sciences; **Jonathan Black** named associate director of research at the Hume Center; **Song Li** named assistant professor of crop and soil environmental sciences; **Venkataramana Sridhar** appointed assistant professor of biological systems engineering; **Daniel Slade** named assistant



Teaster

professor of biochemistry; **Mike Persia** appointed assistant professor of animal and poultry sciences; **Pamela Teaster** joins Center for Gerontology;

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.

Career FRONT



Steele



Stewart

Ryan Stewart named assistant professor of crop and soil environmental sciences; **William Abplanalp** named audit manager of internal audit; **Peter Hauck** joins the Discovery Analytics Center.



Moskal

Penelope Kyle, president of Radford University, was awarded the 2014 Women of Achievement Award for Education by DePaul Community Resources.



Riegger

Meredith Steele appointed as assistant professor of crop and soil environmental



Hauck

sciences; **Marin Riegger** joins the Graduate School as child care coordinator;

Patrick Hilt has joined the Roanoke Higher Education Center as director of facility services.

Dr. Joseph T. Moskal has been appointed head of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

Dr. Alma Ramirez of Emory & Henry College was awarded the 2014 H. Hiter Harris Rising Star

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CULTURE FRONT

The Kiwanis Club of Roanoke 2014-2015 board of directors include: **Sherry Dillon**, president; **Reginald Wood**, president-elect; **F. Anderson Stone**, vice president;

Lloyd Enoch, treasurer; **John Montgomery**, secretary; **J.C. Taylor**, past-president; and the following directors: **Jeanne Bollendorf**; **Wilburn Dibling, Jr.**; **John Light**; **Richard Clemmer**; **Cheri Hartman**; **Heth Thomas**; **Preston Collins**; **Jenny Lee**; **Don Witt**.

Beth Lutjen has been installed as the new executive director for the

Local Colors nonprofit diversity organization.

Kristin Tadlock-Bell has joined as CASA program coordinator; and **Donna Hopkins Britt** has joined as education facilitator at Children's Trust.

OTHER FRONTS

David Hoback has been named executive director of the West



Jackson

Piedmont Planning District Commission.

Josh Jackson has been named program director and content manager for WVTF Public Radio and RADIO IQ.

Compiled by Tom Field

Roanoke Regional Writers Conference VIII

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VT Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

VTIN funding

Virginia Tech's Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Pamplin College of Business has launched the VT Investor Network to fund high potential startups by VT stakeholders.

No answer

Intersections Inc., a call center in the consumer identity risk management services business, is laying off 77 jobs and closing its operation in Altavista, after four years, citing regulatory changes.

Zoo challenge

Mill Mountain Zoo received "The Ed and Barbara Kitas Challenge Gift" for its Renew the Zoo campaign for a matching contributory

funding toward debt retirement and sustainability; a total of \$100,000 in pledges between Kitas and the GE Foundation.

In high gear

Dynax America Corp., the manufacturer of automotive parts such as automatic transmission components, is expected to hire 75 new jobs in conjunction with a \$32 million expansion at its Botetourt County facility.

Popular passage

Williams Companies Inc. of Tulsa, Oklahoma initiated its proposal of the Western Marcellus Pipeline project, a natural gas pipeline which would pass through Virginia on its route between Texas and New York. This project joins the currently

contested Mountain Valley Pipeline and Atlantic Coast Pipeline projects.

Wallyworld welcome

WalMart is hiring up to 300 associates for the three new WalMart Neighborhood Market stores, opening in the Roanoke area.

Market money

Foundation for Roanoke Valley has awarded a \$26,420 grant to LEAP for Local Food to support Community Food Market in the West End Neighborhood of Roanoke.

First retailer at Woolworth

Susan Adams Interiors, a home furnishings store,

has opened in the historic renovated Woolworth building in downtown Roanoke; the owner is also one of the Woolworth apartment tenants.

Gone fishin'

Virginia Cobia Farms property—an indoor fish and aquaculture operations in Saltville—is up for auction by Woltz & Associates in mid-November; the site includes 20 acres, 54,000 square foot in facilities, and equipment in the town's enterprise zone.

Trash talk

A landmark, potential precedent-setting case is being heard by the Virginia Supreme Court where a carpet cleaner is suing an online review

service for defamation regarding negative comments posted anonymously.

Room at the inn

The Inn on Campbell, a bed and breakfast in downtown Roanoke is for sale; a \$998,000 listing price for the historic, three story building.

Summer's eve sets west

C.B. Fleet Company in Lynchburg sold its majority stake to Gryphon Investors in San Francisco; no immediate changes for the location or employees were reported with the announcement.

5 year plan

The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research in Danville (multi county service area) has signed a new five year master research contract with Virginia Tech, constituting a five year partnership.

Gigging

Cox Communication has announced its deployment of gigabit internet service for Virginia residential customers; the first service area to begin in Chesapeake.

Well said

Virginia Western Community College was honored with 14

Virginia Community Colleges Association (VCCA) Excellence in Communication Awards at the VCCA conference.

Getting off the pot

The Virginia Department of Forensic Science has reported it will no longer analyze marijuana evidence collected for misdemeanor cases without a court order; field test results will still be allowed.

Technically repurposed

A former 80-acre textile manufacturing site in Danville has been planned for a Dan River Technology Park by the city's Industrial Development Authority; with buildings, utilities, and broadband services already in place.

New owners

Floyd Country Store has been sold to Roanoke's Jefferson Center artistic director Dylan Locke and his wife, Heather Krantz of Floyd; who have pledged no big changes and to preserve the venue's traditions.

Pass code trumps DNA

A circuit court judge in Virginia Beach has ruled that a criminal defendant cannot be compelled to give authorities the pass code to his cell phone due to Fifth Amendment protection; however fingerprint, communications, or actual key accesses are permitted to authorities

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.

as they are comparable to DNA evidence.

Orient express

The Chinese language edition has joined the international lineup on Virginia's tourism website (www.virginia.org), which now features landing pages for China, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Korea, and Japan.

Hot jobs

Mersen SA, a graphite/silicon products manufacturer for high temperature systems is receiving a \$5.7 million investment from its French parent company; reportedly adding 50 new jobs to the Salem facility.

Seasoned living

Grisson Lane Apartments has opened in Blacksburg; an eco-friendly, affordable housing option geared for residents 55 years and older; developed by CHP Construction.

Alt er godt

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

has compiled its list of "Best Countries for Work-Life Balance" with Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Finland, Belgium, Switzerland, and Sweden as the top seven; the United States ranked 23rd.

VT prepper

Virginia Tech is the first college or university in the country to receive accreditation by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program, an independent non-profit organization that has established rigorous national standards for emergency planning.

Transporter

Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization (RVTPO) is the new name for the Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization; as the board decided a focus on transportation was necessary for clarity and public communications.

First adcamp

AdScape, a new diversity initiative and introduction to advertising careers to young people was held Oct. 30 at Radford University by the AAF

FRONT Notes

Roanoke advertising club; 87 high school students attended sessions ranging from broadcasting to digital to animation to audio/video/photography.

Atten-hut

Lane Hall, the iconic and one of the oldest buildings on the Virginia Tech campus, and an iconic symbol for the Corps of Cadets, was added to the Virginia

Landmarks Register by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Building a lot

Hist:Re Partners, a Roanoke urban re-use developer contractor has proposed a 70- to 80-unit apartment complex on an approximate one acre parking lot site in downtown Roanoke at the corner of Williamson Road and Tazewell

Avenue; pending the current \$50,000 sale, public hearing, and financing options by the city.

Banding together

Roanoke City and City of Salem have agreed to an initial appropriation of \$100,000 each for funding the 42-mile, \$4 million broadband network project proposed by the Roanoke Valley

Broadband Authority; a total 63 mile, \$8 million network is still on the table with Roanoke County and Botetourt County currently abstaining.

Fuel up

Kroger has begun construction of a fuel center on Brambleton Avenue in Roanoke, bringing to 10 the number of locations in the Roanoke Valley.

Rubber band

Wolverine Advanced Materials in Montgomery County, a manufacturer of rubber-coated materials for automotive, industrial, and brake applications is investing in a \$10 million expansion that is expected to create about 100 jobs.

Large shark pool

More than 80 submissions were received by the new Roanoke Star Tank — a local entrepreneurial and investment pitching session — at its first event held at the Grandin CoLab in early November.

Local made

Art and Iron, a new gallery offering handcrafted steel furniture and exquisite original art has opened at 108 Market Street in downtown Roanoke.

PR awards

The Blue Ridge Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America



VT's Lane Hall

recognized ND&P with the best in show for "Mountain Lake Lodge" successful launch / average budget; and Roanoke County Public Schools with best in show for "Graduation Live!" promo / modest budget among the 73 entries and approximate 50 gold and silver awards at its annual Summit Awards in November.

iMenu?

Evernaut, a Blacksburg company, has introduced its digital handheld tablet in place of printed menus for restaurants; promising greater flexibility, reduced costs, supplemental content, easier readability, and advertising opportunity; the product is currently being used or expected at 622 North, Sharkey's, Cabo Fish Taco, Carlos Brazilian International, Town Center Tap House, Bull & Bones, among others.

Designated driver

Roanoke Craft Beer Tour, a "subsidiary" of sorts of Roanoke Food Tour is operating, featuring guided visitations at selected local breweries in the area.

Women and biology

Virginia Tech Board of Visitors voted to create two new academic degree programs: a



Evernaut has introduced its digital handheld tablet in place of printed menus for restaurants

Bachelor of Science in Systems Biology and a Master of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies.

Medical feed

Centra and Liberty University College of Osteopathic Medicine (LUCOM) have signed a 30-year affiliation

agreement, covering medical education support, staff and faculty collaboration, and student clinical rotations.

Momentum for startups

ScaleUp America is likely bringing its entrepreneurial building

classes and support services to Roanoke's CoLab in the first quarter of 2015; a ScaleUp Roanoke Valley version primarily directed at small business applicants in the two to five year range with \$150,000+ annual revenues.

Compiled by Tom Field

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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“ ”
 I am a young professional. To me,
 this classification sounds a lot like
 ‘student driver’ — Page 43

“ ”
 We worked on this effort for
 almost ten years — Page 19

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