

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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vbFRONT.com

Here
Comes
the
Judge

*Reviewing
Businesses Online*

Matt Bullington,
Texas Tavern

Valley Bank

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WE'RE PLEASED TO SHARE WITH YOU OUR MOST RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

For the 1st Quarter of 2014

- Net Income to Common Shareholders of \$1.52 Million
- Earnings Per Share of \$0.31, up 3% over 1st Quarter of 2013
- Return on Average Shareholders' Equity of 11.24%^[1]
- Total Assets Grew to \$869 Million, up \$105 Million over the past 15 Months
- Declaration of Cash Dividend to Common Shareholders of \$0.04 (\$0.16 Annualized)
- Valley Wealth Management Services^[2] "assets under management" approaches \$110 Million

Other Notable Achievements

- Voted a "Top 10 Best Places to Work" by Virginia Business Magazine for the third consecutive year



Ellis L. Gutshall
President and
Chief Executive Officer

Valley Financial Corporation Ranked in the Top 200 Community Banks in the Nation by American Banker Magazine

Valley Financial Corporation was ranked #102 on the list of the top performing community banks and thrifts in the nation by American Banker Magazine.

This year's Top 200 Ranking was based upon the three-year average Return on Equity for the years 2011, 2012 and 2013. The ranking included all exchange-traded banks and thrifts with less than \$2 Billion in total assets as of December 31, 2013 that had a three-year average ROE of 7.8% or higher. There were 851 institutions across the nation fitting the criteria.

This is the second year in a row that Valley Financial Corporation made the Top 200 list and the Company's ranking improved from #138 last year to #102 this year.

Are you with Valley yet?

^[1] Annualized ^[2] Valley Wealth Management Services is a Division of Valley Bank. Investment Centers of America, Inc. (ICA), member FINRA/SIPC and a Registered Investment Advisor, is not affiliated with Valley Bank or Valley Wealth Management Services, Inc. Securities, advisory services and insurance products offered through ICA and affiliated insurance agencies are *not insured by the FDIC or any other Federal Government agency *not a deposit or other obligation of, or guaranteed by any bank or their affiliates *subject to risks including the possible loss of principal amount invested. ^[3] Past performance is not necessarily indicative of future results. For more information regarding our company, please see the filings we make with the SEC, available on our website at myvalleybank.com.



A car dealer, a restaurant owner, and a hotel executive walk into a bar. "How's it going?" the bartender asks them. Before any of them can chime in, he continues. "Never mind. First drink's on the house."

He already knew. He read the online reviews. And like bartenders all over the world who ask rhetorical questions every opening hour — we also, don't need to ask these three businesses. We already know how it's going.

Heck, if a business isn't careful or attentive, we could know more about their service or product than the managers themselves. Or at least, we think we know more.

When someone coined that we're experiencing a "knowledge-based economy" a good while back, I wonder if he or she considered the accuracy of that knowledge? The truth is, we have so much information at our fingertips, we often forget that a good percentage of it is simply opinion.

All of this can be rather mindboggling.

I think I'll have that drink now. I heard this pub got four stars.



Tom Field

“ ”

More than 11 percent of the people living in Virginia were born outside the United States

— Page 59



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The advertisement features a dark blue background with glowing white lines and several circular icons: a globe, a telephone handset, a mobile phone, a laptop, and a briefcase. The text is in a mix of white and light blue fonts.

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DEPARTMENTS

8

COVER STORY “They Said *What* About Us?”

TRENDS

- business dress 22
- etiquette & protocol 23
- small business 24

FINANCIAL FRONT 26

LEGAL FRONT 28

WELLNESS FRONT 32

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT 36

DEVELOPMENT FRONT 38

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT 40

EDUCATION FRONT 43

CULTURE FRONT 46

REVIEWS & OPINIONS

- tom field 50
- guest commentary 51
- letters 53
- book reviews 54

FRONT'N ABOUT 56

INDICATORS 59

EXECUTIVE PROFILE 60

FRONTLINES

- career front 62
- front notes 64

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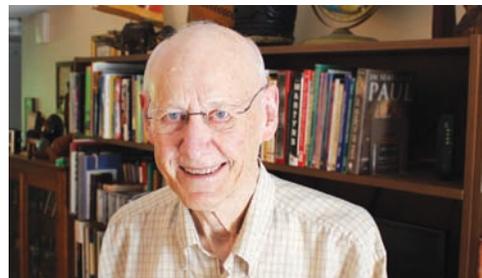
Earthy R.I.P.

Page 40



It's Curtains. Up!

Page 46



An App with No Box?

Page 51

Cover photography of Matt Bullington by Tom Field.

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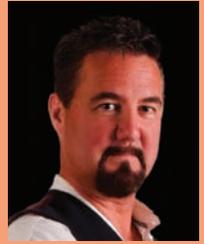
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JUNE



Rod Belcher



Tom Field



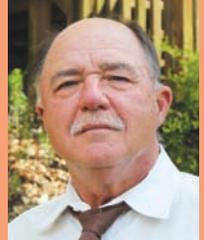
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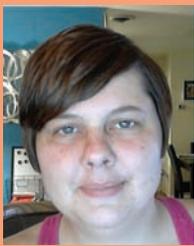
Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of 16 diverse business professionals, who will serve as a sounding board throughout the 18 month rotational term that will turn over every year and a half.

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



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Hunter Mabry



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Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen



Some employers will need to adjust their policies and business practices

— Page 23

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 68.

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)
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Ellis Gutshall Valley Bank (Finance)
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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.



They see the world through a child’s eyes

— Page 37



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“They Said *What* About Us?”



Online Reputation Management >

Executive Summary:
When it comes to coping with the new business environment of online reviews and social media, three business types are particularly vulnerable: restaurants, car dealers, hotels. We talked to one of each.

By Randolph Walker

It used to be said that a business lived or died by word of mouth. That's still true, but now word of mouth is found on the internet.

“The whole landscape has changed,” says Julie Wheeler of the BBB of Western Virginia. “It used to be you'd talk to the neighbors, the people that you worked with. Well, now instead of telling seven people you were unhappy with this particular experience, you go and post it, and millions of people can potentially read it. So the impact is astronomical and can be devastating to a business. Which is why businesses need to be very aware of what their online reputation is.”

“For a company, they can live and die by the customer reviews,” says Paul Klockenbrink, a partner at Gentry Locke. “Particularly it can impact a smaller company, mom and pop restaurant or a hotel.”

“You cannot opt out of any of this,” says Matt Bullington, owner of the Texas Tavern. “You cannot opt out of social media, you cannot opt out of online reputation management. It's going to happen. Just having a web page isn't enough.”



With online reviews, all of us can be judges—including Texas Tavern's Matt Bullington.

The key difference between company websites, and social media and review sites, is that the latter are interactive. "Social media is not just a medium for pushing your message," says Betsy Parkins, director of social media at Neathawk Dubuque & Packett. "It's a two-way street."

And businesses need to look both ways.

Here's a look at three landmark Roanoke businesses—all founded in the days when "computer" was a job title—and how they are bending to the changing wind of the new cyber environment.

Lodging Complaints. And Praises

Michael Quonce, Hotel Roanoke

The venerable Hotel Roanoke (hotelroanoke.com), with its Tudor architecture, peanut soup and Old South hospitality, has one foot solidly in the 21st century. Building and maintaining an online reputation is "extremely important," says Michael Quonce, marketing manager. "It's something we monitor on a daily basis." The response team includes Quonce; the general manager; the director of sales; and the rooms director, with support from Doubletree, which manages the hotel.



Michael Quonce, marketing manager at Hotel Roanoke

Randolph Walker

892 people have reviewed this hotel

Write a Review

Traveler rating



See reviews for

	Families	172
	Couples	301
	Solo	32
	Business	275

Rating summary



Traveler tips help you choose the right room. Room tips (151)

892 reviews sorted by: Date ▾ Rating

English first ▾



LISA B
ARLINGTON
2 reviews

"Double Tree in Roanoke"

NEW

 Reviewed 2 days ago

Very beautiful hotel. Lots of history in the hotel. The lobby is very pretty with historical notes located around the lobby. Very convenient to the downtown area, you can easily walk to restaurants. Rooms were clean, the beds were comfortable. Service was excellent. There was a bit of noise from the trains near by, but that was not too bad.

Review collected in partnership with DoubleTree by Hilton Was this review helpful?

The top review sites for hotels are TripAdvisor, Yelp, Expedia, and hotels.com. For the Regency Room restaurant, Quonce monitors Trip Advisor and Open Table. Quonce sees 15 or 20 reviews a week, mostly from TripAdvisor, with a few from Yelp and Expedia. All reviews—good, bad or indifferent—receive a response.

Quonce uses a service called Revinate, which collects reviews from multiple sites—an online clipping service, as it were. "That kind of keeps everything together so when you're responding or looking at these reviews, you don't have to log in to each individual website. With as many reviews as we see, it could be its own full-time position essentially. I'll typically look through them at Revinate, then I'll respond via the [individual] site. We use Revinate to see what people are saying. We also can see social media. We also can monitor the competition, so we can see what other people are saying about them."

Everybody would rather receive praise than criticism, and indeed, the praise outweighs the criticism by about five to one. "We always push for the good reviews. Here in the Regency Room, after your stay, we've got a card that comes with it—if you enjoyed your experience, we'd love to hear about it."

It's courteous to acknowledge a compliment, and that's true online as well. "On TripAdvisor, if somebody posted

Hotel Roanoke reviews on TripAdvisor

“ ”

We monitor on a daily basis

— Michael Quonce



Randolph Walker

Julie Wheeler, CEO and president of BBB of Western Virginia

The Consumer Point Of View

Genuine online reviews perform a critical service in the marketplace, helping consumers research products and companies before making decisions. But not all reviews are honest.

"Unfortunately there are lot of sites out there that just let you post and rant anonymously without any validation that you are a customer," says Julie Wheeler, CEO and president of BBB of Western Virginia. "That's where it's important for potential customers to understand the validity and potential accuracy" of reviews.

"It's knowing whether you're looking at a site that is only letting real customers post. Some of the big online sites will send you the opportunity to do feedback when you've made a purchase. Those are validated; they know you got that product."

The BBB, which has provided business ratings since long before the internet, has entered the cyber age with online reviews (bbb.org/western-virginia). But it is very particular about accepting customer reviews. "We verify that the email address is valid. It does not go live until the business has had an opportunity to post a response and to validate that they're an actual customer. We do have cases where they come back and say, 'This isn't a customer.' At this point we tell the customer, 'You've got to prove that you had a business transaction with them.' That prevents competitors from posting [fake] bad reviews. And it gives you as a potential customer a really good feel that what you're looking at is from a legitimate customer."

a review, you can respond to them. We can log on as either the PR person or the general manager and say ‘thank you, we’re glad you enjoyed your stay.’”

Even critical reviews can be turned into positives. “There’s a messaging option you have on TripAdvisor. So typically if we get a bad review we always want to reach out to them and have more of a personal contact with them, so hopefully they will respond and we can learn more about it, try to amend the situation.”

A bad review can even lead to systemic improvement. “It’s our chance to learn what everybody’s experiencing here in the hotel. If it’s a service issue, a housekeeping issue, if something happens we can quickly address it, not only with the customer but with our team.

“I’d like to say that we’re 100 percent perfect all the time. We’re not, mistakes are going to happen. Bad reviews are going to happen, but we always respond to them. We can’t make ‘em go away [but] it’s something we can share with our team and utilize to try to be even better the next time.”

Dealer Deals With It ***Cameron Johnson, Magic City Ford Lincoln***

“The car business is probably one of the most antiquated businesses, as far as it’s still done the same way it was 50 or 100 years ago,” says Cameron Johnson, the president of Magic City Ford Lincoln (magiccityford.com). But things are changing. “You’re seeing more and more of that take place on the internet, and that shift is happening pretty quickly.”

While Magic City has good word of mouth locally, says Johnson, the internet has made it possible for people to shop for specific cars and compare prices, sometimes across a multi-state area where many people have never heard of Magic City Ford.

“If they’re from South Carolina and they’re on cars.com and they’re looking at a used car that we happen to have in stock and they’ve never dealt with Magic City before, then it’s really important they see a review. We’ve focused really hard on trying to get as many positive reviews as we could on cars.com.”

Cars.com is important for car dealers because viewers are specifically shopping for cars when they’re on the site. The same isn’t true for a review they may happen to see while on Facebook.

A search on cars.com turned up 13 Ford dealers within 50 miles of Roanoke. “If one has 50 plus reviews and a 4.8 rating, they’re probably going to click that one first



We want to try to harvest as many as we can

— Cameron Johnson



Randolph Walker

James Creekmore of the Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg

Weigh Your Response Carefully

Although a customer might fire off an intemperate review on the spur of the moment—even as he's walking out your door into the parking lot—businesses don't have the same luxury. All responses must be carefully considered, says James Creekmore of the Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg (creekmorelaw.com).

"There's two different types of negative opinions that can be voiced online," he says. "The first is a mere casual negative reference to an individual's personal dealing. The business needs to be calculating in how it responds because that response may get more airplay than the original criticism. When it comes from the business itself, that does directly reflect on the business. An off-the-cuff negative comment by a customer may only reflect on that customer's demeanor or ability to handle something. But when the business demonstrates itself to be unprofessional, that's when the business gets hurt because that's a direct reflection on the business."

"Only if you see a real blow to the business itself, either the likelihood of other customers responding negatively, or something that adversely affects employees within the business, does the business need to step forward and really address it in one of a variety of ways."

Even in such cases, offline communication with the customer, combined with a simple response online, may be the best solution. But in rare instances, legal action may be required. "In another situation we did escalate it as far as a defamation action in court because the customer did inaccurately reflect the facts of the circumstance. The circumstance was videotaped. There was a security camera that absolutely refuted the customer's accounting of the events. In fact, that customer then retreated. We had the review taken off line."

"But one thing that happens is that even though you can secure that relief against that customer, that customer's friends and family can then reflect negatively on the company. 'Oh, big bad lawyer sent us a letter and took us to court, don't do business with this company again.' Even though you may be addressing that one problem, you may have a ripple effect that gives other people a platform to further that critique. So we advise clients, if you're going to go into court, make sure it's a situation that needs to be corrected."

See Legal Front for more discussion of legal responses to defamatory reviews.



Randolph Walker

**Cameron Johnson,
president of Magic
City Ford Lincoln**

if they're not predisposed to deal with a particular dealership."

Magic City sells 200-plus cars a month, about 10,000 cars in the past four or five years, and only has 69 reviews on cars.com. But Johnson expects to see more and more reviews—in fact, he's soliciting them.

Ford surveys customers by mail after a purchase or service call. "Ford does that so they can see, is Magic City doing a good job, are my competitors doing a good job, and then they rank us. However that's not something a customer would necessarily see. We're going to start taking those surveys we get back from customers and sending them a quick email and say, 'Hey, glad you had a great experience—do you mind sharing that on Google or cars.com or on DealerRater?' We want to try to harvest as many as we can.

Featured Review

★★★★★ 5.0 out of 5.0 **Third car in less than two years.**

by [REDACTED] from Blue Ridge, Va | January 21, 2014

This is the third car in less than two years that I have bought with Wayne Fulp and Cameron Johnson. They have always treated me with respect and fairness. Wayne has always helped me anyway he can and always follows up quickly as we go through the buying process. Magic City has made my car buying experience as pleasant as possible. Thanks for an outstanding job!

Did you find this review helpful? Yes No

5 out of 5 people found this review helpful.

Customer Service
Buying Process
Not Applicable Quality of Repair
Overall Facilities
Shopped for a new car
Does recommend this dealer
Did make a purchase
Report inappropriate content

★★★★★ 5.0 out of 5.0 **No pressure.**

by [REDACTED] from Blue Ridge, Va | January 28, 2014

We have purchased several cars from Juri. No pressure. He showed genuine concern that the vehicle we purchased met our needs.

Did you find this review helpful? Yes No

0 out of 0 people found this review helpful.

Customer Service
Buying Process
Not Applicable Quality of Repair
Overall Facilities
Shopped for a used car
Does recommend this dealer
Did make a purchase
Report inappropriate content

★★★★★ 5.0 out of 5.0 **Third Purchase**

by [REDACTED] from Roanoke, Va | January 14, 2014

I have purchased three vehicles from Darren and he is always excellent to deal with.

Did you find this review helpful? Yes No

Customer Service
Buying Process
Not Applicable Quality of Repair
Overall Facilities
Shopped for a used car
Does recommend this dealer

"And if they have a bad experience we'll immediately send them a message. I've done that personally—say, hey, it sounds like we totally screwed up, can I offer you a car to drive, can I fix it on me, I'll pay for it. We've actually sold cars that way. We've actually taken a customer that's quite upset and they go onto Facebook and they're there to blast us and they want all their friends to see that something bad happened, and then it totally turns all the way around and the customer's posting another message that says hey, Magic City handled it better than I could have even expected, and now I'm driving a new F-150. Those are the customers you have for life. When you take somebody that [had] a complaint, and you turn them into a customer again, they become your biggest fans."

So, honest reviews, from real customers, whether good or bad, are welcomed by reputable merchants. But human nature being what it is, some people won't play by the rules.

"We had one person who made a complaint that they were here one day and they had a water pump issue. We went through every single ticket that day and there was no customer with a water pump issue. We don't know if that was a fake post, it could be from a competitor, it could be from somebody that's a former employee that's unsatisfied. Who knows who it actually came from. So that's kind of a scary thing. You do need to be able to identify the person for transparency reasons, otherwise it's totally not fair. Anybody could go and write bad things about their competition, and that's not what you want. You want them to be honest reviews, and you want them to be real."

Magic City Ford Lincoln
reviews on cars.com

Top Websites for Reviews

Lodging

- TripAdvisor
- Yelp
- Expedia
- hotels.com

Automotive Dealers

- cars.com
- DealerRater
- Edmunds

Restaurants

- TripAdvisor
- urbanspoon.com
- yellowpages.com
- local.yahoo.com

General / Businesses

- Better Business Bureau (local, censored and preapproved)
- Consumer Reports (usually more product focused, tested)

Restaurant Reservations

Matt Bullington, Texas Tavern

Matt Bullington, like Cameron Johnson at Magic City, is the fourth generation owner of a family business started in the 1930s. He wears a lot of hats at the Texas Tavern, but he could probably be a professional PR man. Consider this PR coup.

Bullington keeps a Texas Tavern page on Facebook (www.facebook.com/texastavern). "If you do something that engages people, that's fun, that's creative, you can get some really good return.

"The biggest post I've ever had, with the most shares, was this past April 1. [Note the date.] You know the lore of the Texas Tavern, we do not have ketchup. So I went and got a bunch of ketchup bottles, filled them all with mustard, and we put 'em on the counter and took a photo and posted it and said, 'Big news at the Texas Tavern, something's different, can you spot what it is?' We had well over 200 comments and almost 30,000 people saw the post. Took me 10 minutes to do that."

Bullington has also had good responses to his "Throwback Thursday" posts highlighting the Tavern's history, such as a photo from the day his great-grandfather, Nick Bullington, opened for business, Friday, Feb. 13, 1930.

But using social media isn't just about posting. It's also about listening and responding.

"Let's say something didn't go right with their experience. It gives us a way to directly interface with that customer and make it right. If somebody sends us a personal message I will send them a message back and want to know the details of what happened and absolutely try to make it right. I've had that, where something happened in the business that shouldn't have and that helped me out. Employees know that people can do that. I think it actually improves service."

Some complaints are so vague that there's little he can do to address them. "With negative reviews, you want to bury them with positive. It shows they become outliers. If you see glowing reviews and a couple of negative, most people look at that and say, that's an outlier."

And then there are reviews that aren't just vague—they're counterfactual. "I have a camera system that records every single thing that goes on at my business. I've had times where somebody was complaining about something that [allegedly] happened and I investigate it, and it wasn't the case. There's people out there that are just mad at the world and they can post on Facebook."



Randolph Walker

Betsy Parkins, director of social media at Neathawk Dubuque & Packett

Hire An Expert or Do It Yourself

Does your business need a social media specialist, either in-house or on contract?

There are two points where businesses can benefit from social media expertise, says Betsy Parkins, director of social media at Neathawk Dubuque & Packett (ndp-agency.com).

First, at the beginning when a business is launching into social media, it can help to have assistance in mapping out goals.

Second, "if you are very successful in social media, [and] your social hits a tipping point and the conversation expands exponentially, it's harder to source content and keep up with the conversation," says Parkins. "At that point it's good to bring someone in who can spend a lot of time monitoring the conversation and responding. When it comes to the point where you can't answer questions in a timely manner, that's when you need somebody to come in and pay attention."



Matt Bullington, fourth generation owner of family business Texas Tavern

Randolph Walker



If that happens, “we’ll address that very courteously. Under no circumstances do you ever get into any kind of argument online. Your behavior will be exhibited for everyone to see for a long time. You always want to take the high road and be respectful, even with somebody’s who’s accusing you of something.”

Another rule: Monitor your accounts. “Don’t just put ‘em up and ignore ‘em for three or four months. You might have a whole bunch of good comments, you might have some negative comments, you might have somebody putting profanity up there. Even if it’s good-natured, I don’t want somebody being vulgar on my site. So delete those. It’s a reflection of my business.”

As owner, Bullington has other things to do aside from responding to Facebook posts all day. “You can spend 10 hours a day trying to manage every single little comment, you’ll go nuts,” he says. In fact, he has been approached by online reputation management companies, but has declined their services. “I know the intricacies of my business more than any other company’s going to know. We’ve found that we can manage it pretty well.”

Business is still about people—but with a difference

For Matt Bullington, face-to-face interaction with customers is still “where the rubber meets the road.” Only now, he knows that customers are able to describe those interactions for an audience that is potentially worldwide.

“The past 75 years was built on word of mouth,” says Cameron Johnson of Magic City Ford, founded in 1938. “The next 75 years is going to be built on people and what they read.” 

What are those red bottles? At the Texas Tavern?!

“ ”

You always want to take the high road

— Matt Bullington



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Paying respects starts first with... being respectful.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T >

Just when I think that nobody gets it anymore, something reassuring happens.

It was late winter and I was confounded to find myself at the memorial service for a young student who died suddenly of natural causes. An undetected enlarged heart, most likely from a viral infection, had abruptly taken the life of the seemingly healthy young man with a bright future.

The memorial took place on a large college campus at nine o'clock at night, a snowy Wednesday evening during midterm exams. I prepared myself for a sparse turnout of jeans-and-sweatshirt clad students. Who could blame them? Mid-week and late in the day, we'd be lucky to see anyone at a memorial service.

But that didn't happen. We adults arrived early and stood in the anteroom making small talk in hushed tones. Slowly, small groups of students began to trickle into the building. I walked a young man dressed in a dress shirt, tie and khakis—nice. Another wore a business suit and tie—very nice. With a sense of hope that this memorial service would go well, we chose a seat and waited for the service to begin.

Several young women entered dressed in dressy skirts, tops and dresses and more young men in suits. Even students who did wear jeans added a nice sweater and dressy shoes. They'd made the effort to look presentable for the solemn occasion.

Soon we heard the muffled sound of more chairs being set up to accommodate the growing crowd. The turnout was going to be a full house and yet you could hear a pin drop in the room. All those people showed up and really didn't know what to say.

No words of comfort seemed adequate. None of us could explain away this tragedy when we faced his parents and brothers. But the students said it all with their presence and their appearance. His family understood how important he was to his friends.

More often than not, it's difficult to find words to express our deep loss, grief and respect for a fallen friend. When words fail us, something as simple as our clothing can help us show just how highly we regard the person we've lost.

Those students took a sad occasion and created a hopeful tribute to a friend—and they did it with very few words. 

Comments or questions? Email kssurace@aol.com.

Millennials in the Workplace – Part I >

Many older, more traditional people in the professional arena are distrustful of these “Young Turks”, who just don’t seem to conform to the norm in the business world. Who are they anyway? Let’s take a look at some of the characteristics of this generation, born between 1982 and 1998. They are having a huge impact on society, and they are changing the way the professional works. Some employers will need to adjust their policies and business practices to accommodate this new generation. This will include finding new ways to motivate and reward them.

Millennials say they would prefer to own a business, rather than be a top executive. They have a keen entrepreneurial sense that includes social entrepreneurship. A perfect example of a social entrepreneur is Blake Mycoskie, founder in 2006 of TOMS shoes. For every pair of shoes sold, TOMS donates a pair to someone in a developing country. In 2011, TOMS expanded its One for One concept to eyewear.

Sales of this newer product help the company donate eye glasses, and fund glaucoma surgeries for people in the developing world. To date, the company has donated more 10 million pairs of shoes, and restored the eyesight of 200,000 people. By the way, there is no Tom. TOMS is derived from the word “tomorrow”, and the hope that tomorrow will bring a better world.

As children many Millennials were catered to by family and school, and were told:

- “You are special.” “You are smart.”
- “You must achieve!” Some parents started choosing the right pre-school while the child was still in the womb. (If the reader thinks this begs credibility, be assured that this writer has witnessed the phenomenon!)
- “You must attend the ‘right’ college.” Some parents hire private agents to find the “right” college.

In addition many Millennials:

- Are tolerant and inclusive – of races, religions, and sexual orientations.
- Are connected all the time with their computer, smart phone, and/or i-Pad.
- Prefer chatting on line to talking in person or on the phone.
- Believe in service to the community. Many high schools require community service hours for graduation.

In one Roper Survey, where Millennials were asked for the major cause of problems in the country, they opined “selfishness.” Yet some consider the millennial generation to be selfish, narcissistic, and lazy.

Obviously, not all Millennials are coddled. A huge number of the population lives in desperation and poverty. This will create its own set of problems in society. There’s much more to the millennial story; let’s continue this discussion next month. 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
Millennials have a lot to offer; some of it overlooked or discounted.



Small Business

By Samantha Steidle

Executive Summary:
Customer discovery should be the first step when starting your new venture.

Before you even think about marketing, do this >

It sometimes seems as if business owners are in a rush to get to market. They can't wait to open doors, put up signs, and run advertisements. They want the world to know they've arrived.

It's understandable. They're business owners. They're ready to do business. But before making that triumphant leap into the marketplace, entrepreneurs ought to have a superb understanding of their customers. They ought to have done their homework on whether their product or service is something the public really wants and will pay for.

Have you considered what the process of "customer discovery" can do for you? That's the business terminology for finding out everything you can about your potential customer base. It pays to do so.

Take my money!

You see, it doesn't matter how many slick commercials your run if nobody wants your product. You might be in love with the product, but your personal enthusiasm will only take you so far. People have to see a real value in what you're selling, with or without your magnetic sales pitch.

When you describe your product or service to people who will ideally become your customers, you ought to hear, "Yes! I want that. I've been looking for something like that. Where can I get that?"

There's a popular Internet meme, "Shut up and take my money!" based on something the character Fry said in the animated television series *Futurama*. People use that phrase in online discussions when someone else describes an idea or a product they find appealing.

You want your potential customers to be saying a version of the same thing, right? What your business has to offer ought to be something people will gladly pay for, because it's that valuable. The process of customer discovery gets you there.

Three key questions

How can you find out whether people will see value in your product? It may help to think of yourself as a sleuth or a scientist. You have a "hypothesis" about what the market wants or needs. You are on a mission to test that hypothesis.

Be warned: You might find out that the market doesn't

exactly want what you have in mind to sell. But don't be discouraged, because that knowledge can open even greater doors. At any rate, it's better to know as much as you can in advance about your market.

Ask yourself three questions to prepare:

1. Who are my business partners?
2. What is my customer segment?
3. Where are my revenue streams coming from? (It should not be from only one place.)

After you brainstorm on those questions, make a list of a number of people to interview personally. Strive for 100 people. You don't have to know all of them personally or even by name. Some of the people you interview might be at venues where your ideal customer is likely to be found.

The key in interviewing your prospective customers and business partners is *not to sell* anything. Tell them you're thinking of launching a business that specializes in delivering a product or a service. Ask their honest opinion about that. Ask how much they would pay for it.

Then listen. Listen. Listen. Take notes. Look for patterns in what people say. They're giving you golden information about a market opportunity.

Be brave, get feedback

People enjoy being asked for an opinion, especially if you've carefully handpicked them for feedback on a product or service that they find interesting or useful. They will gladly help you.

You might find, however, that people will tell you they want something else than what you had envisioned. If you hear that enough, it might make you reconsider your business model. Can you fulfill that revised demand? If so, you may be the only business owner in your area to do so. You may be in the enviable position of having little to no competition, at least for a while.

A true entrepreneur listens to his or her customers and responds. So, if your business opportunity turns out to be different than what you thought it would be, embrace the chance to tweak it.

When you have your ribbon-cutting ceremony, do so with the confidence that the market is ready for you. You've done your homework. You've discovered your customers. Now they'll discover you. 



You might be in love with the product, but your personal enthusiasm will only take you so far. People have to see a real value in what you're selling, with or without your magnetic sales pitch.



The key in interviewing your prospective customers and business partners is not to sell anything.



People enjoy being asked for an opinion, especially if you've carefully handpicked them for feedback on a product or service that they find interesting or useful.



Tom Field

Dan Wilmer

Financial Matters

Your Retirement: How Long Will it Last? >

Executive Summary:

Index annuities offer a safe option for retirement with distinctive advantages.

By Dan Wilmer

According to a Congressional Research Service report dated July 23, 2013 the average family age 55 to 64 has \$250,000 in retirement plans and about \$300,000 in other assets. They owe \$142,000 on a mortgage and \$40,000 other debt. Their income was over \$100,000 per year combined.

Sounds pretty good, right? Now they want to retire, travel, spend time with grandkids and continue a lifestyle that they are used to having. What are the options? Put \$500,000 in a CD and collect the interest to provide an income along with Social Security of maybe \$40,000 per year? The numbers don't work. How about paying a money manager to handle their assets and hope to make an average of 7% per year? This sounds like a much better idea. Of course they could handle their own money and buy index mutual funds and not pay the money manager.

What happens when the stock market loses 30% (2008)? Do you sell at a loss never to be made up? Do you fire your money manager? Or do you go back to work like many others have done over the last several years?

What happens when age catches up to you and you need long term care at maybe \$60,000 per year?

Over the last 10 years we have been

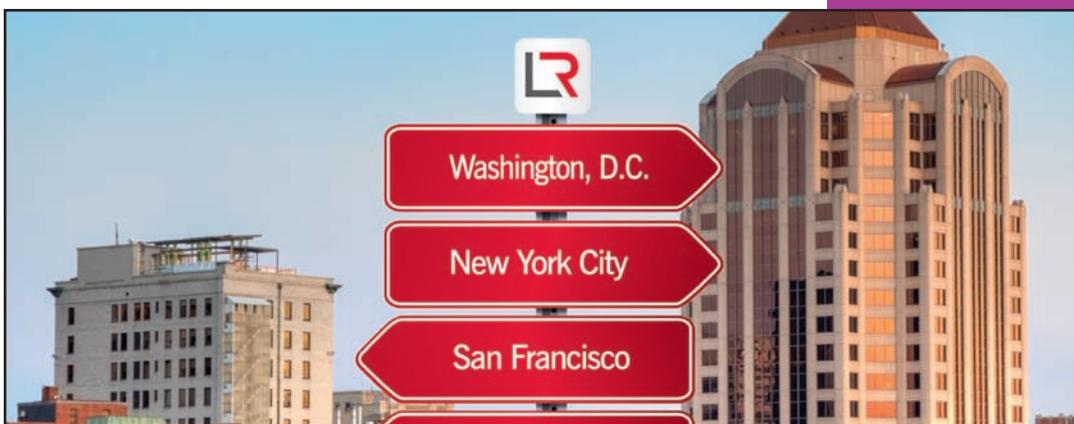
suggesting index annuities to our clients for some part of their retirement assets; the part that they want to be invested safely. These accounts have some very nice advantages.

- They have no fees. (Don't consider the programs with various sets of fees.)
- They pay some rate of interest earmarked to a stock market index. (There are limitations on earnings.)
- They lose no money when the stock market falls.
- When the account runs out of money the payout continues for as long as one lives.
- Many of the programs double

the payout if one qualified for long term care.

Of course no one is going to invest all his assets in any single thing. Most people want some risk money because interest rates are less than 1%. Many are active and do their own investing in either the market or mutual funds. Many pay a money manager through their bank, brokerage firm or independent advisor. I believe someone that is independent, who has a good track record and who has enough years of experience to have weathered the ups and downs is the best bet.

Also, consider these indexed annuities for some of your assets; especially that portion that you want to keep safe and still make market returns without the risk of market downturns. 



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Randolph Walker

Paul Klockenbrink

The Defaming Game >

Executive Summary:

Malicious online reviews—when to take action, when to let it them ride. Legal action is a last resort when companies fear serious damage from an online review.

By Randolph Walker

“ ”

There's actually a Virginia code section [8.01-407] that allows people that post on the internet to be identified.

— Paul Klockenbrink

If an actual customer, using his real name, posts a factual review—good or bad—a business has little to object to. But what about a negative review by an anonymous user—especially one that appears ungrounded in fact or poses a real risk of damaging the business?

“There's actually a Virginia code section [8.01-407] that allows people that post on the internet to be identified,” says Paul Klockenbrink, chair of the Gentry Locke's Restaurant & Hospitality Law Group. This allows a review site to be subpoenaed—after other good faith efforts have failed—for the names of reviewers, so a defamation lawsuit can be filed.

In such a case, the plaintiff doesn't know whether the review was posted by a real

customer or is a malicious fake posted by a competitor. The plaintiff may suspect the review was completely fabricated. If they obtain the identity, they may discover that the reviewer had never been a customer.

The plaintiff might also discover that the reviewer can't be identified, says James Creekmore of the Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg. The reviewer may have created a bogus identity and posted from public library computer, or used a web service that masks his computer's

“”

You may wind up commencing that lawsuit only to have it go nowhere only because you can't get the requisite information to find out who actually posted it

—James Creekmore

IP address. "You may wind up commencing that lawsuit only to have it go nowhere only because you can't get the requisite information to find out who actually posted it," he says.

A case involving a Yelp review of a cleaning company is before the Virginia Supreme Court. The company is trying to force Yelp to reveal a reviewer's name. "So then the question is whether that code section is unconstitutional, because you have First Amendment rights," says Klockenbrink.

Some companies are suing reviewers knowing that they're probably not going to win. "The goal is not necessarily to win the



Randolph Walker

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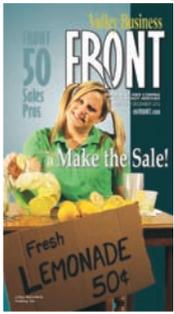
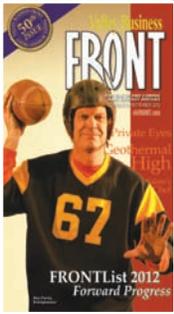
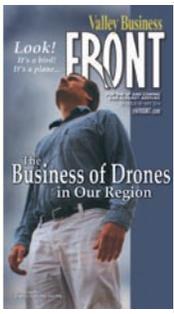
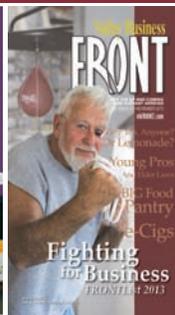
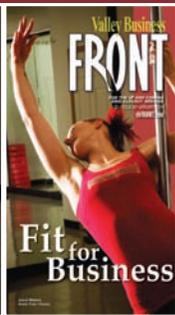
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3 REASONS YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO THINK ABOUT ESTATE PLANNING

lawsuit,” Klockenbrink says. “The goal is to deter online reviewers from being malicious, fraudulent, scamming. They want people to think twice before doing an online review.”

Klockenbrink advises caution to businesses contemplating such a course. “As a business you have to think [about] the strategy of fighting that so hard, because what are you doing? You’re drawing attention to the review. Nobody knew about the bad review, maybe, about this dry cleaner,” before the lawsuit.

“A lot of times my advice is let it sit for a little bit. Because if I send them a letter or I send them a lawsuit—depending on what they’re saying, everything depends on what they’re saying—they’re probably going to post my letter on Facebook and you’ve given ‘em a microphone. ‘Oh look, the lawyer from the company has sent me this letter.’ You’ve almost fed the beast. I’m a little hesitant to automatically say, yeah, we’re going to send a mean letter threatening a lawsuit.”

But if the situation does not simmer down, the legal option is available.

“Depending on the content of the material, if it’s truly defamatory—in Virginia we don’t distinguish between libel and slander, we just call it defamation—and you believe it’s a fake review I believe at some point you’ve got to take an aggressive stand,” Klockenbrink says.

While many states have laws banning such lawsuits—called anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) laws—Virginia is not one of them. “We are very pro business. You are allowed to use these lawsuits that are intended to discourage people from posting bad reviews or fake reviews. Until somebody declares it unconstitutional it’s a fairly strong weapon.

“It’s a fascinating area of the law because we’re on the cutting edge and it’s not defined. It’s a battleground between the First Amendment rights of individuals to be able to express their displeasure, and how companies try to deal with this.”



CHRISTINE UNDERWOOD

1 CONTROL

If you don’t designate who gets your assets at death, someone else will. Without a will Virginia’s laws of intestacy will determine who receives your assets. While at a young age you may not believe your assets are significant, you still may want a say in how they are distributed. Do you want to make a gift to a particular friend? Do you have a beloved pet you’d like to provide for after you’re gone? Only you can control your wishes.

2 CHILDREN

Who will look after your children in the event of your death? Would you want your children to receive a lump sum of assets at age 18? Do you have a special needs child who will need particular care and attention after you’re gone?

3 INCAPACITY

Estate planning isn’t just about death. Who do you want making decisions about your health care if you are unable to do so? Who would you want controlling your assets, paying your bills, etc., if you are unable to do so?



all photos: Tom Field

Executive Director Angela Leonard with kindergarten student Kaedan Ingerson.

Caring is Sharing >

Executive Summary:

Early intervention and experiential learning are critical in the mission at Blue Ridge Autism and Achievement Center.

By Rebekah Hertzberg

Tucked in a small, residential niche just off Peter's Creek Road is BRAAC, a 26,000 square foot center dedicated to improving the quality of life of individuals with unique learning challenges. The Blue Ridge Autism and Achievement Center, or BRAAC, is a nonprofit organization in Roanoke County that serves as an educational facility (private school) and advocacy center for its target population, largely those living with autism.

With additional centers in Buena Vista

and Lynchburg, Roanoke BRAAC currently enrolls 65 students aged 2-22 and provides services in three programs: Preschool, STARS, and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). ABA is for autistic students and provides one-on-one instruction. With a student-faculty ratio of 5:1, the traditional class, both at the preschool level and within the STARS program, serves students affected by a specific learning disability. In each class is a peer model, a student with no disability.

Executive Director, Angela Leonard, remarks, as I tour the facility, that only after careful observation can one distinguish between the autistic child and the peer model. As Angela proceeds to guide me through the Center, I follow, carefully observing the art-filled halls and walls. I find the color spectrum plastered on one of the walls as giant jigsaw puzzle pieces inviting: each piece interlocking with the next, each a different color, each a testament to the spectrum of autism.



Recreation time in BRAAC gym.

Indeed, autism is known as a spectrum disorder because of the varying degrees of severity. Autism is, in essence, a developmental disorder that most commonly affects and delays communication and social skills from an early age and typically appears during the first three years. Although some autistic behavior is predictable, symptoms of autism vary but commonly prevent those affected from forming meaningful relationships. Early intervention increases the rate of success and independence later in life.

Angela comments, "Data collection is something that is very big around here. We collect a whole lot of data on the students and graph it to make sure they're making progress."

Although Angela has been involved with the autistic community since her own son Joshua's diagnosis at 18 months old, she admits that she is continually learning about general support for her son as he transitions from adolescent to adult.

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BRAAC class packing up at end of school day.

Her personal connection to the Center and its mission is evident when she tells me about her now 18-year-old son playing on the football team at Lord Botetourt High and his touchdown last season.

As Angela and I pace the halls, and I continue

to admire the artwork, she recounts the process of guardianship that she recently endured. Guardianship forfeits some of Joshua's basic rights to Angela but is enacted for his protection. Angela hopes that she can pass on words of wisdom to others facing similar challenges by



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increasing the support and advocacy for those adolescents transitioning to adulthood.

I admire Angela's willingness to discuss her affinity to the Center's mission and the sometimes difficult nature of learning through experience with Joshua and children in similar circumstances. Angela's personable and passionate personality envelops me as I tour the Center, its art-filled halls, its classrooms, computer lab, and the playground outside.

Clearly, Angela and BRAAC are paving the way for future generations, learning through experience, sharing, advocating, educating, and most importantly preparing these children to enter adulthood ahead of the game. Angela reiterates the importance of preparing this particular population for life and the Center's devotion to and encouragement of the development of



BRAAC buses line up for afternoon pickup.

students to their full potential by the time they transition from the Center to public school and high school graduation, and beyond. 

For comprehensive and up-to-date information about the Center, go to www.braacroanoke.org.

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Michael Miller

Tech Scoop

Fostering Creativity >

Executive Summary:

It's rather undeniable that creativity has its place in the workplace; businesses may need to be more accommodating.

By Michael Miller

Creativity is a funny thing.

In the old days, creativity was something we often assumed was limited to the ranks of artists, writers, composers and the like. That's because most of us weren't artists,

writers or composers, and we really didn't understand how they functioned.

But the development of an economy based on rapid technological change has altered the perception of creativity and moved it squarely into the mainstream of the corporate halls. Apple, Inc. did not become the most valuable global corporate entity because they had better engineers. It was due to their creativity in solving problems and seeing into a future that "could be". Nowadays, any new startup focuses its efforts to create an environment that fosters creativity, because they know that's the only way to be successful.

But creative people are somewhat of an enigma. Creativity is all about tossing aside conventions that impede free thinking, and yet some rules are necessary in order for a corporation to function effectively and legally. So how can we manage this dichotomy?

The first step is to recognize the telltale signs of creative people, and then construct an environment where they can thrive. Here are some properties of creative types:

1. They quickly become bored. They have to stay stimulated constantly because they function best when they are assembling apparently unrelated pieces of information together to solve a problem. So, they need lots of experiences. We used to call this ADHD.
2. They are often found daydreaming. Often. This goes with #1, because it's part of their process for obtaining new ideas and experiences.
3. Also, they can solve problems in their sleep. Which goes back to #2, especially when you realize that dreaming and

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daydreaming are the same to them.

4. To a creative person, imagination and reality are equals. I don't mean they are equally important, I mean they are fundamentally not different. They don't distinguish between the two, and that's a good thing.
5. They never know what time it is. They become so absorbed in their creative process that time has no meaning for them. They will forget to eat and sleep when they are working on something they find interesting. Make sure it's something you wanted them to work on.
6. They see the world through a child's eyes. An important part of them never grows up, and that is really the key to their success. They see the world with

the fascination of somebody who is experiencing it for the first time. It's all so cool.

7. They think everybody is just like them. Unfortunately. They believe that anybody who does not think and act the way they do is suppressing their natural urges, and they can't understand why anybody would do that.

And that last one is the key to the future for the world. Because now that we are beginning to understand how important creativity is to everything we do, perhaps we can find a way to free the shackles from our employees and let them be what they were meant to be.

Because we need a world where they're exactly like you and me. 

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Laura Purcell

Shelling Out a Space >

Executive Summary:

Christiansburg's Threshold Center is essentially industrial space that's tenant driven.

By Laura Purcell

Michael Abraham hopes someone will kick him out of his office. As owner of the Threshold Center, a 40-thousand square foot, multi-tenant, industrial shell facility in Christiansburg, Abraham's business is keeping the building full.

"Our goal from day one has been to be flexible," Abraham said. "One of my tenants chose a space with no internal improvements at all. They use it as a warehouse. Other tenants have a substantial outfit with more finished space."

Abraham never set out to be a landlord. He and his wife built the facility at a time when they were having trouble finding the right location for their former business, Christiansburg Printing. "All we wanted to do was buy an eight thousand square foot building."

When they couldn't find a place that fit their needs, Bob Isner, from the Montgomery County Department of Economic Development,



Laura Purcell

suggested they build something. But the town of Christiansburg only wanted to sell them a five-acre parcel. "I thought, I don't need five acres," Abraham said. "I didn't want to pay for land we wouldn't use."

Abraham brought this concern back to Isner. "He told me to buy the property and build a larger building than we need, then make the rest available to rent." The Abrahams took this advice and built a 20,000 square foot building, with the intention of using eight and renting the other twelve. Once the facility was built, they found a tenant for the empty portion of the building in two weeks.

"We've gone through a lot of twists and turns along the way," Abraham says. They built a second building after their first success, but they'd only rented a quarter of the new space when 9/11 occurred and the economy stopped. It took years, but they eventually found tenants, and sold their own business to a competitor who now rents space from them. "In this type of business, there's only two hard parts—risk, and everything else. You have to be in a position to deal with risk in order to be successful."

One tenant is Wing Ng, a professor of mechanical engineering at Virginia Tech. Ng rents part of the Threshold Center for his business, TechsBurg, which provides engineering and precision manufacturing services. "Our company does a lot of engineering testing," says Ng. As a subcontractor for NASA and the Department of Defense as well as other



Michael Abraham

private industries, TechsBurg has wind tunnel testing capabilities as well as mills and lathes for precision manufacturing. "We need open floor space with high ceilings as well as offices," Ng said. A tenant at the Threshold Center for eight years, he recently expanded his space by 50 percent. "We were fortunate there was space available, and Michael has been very accommodating," Ng said.

"We provide a facility that has met a need," Abraham said. "There's a diverse mix [of tenants] and that's the beauty of it, really. Forty or fifty people work here, and this is our contribution to the economy," he said. 

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all photos: Rod Belcher

Blair Graninger

Down to Earth >

Executive Summary:

Whether it's considered a trending new idea or very old idea, green burial offers a more personal end-of-life experience for many people, and it's undeniably more eco-friendly.

By Rod Belcher

A field carpeted with lush grass and wildflowers, surrounded by a cathedral of trees. The only sounds, the voice of nature-bird song and the whispering rush of the wind off the mountains. For many, this is a more appealing final resting place than the traditional burial plot or mausoleum vault.

The practice of green burials is slowly taking root in the United States and in Virginia. Unlike a traditional funeral,

involving toxic embalming chemicals, aluminum coffins and concrete burial vaults, the green burial movement is focused on making the end of a lifetime into a very personal event while leaving as slight an impression upon the planet as possible.

"The trend started in the 1980's, Blair Graninger, Family Service Counselor for Forest Rest Natural Cemetery in Boones Mill says. "It was part of the national movement to 'go green' and leave less of a footprint on the Earth."

Forest Rest is tucked away in a pastoral corner of Mountain View Memorial Park, a more traditional cemetery.

"We have five acres and three hundred spaces devoted to green burials," Graninger says. "We are the closest green burial facility between Harrisonburg, Virginia and North Carolina."

At the core of the green burial philosophy



Forest Rest markers



is a return to pre-Civil War burial rituals and practices. A death in the family was most often an event handled at the family home and on the ancestral lands, instead of in a funeral home by a staff of professionals.

"America has commercialized the funeral process," says Isabel Berney with the Funeral Consumer's Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge. "Only The U.S., Canada and Australia embalm," Berney says, "Most countries don't. They have no reason to."

For those looking to help reduce pollutants and contaminants, what has come to be seen as traditional burial leaves a legacy of less than eco-friendly by-products. According to research done by the Green Burial Council, the environmental impact of current funeral industry practices produce 4.3 million gallons of carcinogenic embalming fluids, like formaldehyde.

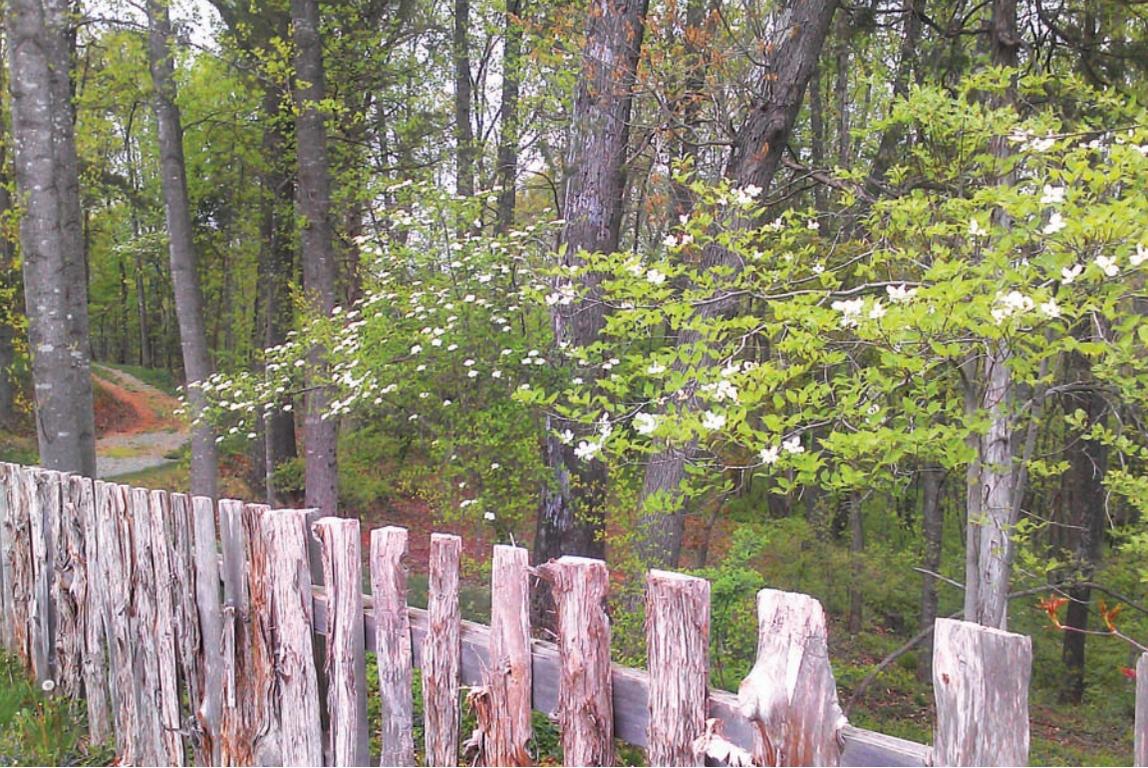
"With green burial there is no embalming," Graninger says, "or the deceased is embalmed

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Forest Rest fence

with non-toxic chemicals. The burial container is a simple pine box or a wicker coffin. There are no vaults, no cement and the deceased is buried in a shroud of natural fibers, like cotton, silk or linen”.

The burial process can be very different as well, with the grave being dug to a more shallow depth than the traditional six feet to encourage aerobic bacteria to do its job, hastening the discomposure of the body to nourish the soil and plants. Burial monuments and markers are limited to materials that could be located in an undisturbed field or wood, like simple wooden tablets or smooth rocks.

Many families, Graninger says, may take part

in washing the body, having visitation at their homes and even digging and covering the grave, which can be located on the family's land, in accordance with Virginia laws. It makes for a intensely personal experience for the departed's loved ones. For some, perhaps too intense.

“I see a lot of couples where one person is interested and the other isn't,” Graninger says. “Some people don't like the idea of the dirt being on them, or being in the earth.”

And while Graninger says many like the notion of a sense of continuity and a return to simplicity that green burial offers, those incentives have yet to turn into major sales.

“We have 10 spaces sold since we started in 2011,” Graninger says. “As of yet, no burials. We have lots of inquiries and lots of people interested in preplanning.”

It's a slow and steady process, Berney says but green burial is growing in popularity as more people look to take a hands on approach to their lives and deaths.

“In the 17 years since the first green burial facility opened in South Carolina, over 40 such facilities are now operating in the country,” Berney says. “Green burial is about where cremation was at 50 years ago. It's definitely trending up.” 



Forest Rest bodywrap



all photos: Dan Smith

TMI Director Ali Nazemi (sitting) with former director Larry Lynch.

A new way to look at town-gown >

Executive Summary:

The Management Institute at Roanoke College, which has been operating at full throttle for a quarter century, is turning out some of our best business leaders.

By Dan Smith

When “town” and “gown” appear in the same sentence, the implication is often negative. The town-gown relationship between The Management Institute at Roanoke College and the Roanoke Valley business community has been anything but that for the past 25 years.

The Management Institute, in fact, has helped turn out a full generation of business leaders with its combination of academic theory and practical experience for students who are already veterans in the professional world.



Students listen intently in TMI class

Larry Lynch, who was director of TMI for several years, says, "TMI has brought recognition in the business community to the college and has been a great resource for continuing education for the Greater Roanoke Valley."

The Management Institute is a program rife with evolution. Says Director Dr. Ali Nazemi, "If you took the class 10 years ago, it would be 80 percent different than this year's classes."

In its quarter century, The Management Institute has graduated 460 students from its 12-class, 39-hour program. Students are nominated by their companies for participation and each year, classes range in size between 14 and 22 managers, directors, CEOs and owners.

The program is supported by a wide range of corporate sponsors from the Roanoke Valley. Among the long list are LewisGale Medical Center, Save-X, Vision Point,

Mennel Mining, O'Connor Group, Patrick Henry Hotel, United Health Care, City of Roanoke, Cycle Systems, Hill Studio, Maid Bess, Yokohoma, Allstate, Roanoke Gas, Carilion, Member One, Branch Highways, Davidsons, Lanford Brothers and Richfield. The list is well over 100 companies long.

Nazemi says TMI is "professional advancement almost at an MBA level." Curriculum, which is ever-changing, is developed in identified areas of need that companies often express. He says the program has done "a good job connecting the theoretical with the practical." The class structure more workshop than lecture: "We learn from each other," says Nazemi. "We understand real issues and I take those back to my undergraduate classes."

CEO Nancy Agee says, "Carilion Clinic partners with The Management Institute to supplement educational opportunities for our emerging and seasoned leaders. The program focuses on evaluating and developing business skills and competencies as well as networking with other professionals in the Roanoke Valley.

"The feedback from those who have benefited from this experience is positive and highlights the individualized approach to the program. We continue to partner with the The Management Institute as it aligns with our leadership development philosophy by focusing on business acumen, staff development, emotional intelligence and community-involvement."

Ken Lanford, president of Lanford Brothers,



who has graduated from the program, says, "The structure and format make it easy for participants, since everyone has a full time job and other commitments."

Says Will Karbach, CEO of The Branch Group, "TMI passes the 'Just Right Test.' I think it's a good opportunity for a company or organization to provide to their rising stars a glimpse of what a larger role looks like and the broad array of issues faced by company leaders, without completely overwhelming them."

Todd Leeson, an attorney with Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore in Roanoke who teaches at TMI, says the practical application of lessons is undeniable. "Most managers are not fully aware of all the laws that govern the workplace, and proactive steps they can take to minimize the legal risks to their

businesses. In my course and others, the participants receive practical advice and recommendations that will help them become more effective and efficient in their roles."

TMI's first director, Melinda Cox of Roanoke County's Department of Economic Development, points to the link between business and the college as of enormous significance. "An incredible network has developed between the college and business community over the past 25 years that has forged a unique, long-term partnership between the professors and business executives," she says.

"The institute promoted dynamic professors challenging the business community's cream of the crop, which resulted in a win-win or, in this case, a learn-learn environment." 



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Dan Smith

Jack Avis and Ginger Poole at Mill Mountain Theatre

Staging something constructive >

Executive Summary:

Ginger Pool and Jack Avis used their love story as a springboard to revive Mill Mountain Theatre, and both are still going strong.

By Dan Smith

As the first chapter in a love story, this one set a high bar for the inauspicious. Minutes after Jack Avis met Ginger Poole Feb. 9, 2009, he laid her off from her job at Mill Mountain Theatre. That's why he was there. As chairman of the board, he had to permanently dismiss 23 employees in 2009.

It was a tough day all around for Jack, owner of Avis Construction in Roanoke and a board member of the theater for a good while. He had to leave the board meeting shortly after the massacre because he needed to get his neck put back in a brace, the result of surgery.

"We thought it was over," says Ginger, looking back. But it wasn't. They had the run of "Driving Miss Daisy" to finish, which meant a couple of weeks more with a skeleton staff, one of whom was Ginger. Jack and a core of about six board members worked side-by-side with the few who remained and Jack and Ginger spent time together. Intense time. Rebuilding and re-invigorating time.

"It was damage control," says Jack. "We didn't know there'd be a future" and, says Ginger, "We had to deal with vendors, patrons, the press ..." Says Jack, "We did it one-on-one, face-to-face with everybody."

About two weeks into what turned out to be triage, Jack and Ginger noticed they really liked each other. They are both mature (he's 49, she's 43), stable and professional and they liked the way their strengths played together. "It wasn't formal," says Ginger. "We'd just finished 'Driving Miss Daisy' and we went out to celebrate with a glass of wine. It was our first date." But not their last.

In retrospect, says Ginger, "It was an intense and compressed time for us." There was a lot going on, a depth of experience two people might not share in two or three years. Now, they've been married for three years, have a baby, the theater's running successfully and "it worked for us," says Ginger, smiling broadly. "I don't know if I'd recommend doing it that way, though."

Jack says that without Ginger and the education classes, "we wouldn't be here talking about this today." It was the first in a series of serendipitous events—stuff nobody could anticipate—that fell into place, all firming up the foundation of the new theater.

After "Miss Daisy" closed, Ginger had scheduled education classes and didn't want to simply cancel them with no refund. She had been brought in to cover education—one of the few remaining successful centers for

1983 ... 2014 ... tomorrow



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MMT at the time—after the education director, Pat Wilhelms, left in a dispute, starting Roanoke Children’s Theatre. It’s not Ginger’s style. So MMT worked with Center in the Square and held the classes. They were successful. They were also a light at the end of a long tunnel.

The board saw the potential in the classes and began building on them. After a while, the board and Ginger determined that they should do a play with the children and settled on “Annie, Jr.” It was a huge hit, but with Mill Mountain Theatre closing for the next 18 months—in various stages—for renovations, setting up several plays was not possible. They’d have to do what they could when they could do it.

That, says Ginger, turned out to be a blessing because it didn’t allow them to get ahead of themselves in the resurrection of the theater. It was slow and steady, growing a bit at a time. “We were forced to pace ourselves,” says Ginger. The business professional in Jack knew the wisdom in that.

While MMT was out of commission, theater

in Roanoke was not. It was, in fact, enjoying something of a growth spurt with new organizations jumping in and the program at Hollins University becoming nationally prominent. People were learning to work together, something that deeply appealed to Ginger, the consummate professional with the extensive background. “Theater grows theater,” says Jack. Ginger noted what was happening, as well: “Competition is good. It’s not about doom and downing others.”

Suddenly theatrical troupes in Roanoke are working together, something unheard of in the past. Ginger says the 1990s “were ego-driven years” that hurt theater, but “now for survival, we need each other; we need the synergy.” Collaboration—MMT with Hollins; Showtimers with MMT, etc.—is growing. Mill Mountain is exploring co-productions and collaborations with other theater groups in the region and the excitement is growing almost daily.

A new marriage likes that kind of stimulation, both in theaters and in people. 

Tamara Futrell

- *Associate Dean of Students at Washington & Lee University*
- *Graduate of VCU (BS), Longwood College (MS), & PHD Student at Va Tech*
- *President of Beta Chi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.*

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Group Plans: Know Your Benefits

Making decisions about health insurance probably isn't at the top of your list of favorite things to do. However, health insurance is an important part of your finances and medical care, so you want to make an educated choice about which plan to enroll in. If you are offered group health insurance through your employer, you can take advantage of several benefits.

What Are Group Health Plans?

Group health insurance plans are employer-based plans that offer coverage to a pool of employees. In contrast, an individual plan is purchased to cover only one person or family. The difference between how group and individual plans are designed affects your costs.

Why Choose a Group Health Plan?

Group health insurance plans hold several advantages over individually purchased health insurance, including lower costs and convenience.

Shared risk

Because a group plan covers multiple people, the risk is spread out over what is likely a fairly healthy group of participants. This helps keep your premium rates lower than individual plans whose rates are based on individual risk.

Shared costs

With group coverage, your monthly premium is even lower because the cost is shared between you and your employer. Employers will pay varying percentages of coverage, but whatever amount they choose, it reduces the amount you owe.

Depending on your employer's benefits, you may be responsible for the full cost of the premium for your enrolled family members, or your company may choose to contribute to those premiums as well.

Tax advantages

If you pay health insurance premiums for an employer-sponsored group health plan, you can pay your premium with pre-tax dollars, which means you are not taxed on the money that is spent on your premium. This lowers your taxable income, giving you another financial benefit from group health coverage. If you are enrolled in an individual health plan, your premium will typically be paid with taxed dollars.

Easy enrollment

A huge advantage of group health coverage through your employer is the ease of enrolling and paying. Your employer will handle the administrative burden of facilitating coverage, and typically your premiums will be automatically deducted from your paychecks.

COBRA

Under certain circumstances, such as voluntary or involuntary job loss, you have the option to keep your group insurance plan for a certain length of time under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA). You will have to pay more for the premium because your employer is no longer paying a share of the cost, but it is an option available to you while you work on acquiring new medical coverage after a job loss or other qualifying circumstance.

For more information on COBRA, visit www.dol.gov/dol/topic/health-plans/cobra.htm.

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Sticks and stones >

I'm intrigued by our FRONTcover story this month. You may recall last month our LegalFRONT featured a report on picketing. When I assigned that story to Randolph Walker, I asked him to throw in some attention on "virtual" picketing as well, because I knew online reviews and consumer postings often have a much larger footprint when it comes to long term impact. We weren't in to our first interview about real time, onsite picketing when we both realized the virtual side of this picture was a whole other story.

In fact, it's so big, I knew we had a cover on our hands.

Reputation management is no longer a personality trait. Reputation management is no longer just a good way to be or something to believe in as you run your business or perform your job. It's a full fledged business practice, often requiring dedicated and systematic activities by employees or departments.

Even if your mission and vision statements and overall company policies are designed to install safeguards so that you run a solid, clean operation, with the utmost attention on customer service—you still may find it necessary to address the ongoing perception of your company (or job) from external reactions.

In many ways, it's a shame we have to do this.

Is it possible to run a proper, ethical, customer-centric operation—and that will be enough? Can you—as I tell my children—treat insults like water off a duck's back? Ignore the negativity and just do the best you can?

You can try.

I'm convinced the smaller you are, the easier it is to just do your best and let that persistent goal serve as your reputation management program. But grow a little, serve a few more people, hire a few more employees, contract a few more vendors, move into a larger market—and sooner or later something you do is going to surface as a "shortcoming," no matter how attentive you are. And on top of that, something you *don't* do will surface as a shortcoming. You could have zero blame for the dissatisfaction. It's the nature of a population.

Whether you manage your reputation in a systematic way or you just try to be good, manage it—you must.

Otherwise, someone else will manage it for you. 

On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:

Is keeping a good reputation and not worrying about what others say about you still good enough these days?

Banning the Box >

Should the “Have you ever been convicted?” check box be removed from employment applications?

The national Ban the Box movement says ‘Yes’, arguing that it unfairly discriminates against ex-offenders. Many employers say “No”, arguing that they have a right to know an applicant’s background. Who is right?

Both are. Here’s why:

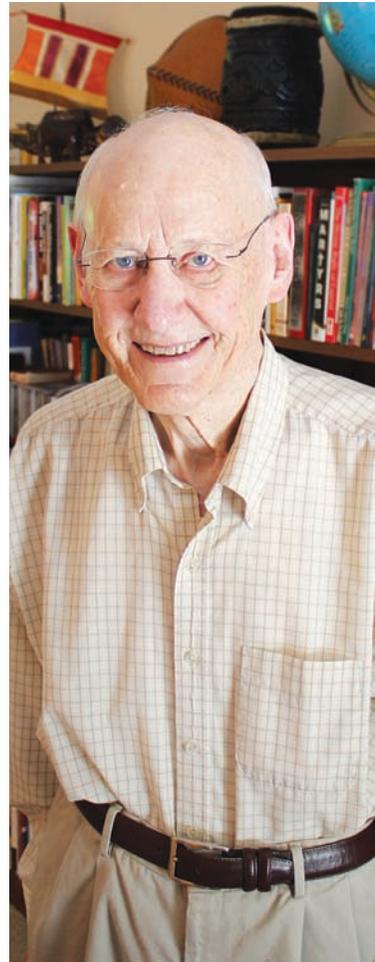
Currently job applications in which this box is checked are routinely tossed aside by most employers – even though the applicant’s offense may have been a low-level nonviolent crime in the distant past and the applicant has since turned his or her life around (neither of which will be evident in the job application), and despite the fact that the employer may miss an applicant who possesses excellent job skills.

There are now over 325,000 ex-offenders in Virginia who have ‘paid their debt to society’ by completing all court imposed punishment and now live in our communities. For most, their highest priority is to get a job so they can support themselves and their families, become productive members of our communities and integrated into mainstream society. Research has found that those who obtain employment are willing to work hard and are far less likely to revert to crime and become recidivists than are those who are unable to get a job.

Those who want to ban the box are asking that questions about any conviction history be removed from the initial job application so they will have an equal opportunity of being called for an interview where they can make their case and be evaluated as whole persons and not be arbitrarily discriminated against because of a single mistake they made somewhere in their distant past. During the interview the employer would have the opportunity – indeed, the responsibility – to ask about any conviction history, run a criminal background check, and determine whether an ex-offender possesses the relevant job skills and deserves a ‘second chance’ to become a productive citizen. For jobs relating to public safety, handling finance or requiring contact with vulnerable populations such as working with children and the elderly, employers are required by law to carry out criminal background checks.

It is becoming increasingly recognized that banning the box promotes fairness and is also good for our

continued on Page 52



Hunter Mabry

Guest Commentary

By Hunter Mabry

Executive Summary:

Even when the employer should be knowledgeable of an applicant's background, the application itself can nip any chance at full discovery.

Guest Commentary

from Page 51

economy and the safety of our communities. In Virginia, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth and Richmond have enacted 'ban the box' policies to eliminate questions about criminal history from the initial application. Last October Target, our nation's third largest retailer, announced it would remove questions about criminal history from its job applications. Recently, The Roanoke Times (16 February 2014) featured the story of a local entrepreneur who has launched a successful business specifically to provide employment for women ex-offenders.

This is a win-win situation for both ex-offenders and employers. By deferring questions about any conviction history until an interview, all applicants will have an equal opportunity to be considered on the merits of their job skills, and employers will be assured of not missing well-qualified applicants. As a sweetener to the deal, free federal bonding insurance is available to help protect employers against the risk of dishonesty by any such applicants. 

Hunter Mabry is a retired theological professor and United Methodist minister now living in Roanoke.

“ ”
The impact is astronomical

— Page 8

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Letters

No fly zone

I read your story on drones this month with great interest, and I've been following the issue quite a bit lately.

I've been taking ground-based aerial photographs since 2009. My original idea was to mount a camera to a model helicopter, but discovered even then that the FAA had prohibited flying UAVs for commercial purposes. At the time, the FAA hadn't charged anyone yet, but I doubted whether I could even insure a UAV for liability if FAA regulations prohibited them. Once I found out about the FAA's policy, I bought a 50 foot tall mast with remote controlled camera

equipment to take aerial photographs.

I can't wait for drone photography to be legal and insurable, it would allow more versatility for positioning and probably be quicker setup. That being said, 50 feet up is still a stunning view and it's a legal way to have an aerial shot without aircraft.

Greg Pruett

www.crowsnestphoto.com

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

“ ”

It's a fascinating area of the law because we're on the cutting edge

— Page 31

“ ”

You cannot opt out—it's going to happen — Page 8

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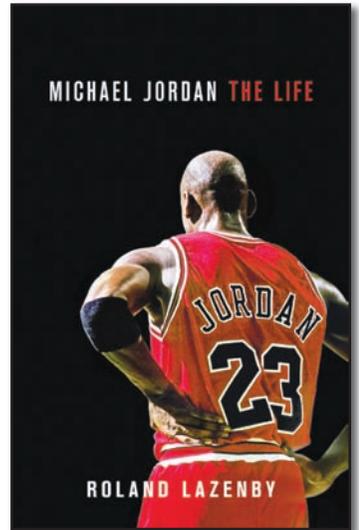
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Books @ the FRONT >

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



A dang good book

Roland Lazenby's *Michael Jordan: The Life* (Little-Brown) puts an exclamation point on a career that to this point has involved about 60 books, notably *Jerry West* and *Blood on the Horns*. Roland, a Wytheville native who has lived in Roanoke for years and taught at both Virginia Tech and Radford University, has made a career covering the NBA from this backwater. He is a sought-after expert.

Jordan is a long book (690 pages, cut from 1,000), but I never found it tedious or difficult and I'm not an NBA fan. The first third in particular is riveting, delving into Jordan's Eastern North Carolina roots and featuring his tough, wiry grandfather, a man who helped make Jordan the uncompromising warrior he became.

Roland is, first, a reporter and a damn good one. We worked together some years ago at the local daily and he remains a legend there for his temper and insistence on the story. It shows in his books, as well. The craftsmanship is superb and the story is straight from a born storyteller. It's a dang good book.

—Dan Smith

Spirit of the plantation

Like romance? Excited by gothic novels set in the American South? Ready to match wits with an enterprising young woman who is determined to discover the identity of a haunting ghost and mysterious roses that appear unexpectedly (but in timely fashion) in a Pre-Civil war plantation? Then you are just the reader author Susan

Coryell has in mind with her latest novel, *A Red, Red Rose* (Wild Rose Press; 2013).

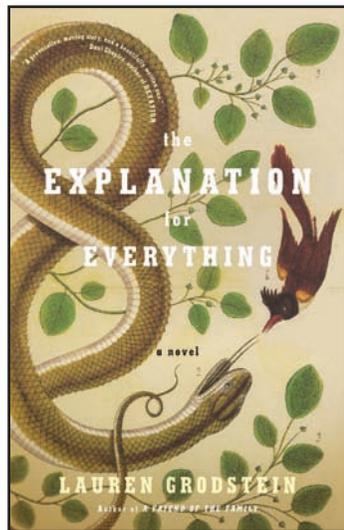
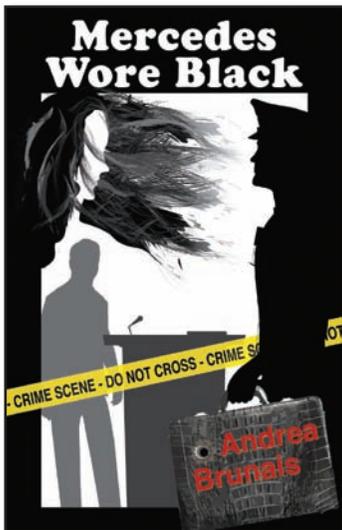
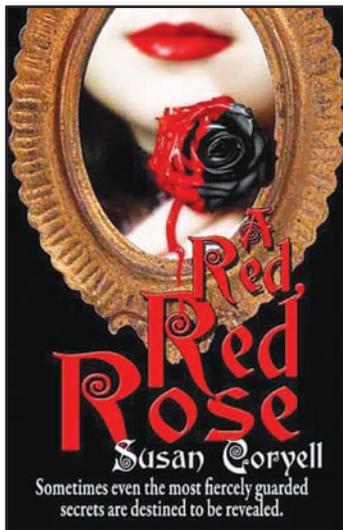
Coryell invites you into the life of her 20-year-old sleuth, Ashby Overton, who thinks she will be enjoying a carefree summer vacation at Moore Mountain Lake—filled with sunny days of water skiing, horseback riding across the woodlands with her young cousin and Luke-the-handsome stable boy, and family get togethers. Instead, she finds herself exploring old attic trunks and perusing ancient diaries as she searches for clues to an apparition that has a family connection and a deeply personal interest in the current life of our protagonist.

This book follows Susan Coryell's first novel, *Eaglebait*. She's a career educator, using her characters lives in teaching young adults. A native Virginian, Coryell keeps readers involved in the mysteries of ancestral ghosts and symbolic roses. She uses the cultural battles of city against rural life and the values of the past against the realities of the present to establish just the right balance of tension in the search for love and identity. Robert Burns, whose poem inspired the title of this new mystery, would be proud to see his themes played out so well in this modern adventure in an old Virginia plantation home.

—Thomas R. McDaniel

Backpack journalism

Andrea Brunais, communications manager for Outreach and International Affairs at Virginia Tech, has just released her second novel, *Mercedes Wore Black* (Yellow Southern Pine Publishing) and it's a



dandy. She is the author of the novel *Night of the Litani* and of *I See Your Name Everywhere*, a book on media relations. Andrea is a former editorial writer in Tampa and Tallahassee, Fla., where much of the new book is set. The novel is an examination of the new newspaper reporter, one involved in “backpack journalism,” the independent who may well form the core of journalism in the future.

The story is set during a Florida governor’s race and if you know Florida politics, you’ll understand the potential for strife inherent in the story of Mercedes Hawk, a young hotshot of a newswoman who becomes a victim of the latest journalistic trend: cutting staffs to the point that publications become all but irrelevant (you’ve seen it in these parts, too).

Mercedes remains a tough idealist, a young reporter on a mission, and Andrea knows the type. One imagines her as such, in fact. Her writing is crisp and true and the story captivating from the prologue through the wrapup. If you’re in journalism or if you simply want to try to understand what’s going in (in an entertaining format), this one’s highly recommended.

—Dan Smith

Choosing your Religion

In *The Explanation for Everything* (Alonquin Books; 2013), Lauren Grodstein brings us the grand old inquisition of science versus religion (specifically evolution v. intelligent design), in novel form, with characters we all know (unless our circles are so tight as to insulate from all diversity). I was drawn into the story—until the unraveling began. The notion that religion is

a crutch is nothing new; but our characters here are duped even as our readers are teased on the possibility of enlightenment. And in that regard, the book succeeds.

There is something about the writing here that stays just under the ledge of purely literary, perhaps to match the lab environment where our protagonist tests his mice. Factual, black and white, one or the other. There is also a little rushing going on, as the conversions between faith lost and faith gained aren’t quite credible, described as if one were choosing which coat to wear. A baptism scene reveals where the story’s allegiance lies, as what the minister says is nothing like what any would say at any of the baptisms I’ve witnessed, protestant, catholic, fundamental, ecumenical. Despite some implausible moments, *E4E* is a good read, particularly the first 80 percent. Even more fascinating than science battling religion is the more murkier waters between mercy and justice. There are soul-ripping scenes that make you crave more. I just wish the crutch would have been replaced with something less patronizing. Religion’s assistance validated only by moments of weakness? That’s too much like Vick’s vapor rub: it might make you feel a little better at really bad times, but never really cures anything.

—Tom Field

(**The reviewers:** Dan Smith is an author and freelance writer in Roanoke; Thomas R. McDaniel is a professor of education at Converse College in Spartanburg, South Carolina; Tom Field is a creative director and publisher of FRONT.)



From Attimo to White Rock >

A picture perfect Saturday greeted the Blacksburg annual **Fork & Cork** festival by The Blacksburg Partnership on May 3. At last count, a record 23 regional Virginia wineries hosted tastings for the packed crowd at the First & Main shopping complex.



Beerdrops >

It's raining. So what? It's pouring... beer. And wine. Despite the rain on May 10, Daleville Town Center in Botetourt County kept its **Virginia Beer & Wine Festival** on schedule. Those who attended didn't seem to mind the weather one bit.



Techies unite >

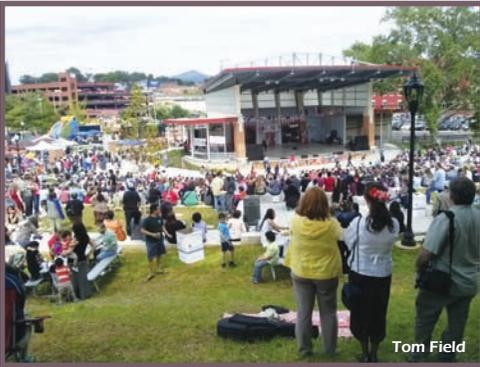
A record 700+ attendees turned out to the Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council's (RBTC) **2014 TechNite** on May 9 at Hotel Roanoke. Technology reporter **Katie Love** from WSLs 10 emceed and Virginia Tech's **Charles Steger** presented the keynote. Winners are listed in FRONTNotes on Page 67.

FRONT 'N ABOUT



Street legal >

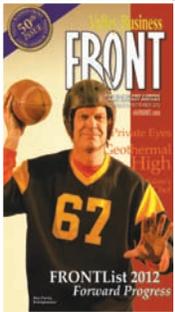
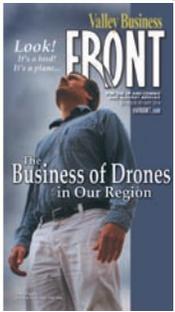
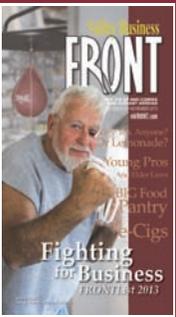
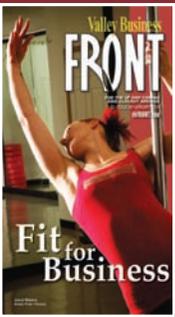
Roanoke law firm Glenn Feldman Darby & Goodlatte held its annual private **Street Food Festival** on the downtown Roanoke city street beside its office on May 14. Local "foodie" vendors, including restaurants, market produce, caterers, brewery and winery exhibited with samples to the large crowd of the law firm's clients and friends.



Colorful >

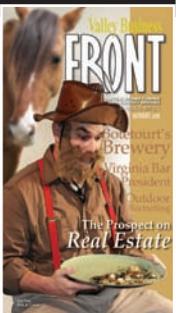
Roanoke's **Local Colors 2014 Festival** was held May 17 in the newly renovated Elmwood Park. Designated local diversity ambassador **Pearl Fu**, carried in the rickshaw, announced this year's event—the 24th season—as her last in an official capacity, as she has Parkinson's disease and is devoting herself to finding a treatment.

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



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By the Numbers

Our Foreign-Born Neighbors and Where They Were Born >

By Anne Piedmont

If you need an example of how statewide statistics often do not reflect the demographic reality of the Roanoke and New River Valleys, look no further than the data surrounding Virginia's foreign-born population.

More than 11 percent of the people living in Virginia were born outside the United States, according to the 2008-12 American Community Survey, while the number is approximately half that locally. And, as regular readers of this column know, the Roanoke and Blacksburg Metropolitan Statistical Areas are also far from monolithic.

The Blacksburg MSA has a higher percentage

of foreign-born residents, due in part to the two large universities. Montgomery County has the highest percent in the region, while Craig County has the lowest. Roanoke City is home to the most foreign-born residents in the Roanoke MSA, not surprising, since the region's largest city tends to be its most diverse.

The region was settled centuries ago by Europeans who braved the wilderness to build homes, businesses and farms. Today, only Botetourt and Craig counties have a majority of foreign-born residents who were born in Europe. The bulk of the Roanoke Valley's foreign born come from Latin America, largely due to Roanoke City. The reverse is true in the New River Valley, where Latin American natives make up the smallest percentage of the foreign-born. People born in Asia (including India) are the largest foreign-born group – almost half – in that MSA.

Why does all this matter? The statistics highlight the differences between the region and the state as a whole, and remind us to beware of broad assumptions. On the local level, the differences from locality to locality speak to the richness of the region and of the changes that are upon us. And our welcoming nature.

	Total Population	Foreign-Born	% Foreign-Born	% Born in Europe	% Born in Asia	% Born in Latin Am.
Botetourt Co.	33,074	634	1.9%	63.3%	21.9%	8.8%
Craig Co.	5,186	16	0.3%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Franklin Co.	56,012	1,553	2.8%	21.0%	23.8%	38.4%
Roanoke Co.	92,432	4,729	5.1%	27.5%	41.7%	21.2%
Roanoke City	96,742	6,276	6.5%	5.6%	28.1%	52.1%
Salem	24,792	1,280	5.2%	26.8%	25.7%	34.2%
Roanoke MSA	308,238	14,488	4.7%	18.9%	31.6%	37.0%
Floyd County	15,268	192	1.3%	19.3%	48.4%	32.3%
Giles Co.	17,149	209	1.2%	23.9%	20.6%	55.5%
Montgomery Co.	94,179	8,358	8.8%	22.6%	53.2%	13.5%
Pulaski Co.	34,869	507	1.5%	26.8%	20.1%	47.3%
Radford	16,511	956	5.8%	23.7%	39.8%	18.8%
Blacksburg MSA	177,976	10,222	5.7%	22.9%	49.6%	16.8%
Combined MSAs	486,214	24,710	5.1%	20.6%	39.1%	28.7%
Virginia	8,014,955	893,177	11.2%	11.2%	41.2%	36.3%



Dan Smith

Vickie Damico (facing camera) chats with client Monica Rokicki of Better Building Works.

Another time, another place >

Executive Summary:

Vickie Damico has excelled at every job she's ever had, always working for somebody else. She decided recently at the age of 57, that it was time to excel for herself.

By Dan Smith

There was something of an epiphany involved. Here was Vickie Damico, running near the finale of what many would have thought an outstanding career in several different areas, facing life without a job.

Her company, Breakell Construction, had recently been the victim of a massive embezzlement, one that put it out of business and nearly ruined a hard-won and well-deserved reputation for excellence and vision. Vickie had sent out resumes, interviewed and discovered that her skills were in demand, but only part-time and only in selective situations. She had a decision to make. And she did.

Thus, was born Vickie Damico the company,

a one-woman agency that specializes in marketing and small business consulting. It is a part-time gig, one that gives her time to be there for her aging mother while going full-bore-break-neck, the only speed she has known since the 1970s.

The always-smiling, ever-energetic Vickie says, "I've enjoyed everywhere I've ever worked, but I'm helping businesses grow and be successful now. I feel like I'm in the prime of my life. All this experience I bring, I do get excited."

There's no niche in this, she says, because niches are limiting. When the question was "What can you do?" the response was "What do you need?" She says, "I'm a big picture thinker who loves the details."

Vickie has always worked from break to break, going to work right out of college at WDBJ7 in Roanoke as an intern, then a part-timer in production. That evolved into work behind the camera for a number of live shows and commercials in Roanoke ("Panorama," "Classroom Quiz," "Mornin'", the news). She was there for seven years and for a brief time became a "weather girl," an episode that left her gun-shy about being on the performing side of the camera. "I still feel bad for [the station and viewers]," she says. "I was

“ ”

I still feel bad for [the station and viewers]. I was never comfortable with the weather. It was not my most shining moment.

— Vickie Damico

never comfortable with the weather. It was not my most shining moment.”

But she was comfortable with everything else. She went to work selling Estee Lauder for a while, but returned to television at Channel 10 in Roanoke with the Miss Virginia Pageant as co-producer of the TV show. She worked a Channel 10 production called “Great Expectations: The Education Project” for two years and then became the “Spirit of Virginia” reporter. That was a series of positive news stories presented each evening. Much of it was done live.

When Media General bought the station, she left and attended Hollins University in a master’s program and then returned to Channel 10 in sales for four years. A stop at Mostly Sofas (helping with advertising) preceded the job with Breakell Construction that she held for 13 years. This one was “very interesting” for her because “it was in a male-dominated industry” and she worked hard to get women into the field and the men in the field recognized by the higher-ups.

In Brief

Name: Vickie Damico
Age: 58
Company: Vickie Damico (marketing, consulting)
Location: Roanoke
Background: Vinton native, mother of three successful girls, wife of David Damico, a lawyer, former Miss Roanoke Valley. Radford College (now University) graduate in speech communication (now broadcast journalism). She worked in local television, mostly production, for many years before signing on with Breakell Inc. in marketing.

“Stan [Breakell] is such a visionary,” she says. The embezzlement and its aftermath “was one of the worst things I ever experienced.” She says that during the FBI investigation, employees were not allowed to tell clients what was going on and the company’s reputation—always sterling—suffered. It ultimately went out of business and she was there on the last day to close the doors.

Now, the next challenge and in Vickie Damico fashion, it is met with a smile, a firm handshake and a mile-a-minute talk about just how much fun this all is. 



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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

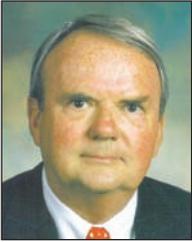


Walton

Michael Walton has been hired as director of business development for Brown Edwards.

Corey Ware has joined Virginia Farm Bureau in Botetourt County as an agent.

Tim Friel has joined Cole & Associates CPAs as staff accountant.



Cartledge

George B. Cartledge, Jr. has been elected chairman of the board for HomeTown Bankshares and HomeTown Bank.

LEGAL FRONT

Jonathan Puvak has joined Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore as an associate in the general commercial practice group.



Puvak

WELLNESS FRONT

Dr. Jeremy Keene has joined Tuck Chiropractic Clinic at the Bedford office.

Bill King has been promoted to managing partner for Modern Woodman of America.

Kimberly Whiter of Jefferson College of Health Sciences Medical Laboratory Sciences Program has been named a "40 Under 40" in medical labs by American Society for Clinical Pathology.

Dr. Harry McCoy has been chosen as national winner of HCA's Frist Humanitarian Award.



Moskal

Dr. Joseph Moskal was presented the Lifetime Career Award by the Virginia Orthopaedic Society.

Tommy East, president of American HealthCare in Roanoke, has been



East

appointed to the Virginia Board of Health by Governor Terry McAuliffe.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Mooney

Rose Mooney has been named executive director of the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership.

Diana Lewis has joined Roanoke Blacksburg Regional Airport as director of planning and engineering.



Oyler

Dan Oyler has joined The Renick Group, Inc. as senior consultant, engineering and IT.

Jonathan Burnham



Burnham

has joined SiteVision as web applications developer.



DeBonis

Mark DeBonis has been named director of Collaborative Computing Solutions, an information technology unit within Virginia Tech.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Ryan Lilly, Lynn Martin, Hunter Moore, Stacey Richardson, and Christine Whittaker have joined Long & Foster, Realtors as real estate agents.

Patricia Lawson has joined Lichtenstein Rowan as a real estate associate broker.

EDUCATION FRONT

Dana Hoos, fifth grade teacher at Mount Pleasant Elementary School, was awarded the 2014 Golden Apple

award by Roanoke County Public Schools.



Spiller

Elizabeth Spiller has been named dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at Virginia Tech.



Gerni

Pascha Gerni has been named director of finance at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute.

Dianne Hailey has joined American National University as director of programmatic and agency approvals.

Rosemary Blieszner has been appointed president of Gerontological Society of America.



Levy

David Levy has been names associate

director of research in cybersecurity at Virginia Tech's Hume Center for National Security and Technology.



deHahn

Henri deHahn has been named director of Virginia Tech's School of Architecture + Design.



Pierson

Mark Pierson has been named director of nuclear engineering program at Virginia Tech.

CULTURE FRONT

Devin Williams of Roanoke has been named Goodwill

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.

Industries International Graduate of the Year.



Boas

Julia Boas has been named events manager for Roanoke Outside, which includes logistics for Blue Ridge Marathon, Radical Reels Film Festival and GO Outside Festival.

OTHER FRONTS



Murray

Jack Murray has joined the Roanoke Regional Partnership as director of marketing.

Ernest McLeod Jr. has joined the Roanoke Blacksburg Regional Airport Commission

as director of finance.

Court Rosen of Roanoke and **Shannon Valentine** of Lynchburg have been appointed to the state's Commonwealth Transportation Board.

Katie Jones has been named administrator for the Joseph C. Thomas Center at Richfield Living retirement community.

Kiwanis Club of Roanoke elected its new officers, including **Sherry Dillon** (president); **Reginald Wood** (president-elect); **F. Anderson Stone** (vice president); **Lloyd Enoch** (secretary-treasurer); **JC Taylor** (past president); and the following directors serving on the 2014-2015 board: **Jeanne Bollendorf**; **William Dibling, Jr.**; **John Light**; **Richard Clemmer**; **Cheri Hartman**; **Heth Thomas**.

Lawrence McConnell has been appointed executive editor of The Roanoke Times.

Compiled by Tom Field



The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has confirmed an emerging pig virus

First class

Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine has graduated its inaugural class. On May 10, the Class of 2014 included 40 graduates who entered the school in 2010 and will now go out across the U.S. for residency training.

Piggy not going to market

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has confirmed an emerging pig virus, which has killed millions of piglets and raised pork prices nationwide, has spread to Virginia. The PEDV virus was first recognized in the U.S. last May and has spread to 30 states. The USDA is now requiring pork producers to report cases of the virus, tracking of pig movement, vehicles, and equipment leaving affected premises. Although the virus cannot

spread from pigs to humans and is not a food safety concern, it has taken a toll on the pork supply and, as a result, consumers are seeing pork prices that are approximately 10 percent higher than before the virus hit the U.S.

Autism clinic and school

ABC's of Applied Behavior Analysis has opened a new clinic in Salem that specializes in helping children with autism. Future plans include operating a school as well, admitting about 30 students in grades K-12.

Data or startup at VT

Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business is launching two new research centers. The Center for Business Intelligence and Analytics will be a resource in the growing field of big data, which combines

information technology and business concepts to improve business performance. The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship will educate students interested in entrepreneurship.

Dig deeper, Cav

The University of Virginia is increasing tuition and mandatory fees for first-year undergraduate in-state students by 4.3 percent and out-of-state students by 5.9 percent. Tuition increases for undergraduate students at U. Va. and U.Va. Wise for 2014-15. The increase is reported to be \$949 for a first year Virginia resident, totaling \$27,417.

Faster than ever

Cox Communications announced new internet speeds of 150 Mbps in Roanoke. The improvement will let

Cox customers download a full-length movie in just one minute. The increase is automatic and customers on Cox's Ultimate Tier will receive it at no additional charge. These speeds are available to customers as a result of the \$4.6 million dollar investment Cox has made over the past two years in its network in the Valley. Roanoke is the first Cox market in the Commonwealth of Virginia to launch the 150Mbps download speeds.

Fairlawn branch

First Bank & Trust Company has opened a new office at 7305 Peppers Ferry Boulevard in Fairlawn.

Engineering software upgrades

Blacksburg's Vitech Corporation plans to significantly update software tools available to the systems community. Plans include new releases of its premier model-based systems engineering (MBSE) tools, which have been used in the defense and aerospace industries for decades, along with new tools geared toward equipping systems thinkers in business and other non-engineering applications.

More Rolls-Royce at UVA

The University of Virginia has joined the global Rolls-Royce University Technology Centers network to develop long-term research and technology programs.

The center will provide each party with mutual funding for collaborative research to advance key aerospace technologies critical to Rolls-Royce. Rolls-Royce and U.Va. have maintained a relationship since 2007 when the company announced plans to build a new jet engine manufacturing plant at Crosspointe, in Prince George County and invited U.Va., Virginia Tech, Virginia State University and the Virginia Community College System to join in that partnership. This latest agreement provides more specific, technical research at the university level, which could eventually lead to new product development.

Drugs downtown

Downtown Roanoke has a new full service pharmacy with the opening of Downtown Drug at the corner of First Street and Kirk Avenue.

Coatings, parking, produce win Echallenge

VT KnowledgeWorks held its annual Entrepreneurship Challenge in April with the following results. For the Tech Transfer Challenge (offered to Virginia Tech faculty, staff, students and alumni to compete for \$100,000 value of mentorship and business support services), the winner was P&P Coating (patent pending low-cost porous coatings). For the Student Business Concept Challenge (for \$10,000 in scholarships,

start-up services, and opportunity to compete in the Global Challenge), the winner was Vestigo (data-driven mobile system using laser rangefinders to provide real time mapping of available parking). The People's Choice winner was Project OrganiCo (online marketplace for local vendors and farmers market products).

Jack being nimble

The Jacksonville Center for the Arts in Floyd has launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise money for operating expenses and an endowment. The effort, managed by Indiegogo, includes publicity for the Center's artwork and handmade crafts from its 60+ artists.

MDA check from Danville Bojangles

In the record-breaking \$536,000 fundraiser for the Muscular Dystrophy Association by Bojangles company, the restaurant at 106 Sandy Court in Danville was recognized as the largest contributor at \$5,470 – the most of any single restaurant across Bojangles' more than 580 stores.

Rockets and ammo

Alliant Techsystems Inc. (ATK) which operates New River Energetics at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant in Radford, plans to merge its aerospace and defense units with Dulles-based Orbital Sciences Corp (developer and

manufacturer of rockets and space systems). Upon the merger, ATK and Orbital shareholders will own approximately 54 percent / 46 percent, respectively.

New 'For Sale' signs showing up

Prudential Premier, REALTORS® has joined Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, a new real estate brokerage network brand with 28,000 agents and 750 offices in 37 states. Premier has offices in Roanoke and Daleville, serving Roanoke, Botetourt, Bedford, Franklin, Montgomery, and Craig counties.

More robots

TORC Robotics, developer of robotic autonomous vehicles, is expanding its corporate headquarters at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center to a new \$2.5 million research and development facility in Phase V of Blacksburg Industrial Park.

Crafty beverages

Chaos Mountain Brewery has opened in the Calloway community of Franklin County on Dillons Mill Road. The

new brewery converted a former bed factory. Also, 2 Witches Winery and Brewing Company is opening in Danville, making both wine and beer in the same facility. Soaring Ridge microbrewery has opened in the old Flowers Bakery building in Roanoke. Five Mile Mountain distillery in Floyd County is finalizing its permitting processes to sell homemade Virginia moonshine.

Reading Vinton

The Town of Vinton will construct its new Vinton Branch Library and begin downtown revitalization construction projects using a \$700,000 grant by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

Paddle on Hollins

Hollins University placed third at the American Canoe Association Collegiate Race Series National Championship, drawing more attention to the whitewater sport, outdoor and river amenities in southwest Virginia.

Oh, Shenandoah

Roanoke-based Shenandoah Life Insurance Company is now offering Medicare

Have an announcement about your business?

Send announcements to news@vbFRONT.com

A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.



The Virginia Cooperative Extension turns 100 this year

supplemental insurance and plans to add another life insurance produce later this year. The two policies are the first new offerings after the regulator restructuring in 2009.

100 years of advice

The Virginia Cooperative Extension turns 100 this year. Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act on May 8, 1914, creating the Cooperative Extension Service, a state-by-state national network of educators who extend university-based knowledge to the people (specifically in this region, from Virginia's two land-grant universities – Virginia Tech and Virginia State University). Faculty members located on two campuses, 107 county and city offices, 11 agricultural research and extension centers, and six 4-H educational centers provide educational programs from family financial management and nutrition, to agricultural best practices and food safety, to small business

development and leadership. In 2013, Extension programs reached more than 2.6 million participants statewide.

Grown up science fair

Virginia now has its first officially designated science festival, which will be held October 4 in Blacksburg and October 11 in Roanoke. The Virginia Science Festival has collaborated with Virginia Tech, Carilion, and other organizations and non profits to launch the new initiative, which includes the mission of educating and promoting job opportunities in science and technology.

Top 50 housing help

Community Housing Partners (CHP) was named to a list of the nation's top 50 affordable housing owners by Affordable Housing Finance (AHF) magazine. The ranking is based on the number of affordable

units owned as of January 1, 2013. With 745 rehabs under its belt in 2013, CHP was also ranked by the magazine as the number-two company nationwide to complete substantial housing renovations in 2013

Beachy rehab

Roanoke-based Medical Facilities of America is building a \$17 million rehabilitation center in Virginia Beach.

Therapists in Blacksburg

Healing Tree Counseling has opened a new office at 100 Hubbard Street, Suite C in Blacksburg, offering psychotherapy, holistic approaches and counseling for all ages. Currently, three counselors provide expertise in areas of trauma, anxiety, sexual abuse, ADHD, eating disorders and developmental disorders, infertility, depression, grief and loss, divorce and recovery, body image and sexuality, work/life

balance, family growth and planning, individuals and couples struggling with LGBTQ-related matters, relationship problems, alternative lifestyles and non-traditional spiritual/religious views.

Pretty pictures on path

The Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission is running its second annual Greenways Photo Contest, where images of scenes and activities along the greenway trails and corridors within the cities of Roanoke and Salem, Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton may be submitted by September 15. Contest eligibility requirements and details are posted at www.greenways.org.

Well that stinks

If you bought a trap to get rid of stink bugs in your house, you probably wasted your money. That's the finding according to Virginia Tech researchers from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The team found that homemade, inexpensive stink bug traps crafted from simple household items outshine pricier models designed to kill the invasive, annoying bugs. "The best way to get rid of the little buggers is to fill a foil roasting pan with water and dish soap and put a light over the pan to attract the bugs in a dark room," the report says. "The trap eliminated 14 times more stink bugs than store-bought traps that cost up to \$50. Though the solution is not new

and has been promoted on YouTube and other websites, this is the first time it was actually tested in a scientific experiment. The homemade trap is not only inexpensive, it is also pesticide-free."

No kilt required

Staff members at Radford University's The Tartan student newspaper say they have been asked to discontinue accepting advertisements from strip clubs. The ads promote patronage and often include a recruitment for dancers. The paper's position is that the ads are legal and the revenue is much needed, while objectors say the ads harm the school's reputation and send the wrong message.

NICU not yet

The Virginia Court of Appeals has ruled against LewisGale Medical Center's request to operate a neonatal intensive care unit, citing there is no public need for the eight bed NICU that would be used for seriously ill and premature babies in the Salem facility.

A dozen career tech scholarships

Kiwanis Club of Roanoke has awarded ten \$500 scholarships to the following high school career and technical education students: Keyanna Andrews (Patrick Henry);

Peter Ayers (Burton Center for Arts and Technology); Ford Carson, Jr. (Patrick Henry); Ammie Cook (Patrick Henry); Clay Hoke (William Fleming); Madison Morris (Hidden Valley); Keith P. O'Connor (William Byrd); Andrew Vipperman, Jr. (Burton Center for Arts and Technology); Emily Whitaker (Patrick Henry); Katherine Wu Yang (Burton Center for Arts and Technology); and two \$1,500 scholarships to: Kali Edsall (Burton Center for Arts and Technology & William Byrd); Alec Travers (Patrick Henry).

Peddling on Brambleton

East Coasters Bike Shop has opened a new location at 3224 Brambleton Avenue in Roanoke.

Techie leaders

Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council (RBTC) presented its 2014 TechNite awards on May 9 to the following recipients: VitruaU (People's Choice); Brian Dye of Radford City Schools and Sarah Gerrol of Salem City Schools (Educator); Mindsense (Rising Star); Bob Summers of TechPad and Fitnet (Innovator); Michael Rihani of Koofers (Entrepreneur); Jack Lesko of Virginia Tech College of Engineering (Regional Leadership); Ken Ferris of Brookewood Management Advisors (Ruby Award). Ray Pethel

and Tracy Wilkins were also inducted into the Technology Hall of Fame.

From young'uns to old'uns

The old Newbern Elementary School building in Pulaski County will be converted to an adult day care service and rehabilitation center by Pulaski Adult Day Service, thanks in part to a \$700,000 grant from the county.

A union made

The integration of StellarOne Bank to Union First Market Bank has been completed. The merger creates Virginia's largest community bank, with 131 branches and more than 200 ATMs.

Starring role

StarCityGames.com, a Roanoke-based gaming, tournament and Magic: The Gathering® retailer, has launched 'Project Shining Star,' a philanthropic program that allows any of its employees to give up to eight hours paid time per year in service to a pre-approved charitable organization.

RU Corp Park on block

Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer has been selected by the Radford University Foundation as sale representative for Radford University Corporate Park. The

106,000 square foot office park is situated on approximately 15 acres, with an additional 40 acres of undeveloped land adjacent, and is located at 6226 University Park Drive in Radford, Virginia. The three-story office building sits off US 11 in close proximity to I-81 in a park-style setting overlooking the New River with on-site parking, exercise room, on-site dining and banquet facilities.

New joint for joints

Carilion Clinic has added a department of orthopaedics with 32 physicians and 16 advanced care professionals as part of a reorganization and previous 2010 merger with Roanoke Orthopaedic Center.

Now see this

Virginia Department of Health has recommended approval for Roanoke Valley Center for Surgery to build an eye surgery center at 2145 McVitty Road in Roanoke.

Country store goes festive

Chantilly Festival Farm and the Floyd Country Store have collaborated to develop a junior version of the store built on the farm site at 2697 Franklin Pike near the Blue Ridge Parkway in Floyd County.

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.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Rebekah Hertzberg is a freelance writer and recent transplant to the Roanoke Valley. She

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Michael Miller has worked with intellectual properties and technology innovation. His consulting company is Kire Technology. With more than 25 years as an inventor and technology consultant, working with Fortune 500 companies and startups, he screens businesses for the World's Best Technology Showcase and mentors tech startups through Development Capital Networks and the National Science Foundation. [mbmiller2@gmail.com]

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

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

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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]

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

Dan Wilmer is a principal at Wilmer-Gray and Associates, a financial services firm in Roanoke for over 40 years. [dwilmer@roacoxmail.com]

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I was never comfortable with the weather — Page 61

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Berryfield	69	LeClair Ryan	27
Biscuits & Bubbles	69	MKB / Burchett & Dickinson	29
Blue Ridge Copier	4	RBTC	37
Business Solutions, Inc.	49	SalemVA Credit Union	45
Carilion	BC	Valley Bank	2
Citizens	3	VCOM	35
CoLab	69	Virginia Veterans Care Center	34
Davis H. Elliot Company	69	Donna Wallace - Stylist /	
Duncan Audi	71	What to Wear Roanoke	69
Entre Computer Center	47	Wheeler Broadcasting	48 & 52
Fantasy Creations	69	Woods Rogers	31

“ ”
Some people don't like the idea
of dirt being on them — Page 42

“ ”
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