

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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vbFRONT.com

Touching
Down
in a
New
Space

*From
College Town
to Home Town*

Bob Rotanz,
Mac and Bob's

Audi
Truth in Engineering



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Awww... There's just something special about seeing a small huddled group of people walking and following one leader on a college campus. Many parents of older kids immediately recognize what's going on: the college tour.

My wife and I have had the privilege of visiting... oh, I believe it's now nine college and university campuses... and there is simply no denying that each has a distinctive "personality." And it's also no denying that these tours make an impact in a way no brochure or recruiting ad will ever match.

Before the college tours, I was naive enough to think that the exercise was just a formality. The top criteria is the program of study in relation to your vocational pursuit, I thought. Not so. The cafeteria matters. The football team. The dormitories. *The... ummm... tour guide himself, apparently.*

But with this edition's FRONTcover story, we get to add in yet another consideration. Something for students and their parents and caregivers to seriously ponder:

Is this the place where you will live?

Not just for college. You could end up living here. Taking a job here. Starting a business here. Raising your family here. *Settling here.*

You may have zero intention of living in the very place where you go to school. But for many students, the place grows on them, swallows them up, envelops them, and brings them in to an exciting, colorful, and brave new world. You might not be able to resist it.



Tom Field

“ ”

Forty years later, I've become that guy

— Page 10



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Valley Business FRONT

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From College Town to Home Town

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Cover photography of Bob Rotanz by Tom Field.

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NOVEMBER



Andrea Brunais



Sarah Cox



Anne Piedmont



Anne Sampson



Alison Weaver

Editorial Advisory Board

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

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

CONTRIBUTORS



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Alison Hammond



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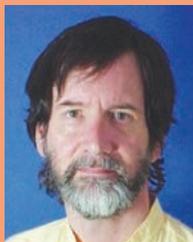
Samantha Steidle



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen



Randolph Walker



Isn't it nice we're
having weather?

— Page 21



It used to be
thought that if you
were doing things
to protect the
environment you
were sacrificing
profit, and that's
simply not true
today — Page 35

Biographies and contact information on
each contributor are provided on Page 60.

2014 Members

Nancy Agee Carilion (Wellness)
Laura Bradford ClaireV (Retail)
Nicholas C. Conte Woods Rogers (Legal)
Warner Dalhouse Retired (Seniors)
John Garland Spectrum (Development)
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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.

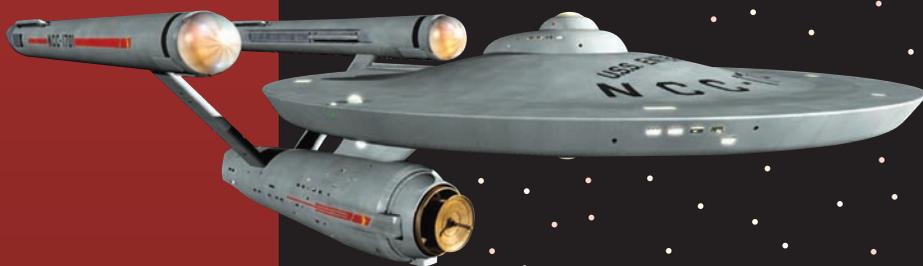
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To Boldly Go...

From College Town to Home Town



College Brought Me Here >

Executive Summary: Economic development and civic leaders know very well how having a college in your town can attract future business; here are five specific examples how that works.

By Alison Weaver

Captain's Log: Stardate 2014.11#74

Exploring a college town is not unlike landing on a new planet. It may not be in a galaxy far, far away; but for many kids it might as well be. Consider the fact that for most new college entrants, the young man or woman is about 18 years of age. For most, going to college is the first really big challenge of his or her life. Leaving home. Striking off to a new world. Filled with new creatures and a whole new landscape. This first time adventure can be scary and intimidating. The young person indeed sees college as a new frontier. A voyage into a four year (or more) mission. To explore strange new worlds. To boldly go where he has never gone before.

Where the student may see a little uncertainty at first (and have no inclination whatsoever of making this place a permanent settlement), the town and regional stakeholders see opportunity. Colleges and universities love to cite the diversity of their student base. How attractive they are to people from all over the world and all the walks of life that come here for a few years. Apparently, the town itself is one of those attractive and interesting and compelling and vibrant spots on the planet as well; because some of the temporary trekkers end up staying here. And liking it, as our interplanetary reporter, Alison Weaver so eloquently shows with their stories below.

— Tom Field

Every autumn, a pilgrimage of fresh, eager students begins to wend its way across Virginia's highways in pursuit of the American dream of a college education.

For some, their choice of school comes after years of careful deliberation and campus visits. Others are candid in saying their decision was based on the weather, the beauty of the campus, or as one interviewee noted wryly, "It was the only place that accepted me. But don't print that."

Most students assume they'll spend four or five years in their college town and then move on to new adventures. The alumni interviewed never thought they would end up living near their alma mater, especially since most said their first months in Southwestern Virginia weren't exactly favorable.

Retirees were some of the first to realize the advantages of living in a college town, which frequently have a vibrancy and cultural offerings not typically found in other small communities.

Blacksburg, home of Virginia Tech, has largely shed its "cow town" reputation and regularly turns up on lists of Best College Towns. In January 2012, it ranked No. 10 in the nation on Livability.com; the American Institute for Economic Research picked it as the nation's eighth-best college town for 2013-14.

Following are stories of people who came to the Roanoke and New River valleys for an education—and stayed.

Yankee Transplant

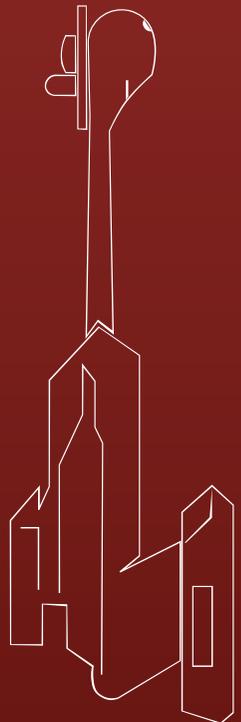


Star high school lacrosse player Bob Rotanz had his pick of schools when he began making college plans.

Born and raised in New York City, Bob's family had moved to Long Island when he was 12. "I was fortunate to be recruited by various colleges for my lacrosse abilities," Bob says. "I came down to visit Roanoke College and really liked the school and the climate. Playing lacrosse in the springtime in Virginia is a lot more pleasant than in the North."

The caliber of Roanoke College's lacrosse schedule also impressed him. "The coach told me it was a small school, but it played top-notch competitors such as Duke and UVa."

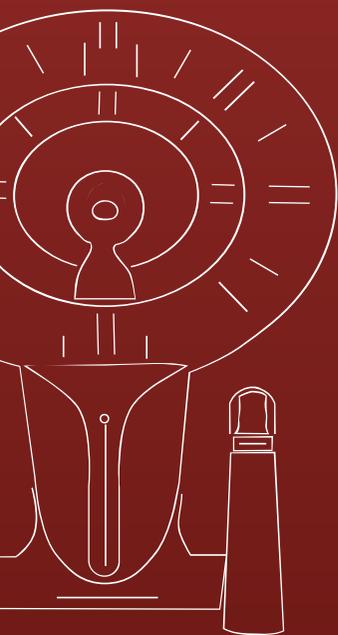
Bob was in a different world from his fast-paced New York lifestyle. "I loved it. One of the first weekends, I went to Brown Hardware to get a bag of nails to do something in my dorm room, and I was amazed at their willingness to





Roanoke College

Roanoke College



chat and get to know me," he recalls. "The guy was talking about the Salem High football game the night before. Forty years later, I've become that guy."

As he pursued a degree in Economics with a minor in Business, Bob teamed up with classmate Jim "Mac" McEnerney to work on a project. "We wanted to explore the viability of opening a restaurant near campus. At that time, there really was no place for students to hang out or have a beer."

The friends refused to heed the advice of people who discouraged their venture. "We had no money. We were undercapitalized and didn't know what we were doing," Bob says.

In August 1980, they opened Mac and Bob's across Main Street from campus. It was a rather inauspicious start in a tiny space featuring just 10 bar stools.

Mac bowed out a few months later to take a job with Merrill Lynch in Long Island, and soon after Joe Dishaw stepped in as Bob's new partner. "We decided to keep the name as Mac and Bob's even though Mac was gone. The truth is, it was too expensive to pay for the typesetting, printing and lamination costs to change the name on the signs and menus," Bob says.

Thirty-four years later, Joe remains his business partner and Mac stays in close touch. The restaurant's first employee, Keith Griswold, is now the general manager.

"Salem really embraced us, and I had some nice people

help me out when we really needed it," Bob says. "It went week to week and month to month; it was touch and go. I was working so many hours that I didn't know if it was worth it."

But Bob had another incentive to stay in Salem. "I was waiting for my girlfriend, now my wife, Wendy, to graduate from Roanoke College."

From its modest beginning, Mac and Bob's has become one of the best-known fixtures in Salem. The restaurant has expanded and re-expanded and now has seating for 330. Joe devoted nearly two years to chef's school so they could focus even more on the food-side of the business.

"Recently, one of my daughters was getting panicky because she didn't know exactly what she wanted to study," Bob says. "I told her to relax and go with the flow. When I was at Roanoke College, I never would have thought that I'd open a restaurant and stay in Salem for the rest of my life."

A Reluctant Hokie



Jane Abraham was brought to Blacksburg, Va., "kicking and screaming."

She had spent 17 years in Seattle, was enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Washington and was pregnant when her husband's father asked him to move to Virginia to take over the family printing business.

"It was a shock moving here from Seattle. Absolute culture shock," she says. "There's been an intermix of races in Seattle for a long time, and I was used to that. I never thought I could adapt to this area."

"I thought I was going to die the first week. We went to



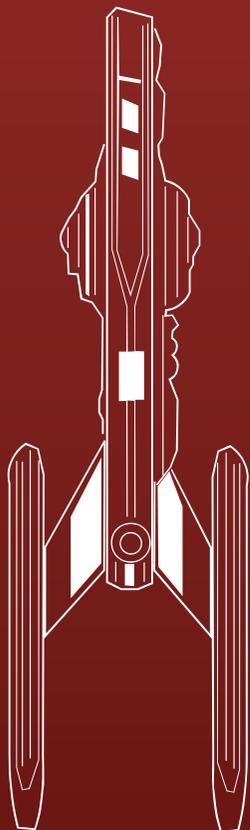
Tom Field

Indeed, that is Bob Rotanz playing our Star Trekker on the FRONTcover. Ask him to beam you up one of those tasty calzones or a frosty beverage the next time you're hanging at Mac and Bob's in Salem—right across from Roanoke College.



Virginia Tech

Virginia Tech



Steppin' Out [an annual outdoor festival] and it was SO hot. I thought I would never survive a summer here."

That was 23 years ago. "Now, I wouldn't live anywhere else," she says.

Jane is rarely seen not wearing some sort of Hokie attire and is often garbed head-to-toe in orange and maroon. "My husband wants to present me to the new [VT] president as the No. 1 promoter of the school."

Despite two decades in the area, she insists she is far from a Southerner and remains amused by some of the traditions. "Sweet tea? Ugh. And I'm still not used to this inordinate preoccupation with the Civil War. It's over, people. Get past it."

Jane met her future husband, Michael Abraham, at a train station in Portland, Ore., after a cycling trip from Seattle. They married the next year, in 1983, and settled into life in Seattle. "I never dreamed we'd move to the South."

Making the best of the situation, Jane enrolled at Virginia Tech and completed her doctorate in Developmental Psychology. She went on to teach at the university for 15 years.

"I think Blacksburg is a great place to bring up a kid. I'm glad we moved out of Seattle; it's gotten so crowded," she says. "This is a safe town and there was plenty for [daughter] Whitney to do."

Jane jokingly refers to Blacksburg as “a bastion of culture in the bleakest of the boonies. Because it’s a college town, we get plays and music and movies that other small communities probably don’t get. There’s a variety of international restaurants, and it’s nice to have the students around, with their youth and vitality.”

The Abrahams take full advantage of many of the sporting events the university offers. “Football games, basketball games ... there’s always some kind of activity going on,” she says.

Jane further rooted herself in the area when she and her husband purchased Pocahontas Press in May of 2011. She serves as editor at the small publishing company which dedicates itself to “bringing the best of Appalachia to the readers of the world.” Jane previews manuscripts and selects which ones will be published, noting, “We’ve become a source for elderly people to write their memoirs.”

Now that their daughter has finished school, Michael talks about moving up the road to Floyd. But for Jane, “This is home. There’s no place else I’d rather live.”

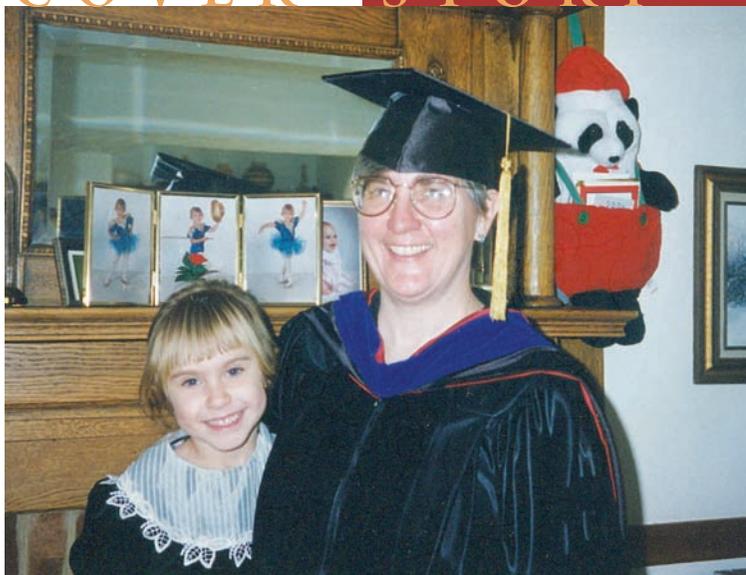
Highlander For Life



After Mary Washington College invited Jeff Corbin not to return for another year, he set his sights on Radford University.

“I spent four wonderful—um, too wonderful—years at Mary Washington and wasn’t making much progress toward a degree,” Jeff says.

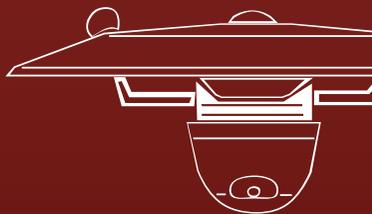
The Culpeper, Va., native made a trek to Radford and liked what he saw. Sort of.



Alison Weaver

(top) Jane Abraham and Whitney in December 1995, on graduation day.

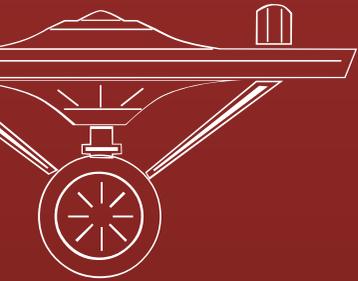
(bottom) Dr. Jane Abraham, the reluctant Hokie who is now a Hokie fanatic





Radford University

Radford University



Jeff Corbin, the Radford alumnus who owns Radford City Florist

"Frankly, when I arrived in the mid-'80s, the town looked kind of grungy and dull and covered with coal dust. But it grew on me," he recalls. "It reminded me of how Culpeper used to be, before it became a bedroom community of people commuting to D.C."

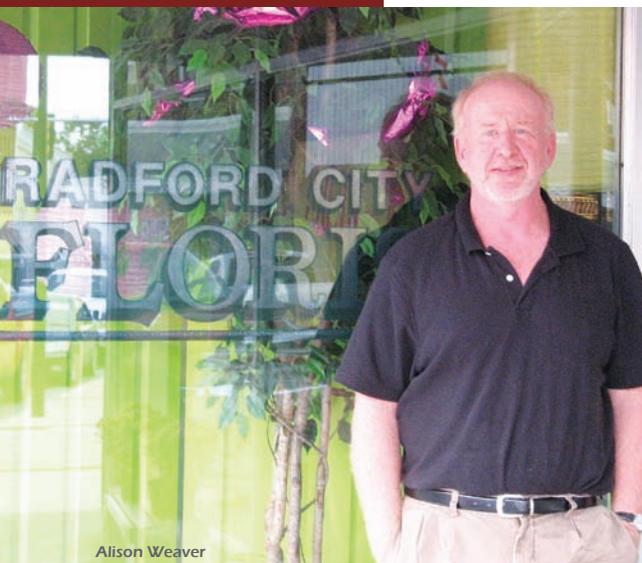
Given a second chance at earning a degree, Jeff applied himself as a Communications major, working at a florist shop to pay his way through school.

"My goal was to be a political speech writer," he says. "After graduation, I went up to D.C. for an interview. When it took two hours to find a parking place, I thought, 'This is not meant to be. I can't see living like this.'"

Jeff returned to Radford and has never looked back.

Village Florist, where he had worked throughout college, welcomed his return. He worked there for a year and then decided to go out on his own. "I bought a building downtown and opened Radford City Florist," he says. With the energy and optimism of youth, it never occurred to him that it was a gutsy move. "I was 25 and too stupid to know better."

Radford City Florist has thrived for 25 years, adding a wine shop at its Radford location and a garden center in Pulaski. "I've worked in the floral business since high school. It was an art that I enjoyed. I also love pottery and painting, but if I'd gone that route, I'd be starving by now."



Alison Weaver

The city has thrived, too, Jeff says, with numerous beautification projects. "Having a university keeps things alive. It's a small town, but we've got arts, we've got culture and there are always things happening."

To satisfy his love of public speaking and education, Jeff became a certified trainer for FTD. He travels across the U.S., teaching florists about the business and about floral design. He also has embraced social media and the Internet as a way to reach people and market his business.

"To me, this is the perfect location. With airports in Roanoke and Greensboro, I can easily fly anywhere," he says. "It's far enough from the crowds but close enough to big cities."

Jeff describes Radford as a college town, dominated by the university. "Anybody who tells you differently is in denial. But the students are the life blood that keeps Radford from becoming stagnant. The university keeps this town refreshed."

Rooted in Roanoke



Erica Pandapas Myatt spent much of her childhood as a vagabond.

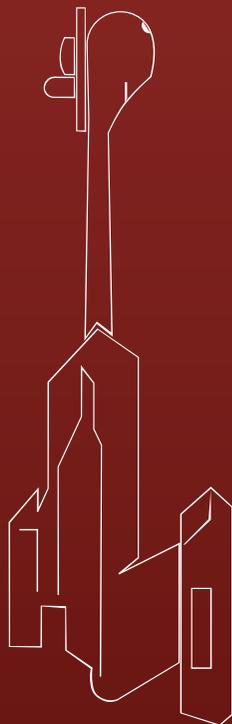
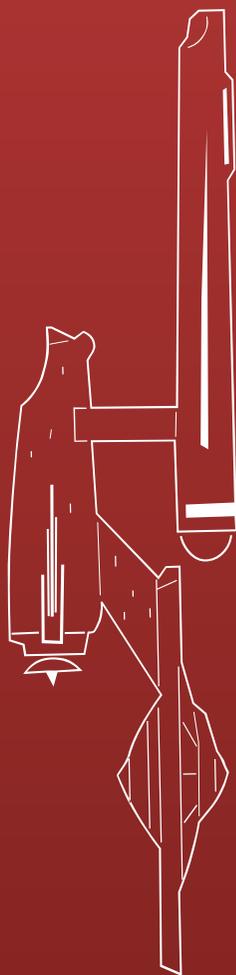
After nearly being born on the Governor's Island ferry, she was delivered at New York University Hospital in Manhattan. The daughter of a Coast Guard officer, she moved up and down the East Coast to cities including Cape Cod, Mass., Cape May, N.J., Mobile, Ala., and Chesapeake, Va. "I ended up spending half of my childhood in New Jersey, but there were lots of other stops along the way," she explains.

Without having real roots anywhere, Erica was open to options when it came to selecting a college. "I pretty much ruled out going to school up North because I don't like cold weather," she admits.

Erica attended a summer program at Washington & Lee University where a law professor suggested that Hollins College (now Hollins University) might be a good match for her interest in creative writing. She fell in love with the campus and the program during her first visit in the fall of 1992. "The whole way everyone reached out to me won me over," she says.

Erica's decision to attend Hollins quickly became a family affair. Her father was getting ready to retire, and the lower cost of living in the South was economically appealing. So when Erica went away to school in 1993, her parents also moved to the area with their only child.

The Pandapas surname is uncommon even in its native





Hollins University

Hollins University

Erica Myatt is seated on the same steps 20 years ago

Greece. The family was used to receiving blank stares and having to carefully spell their name. Yet in the Roanoke Valley, many people simply nodded and said, "Oh, like Pandapas Pond."

Her mother did some research and discovered that Pandapas Pond, a recreational area in Montgomery County, was created by a gift of land from an uncle. "We knew we had a relative in Blacksburg, but we had never pieced it together," Erica says. "I had never lived anywhere that people knew my name."



Alison Weaver

After getting her bachelor's degree, Erica entered the master's program in creative writing at Hollins. "I had planned to be a lawyer, but I realized that my life was re-routing. I became more interested in editing."

She deferred her plans to attend law school at Wake Forest University and instead took a part-time job as a copy editor at The Roanoke Times.

When a full-time position opened up, she didn't struggle with her decision to stay in the Roanoke Valley. "Maybe because I had moved around so much as a child, when I became an adult it was appealing to stay in one place."

As Erica's editing career blossomed, so did her romance with a fellow copy editor who had joined the staff in 1999. Kevin Myatt, known for his Weather Journal and hiking columns, and Erica were wed at the Hollins chapel in 2005.

Now the mother of two young boys, Erica decided in October to become a stay-at-home mother. "I think that things have a way of working out. I ended up in the ideal place to raise children."

Change of Plans

Maryann Castaneda knew from a young age that she wanted to play soccer and become a veterinarian.

A native of the D.C. suburb of Sterling, Va., she attended a college fair, determined to find a small school that would serve her goals. Ferrum College fit the bill.

"I was so sure I had everything figured out," she says with a laugh. "I played soccer the first year but stopped after my freshman year. Classes were overwhelming and I felt I couldn't juggle both."

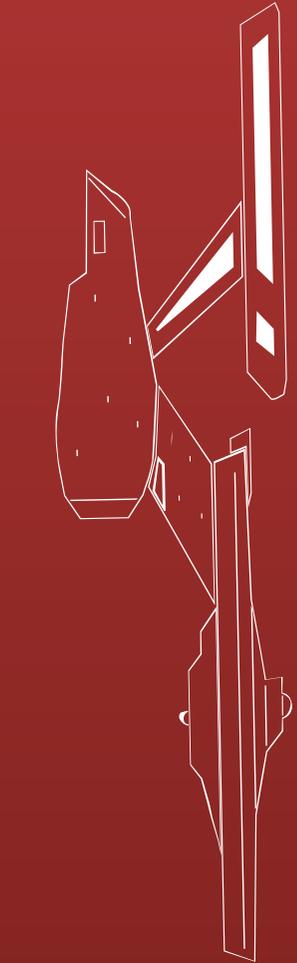
Maryann also realized early on that she didn't want to spend eight more years studying anatomy and memorizing the names of bones and muscles. She kept her biology major and added minors in chemistry and educational studies, giving her time to rejoin the soccer team for her senior year.

"When I got to Ferrum, I thought I really didn't want to be there," she admits.

"Coming from Northern Virginia where everything was close made it difficult to adapt to such a rural area."

The tiny community of Ferrum centers primarily around the college. The town has a couple of banks, a few restaurants and a new Dollar General. "The pace of life is calmer. After I adjusted, I found my niche. I made friends, found a church and settled in," she says.

"My friends from Northern Virginia say there's nothing



Maryann Castaneda, a Ferrum graduate who works at nearby Heritage Christian Academy



Alison Weaver



Ferrum College

Ferrum College Campus



to do here. And I tell them it's a great outdoor place. Go hike, go fish, go run and play."

Safety was a primary consideration for both Maryann and her parents. "The sniper shootings happened when I was growing up," she says, referring to a string of random homicides that terrorized the D.C.-area in 2002. "It was very important for me to live some place where I wasn't afraid to walk around at night."

As Maryann's studies continued, she decided she could combine her love of science with helping children learn to love it, too. She began applying for teaching positions, but was hampered by not yet having licensure.

After spending the first summer after graduation on mission trips, she opted to stay in Franklin County as a substitute teacher. Then, from January to May, she worked as a teacher assistant at Benjamin Franklin Middle School.

"The whole state of Virginia had my application, but I got put on the back burner," she says. "Soon it was August, and still nothing had turned up. I happened to see an ad on Facebook saying Christian Heritage Academy was looking for a science teacher."

Maryann emailed school head Deke Andrews (formerly of Roanoke County's North Cross School) and they quickly determined she'd be the perfect fit at the Christian-based school.

Christian Heritage maintains a close association with Ferrum College. "We frequently make field trips to the college," she says. "I show my students how to do research and use the libraries, and Ferrum has been very generous in donating lab equipment.

"In some ways, it's like I've never left Ferrum. And that's not a bad thing." 



Scott Farmer

Pumpkins: a perennial October-through-December favorite

Agricultural mashup: pumpkins and Christmas trees >

Executive Summary:

Everyone grows tomatoes for farmers markets, so Grayson and Carroll Counties decided to set their imaginations on fire.

By Andrea Brunais

Two counties in Southwest Virginia – Grayson and Carroll – have found their niche. In Virginia, Grayson County is first in Christmas trees and Carroll County is tops in pumpkins, says Whitney Bonham, Virginia Tech economic development specialist.

Both counties mastered the key to success

at what Bonham calls “value-added agricultural opportunity”: They figured out what people want. Since holidays stimulate buying, seasonal agricultural products can be an untapped opportunity, she says.

Pumpkins are a relatively new crop for Carroll County. A decade ago, the county ranked 52nd nationally in pumpkin production. Just five years later, it jumped to 21.

Here's another reason such thinking makes sense. State or federal money can sometimes be had to jumpstart an enterprise. Wayne Waldrop, small business lending manager of Virginia Community Capital, says his institution has a \$10 million fund earmarked “specifically for companies involved in the fresh-food industry.” 

Note: *Whitney Bonham recently left Virginia Tech to become deputy administrator for Washington County.*

SAVE OUR TOWNS



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Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Employers could implement measures to help their employees with dress codes instead of simply issuing a mandate.

Dress Code Blues >

After decades of casual dress invading the workplace, even Wal-Mart seems to agree that a dress code is needed to help customers identify workers in their stores. Recently Wal-Mart implemented yet another dress code to provide a uniform appearance to their workforce and an easily identifiable presence in their stores.

Unsurprisingly, resistance is strong among their workforce. Citing oppressive heat in their workplace and low wages, many Wal-Mart employees object to the new guidelines. They also note that this is one of many dress codes implemented in recent years.

Business Insider quotes Wal-Mart as saying “the new requirements, which take effect Sept. 29, are meant to make it easier for customers to identify employees in the stores. The dress code includes white or navy collared shirts with khaki or black pants, closed-toe shoes and an updated royal blue Wal-Mart-branded vest. Wal-Mart is covering the cost of only the vest.”

Currently Wal-Mart employees make an average of \$11.83/hr, with OUR Wal-Mart, a group that advocates for higher wages at Wal-Mart, claiming that most workers earn under \$9/hr. Understandably, this can be a hardship to workers when every penny of their paycheck goes toward food, housing and survival.

A compromise seems possible here. Wal-Mart sells the very clothing needed to comply with the new dress code. If employees don't already have those items in their closet, why not sell those items at cost to workers in a one-time purchase, paid for over several months of paychecks?

No one wants their wardrobe micromanaged by their employer. However, businesses are faced with a dilemma in order to survive and provide jobs to the marketplace. They must increase, or at least maintain, sales in the face of increased operating costs due to energy, transportation, and materials price increases.

Wal-Mart wants to remain a low-price leader and maintain its market share, as it grapples with higher costs. Similarly, most other businesses operating in the current business climate are tweaking their business model to get the most bang for their operating buck.

If Wal-Mart should fail, thousands of Wal-Mart workers would be out of work. As Wal-Mart tries to stay profitable, their employees might consider how it would affect them if the company fails at winning back customers – and ask themselves how they can, as an individual, make their store more user-friendly to customers. It might make a difference. 

Send comments or questions to Kathy@peacockimage.com

Politics and Incivility >

Some of you will read this before November 4, when elections will be held for the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, some governorships, and some local political offices. The nasty accusations and fingerpointings are already flying!

Every day we hear the pundits and the press lamenting about incivility in politics while often fuelling the fire themselves. Yet this is not a new phenomenon. In England, politicians traditionally applaud each other in the House of Commons for their loud quarrels. Winston Churchill's invective was legendary, but he was saved by his wit – something, it seems, in short supply today. Closer to home, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson's animosity and conflicts were renowned – so much so that John Adams's last words on his death bed were "Thomas Jefferson survives."

James H. Mullen, President of Allegheny College, which gives an annual award called *Prize for Civility in Public Life*, wrote "... national surveys confirm what we all suspect—that perceptions of political civility are down and declining. These perceptions are having a negative effect on political participation, particularly among the generation that will inherit our democracy." President Mullen worried that "... incivility will cause fewer and fewer young people to seek a career in public service... we are at risk of losing an entire generation to public service—with potentially catastrophic consequences."

Let's bring it to a more personal level. I was at a social gathering when one of the guests, during a conversation about college tuitions, pronounced "I could never be friends with a (here fill in the political party)." I was, I admit, shocked. Obviously this woman had never heard of the adage that politics and religion are taboo at social gatherings. And really that's not completely accurate. The guest assumed that all in the room were of like minds. I advise participants in my business etiquette seminars to avoid bringing up politics or religion "when you don't know the other's opinions."

It's great to have a spirited debate. My husband has a friend of over 25 years, and they are extreme opposites when it comes to politics. Yet they have maintained a steadfast friendship, as they debate their opposing views with wit, warmth – and civility!

So let's stop the snide remarks, the sneers, the invective when it comes to politics. Count to ten and, with a smile, change the subject. My favorite way is to murmur, "Isn't it nice we're having weather!" That definitely halts the conversation, and invariably brings a smile! 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey
Harshberger

Executive Summary:
Talking politics can quickly escalate to bad form in social settings.



Get along, li'l doggie >

You may have heard we've entered a new era in business that relies on collaboration between individuals, companies, and public entities in the production of goods and services. Many terms are being used to refer to this reality now, and they all have different nuances, but the "collaborative economy" is a common one.

Rachel Botsman, co-author of *What's Mine is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption* (HarperCollins, 2010), has studied the rise of this new economic landscape since noticing similarities between Airbnb, eBay, Netflix, Zipcar and others. In her September 2014 article in the Harvard Business Journal, she defines the "collaborative economy" as "a system that activates the untapped value of all kinds of assets through models and marketplaces that enable greater efficiency and access."

Let's consider how the collaborative economy impacts you and your business.

Co-opetition: The "muscle" of the collaborative economy

As business people, we're taught from a young age to view each other as competitors. We even see our coworkers as competitors. Ever worked at a place that put your name on a board if you made the most sales that month?

It's hard to break free from the idea of being crowded out by the competition, especially in today's economy. But what if we took a chance on seeing it opportunity through a collaborative lens? I did that recently with my Virtual Marketing agency.

I approached other agencies with an invitation to partner

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for the purpose of supplying creative talent to local businesses.

Guess what? We found ways to partner that involved doing what we both wanted to do, while both benefiting from it. Our efforts were not duplicated. It's a win for the agencies and a win for the talent involved.

It wouldn't have happened without the spirit of collaboration. It wouldn't have happened without asking if there was a way in which we could work together. It wouldn't have happened without trying.

What's happening between my agency and those I'm partnering with is something economists call "co-opetition." It's not a new word, even though it looks funny. It's simply a blend of "cooperation" and "competition." When people do it, they carve out a bigger market together, expanding horizons for themselves. Then they serve that market together.

The idea is strength in numbers. Joined forces are more powerful than one freelancer or one company trying in vain to make a bigger pie. 

Small Business

By Samantha Steidle

Executive Summary:
How well you play with others could be the key to your future success.

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Tom Field

Laxman and Lalita Bhandari: "In America you need to have a big network."

Replanting a business >

Executive Summary:

Home-based NexGet Tax Service is a small, part time business that puts networking to practice in same fashion as its leader's connection to the Bhutanese community in Roanoke.

By Tom Field

Laxman Bhandari has my attention. So does his wife, Lalita. It's one of those first things you notice when you meet people for the first time. They both sit facing me straight on. Sitting, not comfortably back on the couch, but up at the front edge. Hands in lap, feet forward, and... the eyes. Not once does either set of eyes ever look away. Never glancing off in the distance. Never fiddling with an object. Never scratching heads or hesitating or pondering. It's as if my two smiling subjects sitting in their home in the Preston Park neighborhood in Roanoke City are on a mission.

They are.

It's a happy mission. That's plain to see. Optimistic, even with the challenges.

The Bhandari's story is one of planting roots. Transplanting, actually. A change of environment and culture and familiar surroundings and pretty much a whole

new world. And what grows from the new garden is all wrapped up in a town called Roanoke, 8,000 miles away from where it all began.

March 2008 signaled one of the world's largest resettlement missions when the first of an estimated 60,000 Bhutanese refugees began arriving in the United States after a national exile, two decade dispute and revoked citizenship of the minority ethnic Nepalis.

The Bhandari's exodus is part of that story, and Laxman, who could be the closest person to it as leader of the Bhutanese Community in Roanoke (a non-profit organization), says the population of "his people" here is now 800.

Laxman Bhandari has numerous activities occupying his time these days, and they are divided among two branches in his life: a vocation and a passion.

His energy is apparent, and apparently necessary, because his job alone is enough to fill most people's days. The "day job" includes working as a payroll support specialist for CBIZ in Roanoke. He also works as an accounting and finance contractor for Liberty Tax Service and an accounting firm in India. On top of all that, he is building his own tax service business, a home-based business called NexGen Tax Service, which is a mobile operation that currently serves individuals with their 1040 filings.

Laxman speaks three languages (four if

you count “finance”), Nepali, Hindu, and English; making his business services a good fit for those populations that aren’t fluent in the native tongue. As a translator and advocate for refugees and immigrants, he’s also a bridge to transplanted individuals and families who are struggling with assimilation—particularly with the essentials of housing and employment. Laxman’s credentials include his Internal Revenue Service designation as an enrolled agent and his U.S. citizenship status.

It doesn’t take two minutes of describing his vocation before his passion and the larger picture of cultural challenges blossoms in the conversation. And his wife, lights up, even as she asks permission to jump in.

“Transportation is so difficult,” Lalita says. She works as a Head Start teacher

(a regional no-cost education program) for TAP (Total Action for Progress) in Roanoke. She’s concerned that many in the Bhutanese community are missing opportunities simply due to language barriers and lack of access to the basic elements for holding a job. Acquiring a drivers license, for example, is a major hurdle.

“I describe [our situation] as ‘the second migration,’” says Laxman. Building his practice and serving the members of his community involve the same activities and focus.

“We are Bhutanese,” Laxman says. “We have our gatherings, our festivals (such as “Dewali” and “Dashara”), our music, our gardens... . We are a vibrant and dynamic people; my goal is to make our community stronger.

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"I like socialization, meeting people, attending conferences... having the chance to connect and share my story and hear their story," he says, in reference to how he intends to build upon his niche business.

Laxman stresses the need of the Bhutanese settlers to integrate. He says of the 800 people here, about fifty have bought houses.

"When they integrate," he says, "it gives them confidence to adapt."

Both Laxman and Lalita want area businesses to hire people from Bhutan; and they worry about those over 45 years of age, because they're the ones less likely to speak English fluently. The primary agriculture environment of Bhutan develops strong and dedicated

workers; but even though that is not a dominant industry in Roanoke, the Bhandaris cite jobs that are well-suited for both parties: "hospitals, hotels, factories and warehouses."

"It's a challenge in the United States for employment," Laxman states. "People lose jobs for no reason; and that's a different system [than what the culture is used to]."

"In America you need to have a big network," he says, when talking about how he intends to build his accounting practice. "It starts with my people... and word-of-mouth."

The Bhandaris' vocational challenge is no different than the personal challenges of all refugees and immigrants. If anyone can get the community's attention, he's going to do his part to make sure that happens. 

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Tom Field

Sarah Baumgardner is on a recruiting mission for WVWA.

Stream of opportunity >

Executive Summary:

The Western Virginia Water Authority is looking ahead, and what it's finding is a pressing need to fill its own pipeline—employment, that is.

By Tom Field

"The average age is 45."

That's what Sarah Baumgardner says. She's talking about the employment pool at the now ten year old Western Virginia Water Authority, currently 300 men and women serving the regional, multi-county, multi-reservoir / treatment plant (Carvins Cove, Spring Hollow, Crystal Spring, Falling Creek, Smith Mountain Lake) public water supply system, tapping 58,000 meter points (though "meter readers" are no longer employed with the new Iperl wireless transmitters). One needs only to look at

the system map to see how extensive the pipeline and service area is—and though community visionaries have been talking about the advantages of a regional approach from as far back as the 1960s, Baumgardner says, the real catalyst for the Water Authority was the drought of 2003.

"One person on one side of the street would be without water, while the other person had it," she says.

Which brings us to today. As the Authority expanded (in the Roanoke Area System, only the City of Salem and Town of Vinton maintain their own supply) much of the personnel need was simply absorbed from the existing municipalities. The skill set for this industry is partly dependent on experience, since many positions require certifications. The result? Like the sound of droplets from a leaky faucet in the middle of the night, Baumgardner is well aware of the challenges, counting every one:

"We currently have 21 percent of our workforce eligible for full or partial

retirement. In five years, 53 percent will be eligible. And some can retire as early as 50."

Did we mention the system is growing? (Botetourt County is considering joining and the Town of Rocky Mount is about to hook in.) Did we also need to remind anyone that water is an essential need—perhaps the most essential of all?

Baumgardner is the public relations manager for WVWA, and you get the feeling that though she sees not a thing wrong with middle-age workers, she certainly doesn't mind spreading the word to young people.

"This [working for the WVWA] is a good job opportunity, a good way to serve and give back to your community, and you can stay in Roanoke if you want," she cheers. But it is, perhaps, the next two lines that are the most attractive to job seekers:

"Your job's not going to get downsized; and you're not going to get outsourced," she says, pointing out the sometimes not-so-obvious fact that the entire business is based on the local natural resource. Not an industry that can be easily be taken over by a merger or acquisition or shipped overseas.

"People don't really think about this industry," Baumgardner continues. "We're no different than a lot of industries, but you can't exactly bring in robots to do it."

When she's speaking to young people, such as during her outreach programs at community colleges, she offers poignant advice based on what she sees as a pure economic reality for many:

"I always tell kids that at some point in your life, you're going to pick job security and benefits over pay."

The value of the WVWA does appear to be coming more obvious in recent days, even though it celebrated its ten year anniversary on July 1 this year. You see more white trucks rolling around the roads, and you hear more about the advantages of its services. During the infamous derecho of June 2012 (22 deaths and millions of power outages in the Appalachian region) Baumgardner says no one in the WVWA service area was without water.

Currently, Mountain Empire Community College in Big Stone Gap, VA offers certification programs in water and wastewater treatment plant operations, which gives a new entry job applicant a big step ahead in Class rating; but Baumgardner also says that all employees are required to train and test for scheduled advancement while employed with the Authority.

Ensuring the pipeline is filled with skilled and experienced personnel is mission critical. They can't all be middle aged. 

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Santiago Cruz

Chop, chop, and roll >

Executive Summary:

A Honduran making Japanese sushi in an American southern town; it all comes together to make a colorful, tasty, delightful, and attractive work space.

By Anne Sampson

Santiago Cruz, owner of Wasabi's on the Roanoke City Market, came to Roanoke from Honduras 20 years ago and went to work at Sake House, a Japanese restaurant at Lakeside Plaza in Salem. He worked in the kitchen, and when the restaurant's owner asked him if he'd like to learn to make sushi and work out front, he said no. She was persistent and he finally agreed.

"I found out it was cooler out there in





all photos: Anne Sampson



the summer than it was in the kitchen," he says. He learned the operation from back to front in his 13 years there. When the restaurant moved to Blacksburg seven years ago, he opened Wasabi's.

"The hardest thing to learn about sushi is the rice," he says. Japanese rice is short-grained and sticky, and it's difficult to get it to finish at just the right consistency. When you learn to make sushi, "Japanese people won't

let you do anything for 6 months but learn to cook rice."

Seven years in, Wasabi's employs four full-time staff and eight part-time. The restaurant gets many visitors from Hotel Roanoke, with some loyal travelers who stop in every time they're in Roanoke.

Despite the 16 hour days, Cruz says he loves the work, the people he meets and the art of sushi. 





Sarah Cox

Maureen Jones and Paul Thompson of Green Meets Clean:
If you don't go green, you're missing an opportunity.

Clean shouldn't make you sick >

Executive Summary:

Commercial cleaning services are often regarded as "out of sight, out of mind," but harmful products and practices can be reduced or eliminated using services like Green Meets Clean.

By Sarah Cox

Good is good not enough when it comes to cleaning, says Paul Thompson of Green Meets Clean, a new business that specializes in cleaning with green, or chemical-free products. This practice saves money in the long run, can be used by businesses to promote their healthy practices and in fact, is cleaner. One client, Larry Lamanca, president of American Door and Glass SW Va, Inc. in Salem says that he decided to go with Green Meets Clean because it "creates a cleaner and healthy environment, without using chemicals. In this day and

time and the amount of illnesses that are caused by all types of chemicals, I felt it was better for our employees and me to keep our working environment safe and clean." Moreover, says Lamanca, the prices are competitive and "they really do a very good job. There is no question that it makes a significant difference in the way the offices smell or don't smell, with no fake odors and less irritants. Another big difference—I also have them do our home and it really helps if people suffer with allergies; the fewer irritants in the air, the less allergy season affects not only my employees but myself."

In the United States in 2003, janitors and cleaners suffered 127,800 musculoskeletal disorders, which is the fourth-highest rate of all occupations. These same people had the fifth-highest rate of illnesses and injuries resulting in days away from work (Cleaners and the Dirty Work of Neoliberalism). HealthDay reported that janitors suffer more injuries than many other workers in private industry — "In 2007, 262 out of 10,000 full time janitors were injured on the job more than twice the average injury rate for all workers in private industry,

which was 122 out of 10,000 workers.”

Thompson points out that, contrary to cutting corners with high-powered chemical cleaners, “cleaning in general is caught up in an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ kind of thing, which is really counterproductive since, even with the low pay and high illness/injury rates, it remains a cost center for businesses, rather than an asset producer. Essentially nobody wins. There is little or no ROI, which is a missed opportunity.”

His business uses products that are Green Seal certified (he is making end roads to establish his business under this certification as well), which will reduce residues that are harmful but do not introduce toxins into the environment. Good cleaning, he says, is more than just dusting and picking up trash – “it’s about making sure that every surface of the office – and spaces unseen – are clean, fresh and sanitary without the use of poisonous chemicals.”

His business partner, Maureen Jones, has cleaned houses in The Hamptons, New York, and since then in Roanoke for 20 years. Through her Compulsive Cleaners business in Roanoke she discovered that popular products everyone uses are bad for homes, homeowners and the environment. “I found out that Lysol had formaldehyde in it. I always got Top Job, Mister Clean, and Pinesol, whose scents were unnecessary and didn’t clean any better. Then, I started

using Basic H all-natural cleaner from Shacklee for glass and doing floors because a lot of my customers have allergies and I had to be sensitive to that,” she said. Additionally, Green Meets Clean uses microfiber clothes that are color coded so there is no cross contamination, and she will not reuse a mop head before washing it. She says that it’s a much cleaner approach, in addition to eliminating the air-borne contaminants.

Thompson is not operating out of a vacuum — he worked for eight years for The National Resources Defense Council, has a BS in biology, a BA in political science, and master’s degrees in urban and regional planning and political science, and says that the conventional products we use “are derived from petroleum. We don’t need to use them. Workers don’t need to use them.”

But what if we do? The Environmental Working Group says that some fumes from cleaning products induce asthma; common cleaning agents have carcinogens; children born to women who held cleaning jobs have an elevated risk of birth defects; some cleaners cause chemical burns and poisoning.

There is no need of a tradeoff. Green Meets Clean, says Thompson, means a better bottom line, cleaner environments, and improved air quality. 

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Randolph Walker

Delia Heck and Glen Stevens in the greenhouse at Garber Hall, home of Ferrum's environmental programs.

Green work >

Executive Summary:

Ferrum College grads have been protecting the air you breathe and the water you drink since the 1970s.

By Randolph Walker

Everybody's green today, but little Ferrum College, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge in Franklin County, was green before it was cool.

Ferrum offers one of the oldest environmental science programs in the country, and recently added an environmental studies program that is poised to graduate its first B.A. recipients.

Environmental science was created as a four-year B.S. program when Ferrum changed from a two-year to a four-year school in 1970s, says Glen Stevens, program coordinator of environmental science.

"In the '70s there was an interest from

President Joe Hart [then head of Ferrum] in developing majors for students that would get them employment. We have a large number of first-gen college students who are very much focused on getting a job. This was viewed by President Hart as a new, up-and-coming way for students to get jobs."

"The establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency in the early '70s, the passage of the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, it became apparent very quickly that this was a new field that was going to be exploding," says Delia Heck, who heads the environmental studies program. It was a good opportunity for Ferrum to begin to prepare students for jobs in that field.

With environmental issues coming to the forefront of public discussion, Ferrum added the environmental studies program in 2011. Environmental science is heavier in lab sciences like chemistry, while environmental studies focuses more on policy, economics, and sustainability.

"Students with a B.A. in environmental studies might work for an environmental

consulting firm writing environmental impact statements,” says Heck, “whereas someone with an environmental science degree is actually going out into the field taking the soil samples, water samples, air samples, going back into a lab and doing the chemical and biological testing. Some students want to be hands-on in the field, some want to be doing more of the people and analysis side of things.”

Bryce Tignor, a senior from Tappahannock, hopes to go into forestry or horticulture, “I like being outdoors and it’s a growing field,” he says.

Students have done internships with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Fairystone Farms Wildlife Management Area, Booker T. Washington National Monument, Novozymes, American Electric Power, and in a water quality monitoring program at Smith Mountain Lake. Roanoke and Salem employers, could you use a student intern? “We are looking to expand the opportunities for them in the Roanoke Valley,” says Stevens.

The environmental science program has about 50 students. About 14 graduate per year. The newer environmental studies has 10 students with the first four graduating this year. Students have gone on to jobs with the Virginia Department of Forestry, the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Virginia Cooperative Extension, and wastewater treatment departments. But potential jobs aren’t just limited to the public sector.

“The idea of a triple bottom line—society, economics and the environment—means the realm of jobs in environmental science is not simply in a government agency or for an environmental consulting firm,” says Heck. “Large companies need to be looking at what’s their environmental



Randolph Walker

Bryce Tignor (left) and Gage Staton, seniors, identify conks (fungal growths found on trees) in a lab.

impact and how can they save money by being green. It used to be thought that if you were doing things to protect the environment you were sacrificing profit, and that’s simply not true today. You can actually earn money by saving energy or saving water or conducting your business in a more sustainable way.”

Says Stevens: “We’ve got a broad-based environmental science program that allows students to find an area that they’re passionate about, and develop the skills, the expertise and the professional contacts that make them really good candidates for the job market.”



all photos: Jon Shup

Parents: Jesse and Melanie Couch; Kids: Nakeyah, Artise, Malaqui, Jesse, Aaron, Eden

Serious homework >

Executive Summary:

Jesse and Melanie Couch run their home, work, family, faith, and activities all bundled up in one very busy scene.

By Keisha Graziadei

Years ago, Jesse Couch, 32, and Melanie Couch, 29, discovered they couldn't have children of their own. Little did they know that one day they would adopt not just one or two children, but eight, all from Roanoke's foster care system. And they would both still have interesting and rewarding careers on top of their maximal parenting demands.

As if being parents of eight weren't enough, the Couches chose among the toughest kids to care for. Their kids are the ones other families couldn't or wouldn't handle. Each one has his or her own array of special needs, ranging from feeding complications to cognitive delays, and several might have otherwise ended up in regimented group homes as an alternative to juvenile hall.

The Couches dated in college about 13 years ago, got married about five and a half years ago, and shortly after that, started looking into foster care. They have since defined

their own American Dream, never looking back to more culturally acceptable or traditional family and career paths.

Melanie admitted to their naïveté going into it. "There were all these kids that needed a family... We thought it was a cheap way to adopt, like an orphanage." She pet her cat's back, a hairless Sphinx rescue, who pranced around on the dining table. "The point of doing foster care is to rebuild a family and rebuild broken people. You don't want to take someone else's kids."

Nevertheless, it can often pan out that way, as it did for the Couches when they adopted their first foster child, Nakeyah, now 15 years old. "She was not the blonde-haired, blue-eyed kid we thought we'd adopt," Melanie said. "She was a scary African-American teenager from a hard part of town with an attitude problem! But we fell in love with her. She's our daughter."

In the following few years, seven others followed Nakeyah's path. The Couches welcomed the opportunities as they arose. "There was never a plan for this many kids," said Melanie, laughing. And there were times when she wanted to adopt and Jesse didn't. And he was usually right, she added, "but we agreed when it was the right child."

"Prayer always played a big part," Jesse added. The family has been committed to

the Christian faith community in Roanoke and faith has played an important role in their philosophy and perspective. He later added, "We're not here for a comfortable life, we're here for a fulfilling life."

The decision to adopt children has certainly been uncomfortable in many instances. One child they adopted ended up reunited with her biological family earlier this year, and it was hard on the Couches to lose her. Another, Eden, just three years old, passed away in August due to what was believed to be a feeding tube complication, leaving a hole in the hearts of everyone who knew and loved her.

When you have kids with behavioral problems and cognitive delays, people are less likely to want to have you over for dinner, Melanie said. She explained that it can be easy for foster families to fall into the "fringe" of society. So, she started volunteering her time to train and support other foster families. Out of her passion she founded Matthew's Child, a nonprofit whose sole purpose is to provide support to foster families—whether a gift for a child or a family meal.

Managing a career with eight children

For Melanie, it was impossible to keep even a part-time office job, especially in the summer when the kids weren't in school. She eventually had to leave her full time job in railroad claims investigation. Fortunately, she was extended the opportunity to telecommute on a contract basis. Now she consults with a variety of railroad clients in risk management and accident claims, pro re nata, on top of running a nonprofit and being mom to (currently) six kids.

Jesse is an artist with an impressive portfolio of websites he has built and designed, some of which have won notable awards. Last year, he left a position with a well-renowned

agency where he had been since 2010 to work for himself full time.

"I was watching my wife and kids on Facebook having fun and I wanted to be part of it," Jesse said. "I was working a lot and my job was becoming too much of a focus. I was bringing too much work home." His priority has always been his family, and so he thought leaving his job and working for himself full time was the best decision to reflect that.

Working from home is a modern luxury, in many ways, thanks to the development and growing accessibility of technology. 20 years ago, it may have not been possible. According to a 2014 New York Times article, telecommuting grew 79% between 2005 and 2012. Now, 3.2 million U.S. workers





telecommute. Melanie and Jesse are two of them.

With both parents working from home, the couple is indeed more available to their kids—which has revealed itself to be both a wonderful thing and a challenge of its own.

One challenge, they both agreed, is that it can be difficult for the kids to understand that even though mom and dad are home, they still have to work. They explain to the kids that they had to go to school and pay their dues at the office to be able to work from home now.

"They don't see that when I'm on the computer it means that I'm working," Jesse expounded. He's not playing video games, and he obviously can't while working.

Melanie goes on walks around the block to have work conversations. "It can be hard to juggle, you know, when you're on a call and a kid is screaming in the background." They admitted that having a home office could

help. They've outgrown their current house and are looking for a new space to serve their home needs better.

Another challenge is the lack of security. Self-employment does not guarantee 40 hours of work per week and there are no employer-provided health benefits. There aren't always railroad accidents for Melanie, and Jesse has to do his best to ensure a steady flow of work.

Fortunately for Jesse, there has been no shortage of work since he left his last job, even having to turn down a dozen clients this year for a larger contract.

The journey has also given the couple a different perspective on success.

"A lot of times when you're pursuing a career, success is defined by added responsibilities and climbing the ladder and maybe having a wife responsible for taking care of the kids at home, which I totally don't subscribe to," Jesse said. "I find success and fulfillment in being well-rounded. I can't find all my value [at work] because I would be focused on that and not on my kids. It's better to be well-rounded than fixated on one thing."

Now if the Couches want to go on vacation, there's no limitation on vacation time since work can go with them when needed. They invested in a 33-foot RV with seven beds to save on plane tickets and hotel costs, and now they herd their throng of youngsters into their mobile bed and breakfast and go wherever they please, whenever they please.

The last trip was a 20-or-so-hour trip to Wichita, Kansas to visit family for Thanksgiving last year. The kids were baffled by the flat landscape as they had never traveled prior to living with Jesse and Melanie.

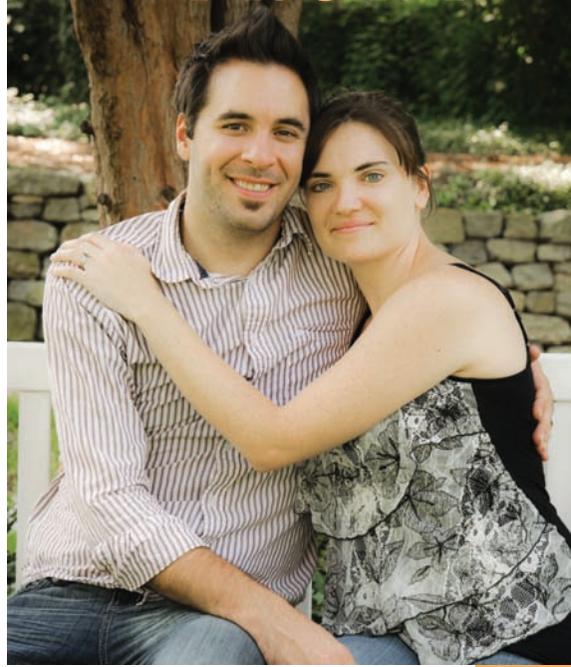
The two will both tell you that fostering started long before *Nakeyah*. "We fostered dogs before we fostered kids," said Jesse

with a grin. He pulled up a photo on his phone of a disfigured dog Melanie had adopted and given a mohawk that she shaped herself with styling gel.

Melanie rescued animals all through college and recalled one time she raided a puppy mill with PETA. She pointed to the PETA tattoo on her torso. They both laughed. "We're working on covering that."

In the past year, they have had two dogs, four cats, and 10 people all in one modest 2,200 square-foot house. "Animals are therapeutic and they're for the kids," Melanie said. "There's a reason for them."

There are lots of ways to help foster kids: Foster a child who needs a home, donate to support families who are already fostering (like through Matthew's Child), or mentor a child. 



Note: Just prior to publication, Jesse Couch accepted a job with Modea in Blacksburg.



Ask our guys (or gals)

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What's the place like?
How do you like being here?
How are the people?

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World peace >

Don't you just love surprises?

The first surprise is finding a room that is pretty filled up. More than 50 occupied chairs. Surprising, because the topic is "What do the World Religions have in Common?"... not exactly the most compelling draw for college students, I imagine. I notice most of the chairs are indeed occupied by students (maybe five old guys like me); so it's clear what has happened: professors are offering extra credit for attending.

We are treated to two academicians. A younger one (visiting scholar) and an older one (hometown celebrated expert). The older one only has a half hour to present his case, so he's forced to skim across the surface of what would ordinarily be a hefty exploration with little chance of real resolution. And with a few simple slides, featuring icons of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam as one set, and Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism as the other set, the old guy does an admirable job. He makes it clear that amongst the world's mainline religions, they are most definitely not saying the same thing. He disputes the oft uttered proverbial phrase at a cocktail party (where you're not supposed to be talking about religion anyway) that "all religions are basically the same."

"No," says the older professor. Can't be any clearer than that.

However, the professor wants to consider the possibility of a yes. There seems to be a notion of hope if we could find a strain of universal truth or agreed reality; so he's prepared to show such plausibility without force-fitting the pieces together. His proposition takes us to three areas: the reliance on some deistic entity or notion; the idea of the enduring self; and some recognition of morality. How religions apply and practice these elements completely screw up any chance of a unified belief, he says, but theologically speaking, there is universality if you laid it all out in each systems' purist form.

Now, it's the younger professor's turn.

He takes issue with this. He takes issue with that. His first disagreement turns out to be a simple semantic misunderstanding. Apparently, he thinks the older professor's use of the term "great" religions for the mainline beliefs inferred "better" or superiority, when it was simply an adjective for scope and population. Young prof then shows the belief structure of an indigenous tribal culture, which was certainly interesting, but seemed to be showcased for no other reason than for the audience to appreciate diversity and embrace less well-known religious traditions. His exploration in no way refuted the plausibility of universal agreements among the world belief systems, much less addressed the topic.

continued on Page 42

On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
Most of us know the possibility of consensus when it comes to religion is a fruitless exercise; would a talk at a local college change that perception?

Refugees earn their place >

Refugees come to the U.S. with a strong desire to begin a new life for themselves and their families. Yet they know this requires time, perseverance, and certainly hard work. Thanks to the community support they receive in Roanoke, they have that chance.

According to the United Nations, there are about 15 million refugees in the world. Refugees are people who have been forced to flee their country to escape persecution due to religion, political opinions, ethnicity, or some other reason. For many, returning home is not an option – their country either won't take them or it no longer exists. Many have lost their homes, their livelihoods, family members, and most of their belongings. Less than one percent of refugees are given permission to be resettled to a new country like the United States, so while they have already endured so much, these few understand how fortunate they are to have a new start.

Over the years, Roanoke has received refugees from Vietnam, Bosnia, Burma, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Nepal, and many other countries. Commonwealth Catholic Charities (CCC) meets refugees at the airport and works with them to have the things they need for life in Roanoke. These include housing, public transportation, classes in English and U.S. culture, and employment. Most refugees are ready within three months to be self-sustaining, due to the work of CCC, the ingenuity of the refugee, and the willingness of landlords and employers to work with them.

Refugees are here legally and are ready to work. They may have cultural obstacles to overcome, as some are from Third World countries where there's no formal education, health care, or even running water. CCC's resettlement staff bridges that gap and teaches them about the American workplace. Local employers in housekeeping services at hotels and hospitals, restaurants and manufacturers across Roanoke work with CCC employment specialists to hire refugees. This works well for local employers because they have a workforce they can rely on – refugees are known for showing up for work, for working hard, and for being eager to learn.

Like anyone starting out, refugees start at the bottom and have to work their way up. Some are happy to stay in entry-level positions. They've already survived so much, and their dream of finding safety and having opportunities for their children has come true. Others have long-term goals they can achieve through hard work, education and promotion. One family from Rwanda recently resettled in Roanoke has two adult children with big aspirations. One wants to be a doctor and one wants to be a human rights activist after witnessing the genocide that ravaged their country in the 1990s.

continued on Page 42



Alison Hammond

Guest Commentary

By Alison Hammond

Executive Summary:

Local employees should be encouraged to hire refugees, who can strengthen the workforce at every level.

Field / On Tap

from Page 40

The young professor appeared frustrated. He spoke as if he thought the older professor was spreading misinformation. Unfortunately, substantive disagreement (if there really was any) was never revealed to the audience.

In other words, we were treated to a quibble.

The most humorous interchanges—and both professors did this—was when one would look over at the other (at moments when they were standing as far apart without looking conspicuous), to begin a rhetorical statement with the phrase... “And I’m sure even my colleague would agree that...” And we would all witness a stone cold face looking back, with no indication of acceptance or rejection.

So what was the second surprise?

It was unintentional. It was inadvertent. Serendipity at its best.

The very interchange between older and younger professor was the lesson itself.

We walked out of a room that just proved it’s probably impossible to get a consensus on even the most broad understanding.

And here we thought deep research and high academic pursuit and free open exchange was supposed to enhance our revelation.

When it comes to our understanding of “god” we’re no further ahead than where we were at the beginning of time. Quite possibly, we’re behind. 

Guest Commentary

from Page 41

Some refugees eventually save enough money to become entrepreneurs as they pursue the “American Dream”. These small businesses are often family-run but also employ others in the community. They give refugees a chance to support the community that has given them so much.

Another local family has seen returns for their hard work. The parents worked with the U.S. military as interpreters in Iraq in the early to mid 2000s. They eventually fled and were granted permission to come to the U.S. as refugees. The mother has worked at a local restaurant for several years and was promoted last year to supervisor of the bake shop. Their family, like many newcomers to our area, felt welcomed in Roanoke. Their children are excelling in Roanoke County schools because they’re surrounded by the kindness and support of others. The parents’ instruction is to show gratitude by making the most of their opportunities, telling them, “If you want to say thank you, do great in everything.”

What can we do as Roanokers to further support newcomers? Continuing an environment of openness, support and friendliness goes a long way. Be a neighbor to those around you. Encourage local employers to open themselves up to hiring refugees, creating a strong workforce at every level in Roanoke. Consider volunteering to work with refugees. Some volunteers give one-on-one tutoring in English and American culture. Others provide the kind of help and mentorship that a friend or a family member offers. This takes dedication and a great deal of love, but we as a community reap the benefits of it. 

For more information on how to get involved, please contact CCC at 540-342-0411 or at www.cccofva.org.



A bastion of culture in the bleakest of the boonies... — Page 41

Letters

Clubbin'

I enjoyed the cover story on area clubs and organizations in the October issue of FRONT. I am or have been affiliated with several that you highlighted, and my experience has been good with each one. They provide venues for learning, networking, supporting businesses, and for giving back to our communities. And the friendships and business associations made among members are pleasant incidentals of being involved.

We are fortunate in the Roanoke and New River Valleys to have many professional

and arts organizations. I urge FRONT readers to enrich their professional and personal lives by participating in appropriate organizations.

Thank you for the rich diversity of topics and insightful stories you provide us each month. The business topics are always interesting, but it's the breadth of other features, or "fronts", that appeals to me as well: financial, culture, wellness, legal, and a monthly executive profile. Your pulse on the community provides business leaders and ordinary citizens what we need to stay informed about this wonderful place where we live and work.

Dan Dowdy
Roanoke

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

““

Incivility will cause fewer young people to seek a career in public service — Page 21

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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 and news@vbFRONT.com

Twisty, indeed

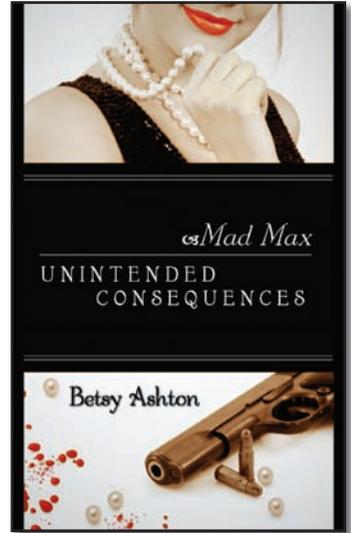
In *Mad Max: Unintended Consequences* (Koehler; 2013) Betsy Ashton takes us for a wild ride through the eyes of her worldly protagonist, Mad Max Davies. The story begins with Mad Max's socialite life being interrupted when she receives news that her daughter may not survive the night after a deadly car accident. Max races from Manhattan to the hospital in Virginia. Once there, she has no choice but to step in and hold life together for her grandchildren and son-in-law. But the joyous news of her daughter's recovery is cut short by her spiral into a dark world that ultimately leads to her death. Mad Max and her surprising team of sleuths go in search of the murderer who took her daughter's life, only to find some hair raising truths along the way.

The surprising twists and turns push us to the final page, wanting to know more about the adventures of our new friend, Mad Max.

—Jane Rosen

Groovy book

Step back in time to the free-spirited and turbulent 1960s in America. Feel the pulse and excitement of that era as well as the frustrations of many Americans with an unpopular war. Witness the effects of social, cultural, and political unrest through the eyes of two young men who come of age during this time.



Although fiction, *Music in the Key of Time* (Outskirts Press; 2014) is made real by the author, Robert Habermann, who lives in Roanoke. He recounts the adventures of two friends and how they confront these societal changes: their college escapades from 1965 to 1969, a near-death experience for the protagonist, loves and lovers encountered, activities ranging from pot parties to peace protests, and the importance of family and friends. A talented musician as well, Habermann provides an accompanying CD (a work in progress) comprising his compositions, which, along with many popular songs of the times, are referenced throughout the book—hence, the catchy title.

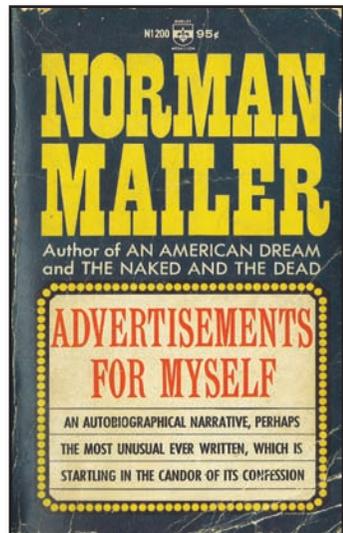
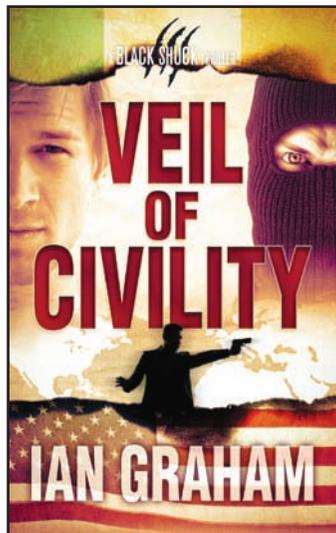
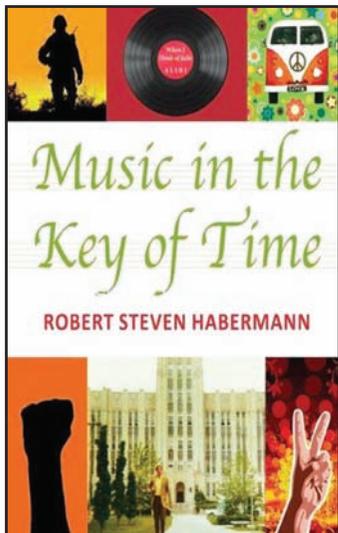
This is a must read for Boomers and anyone who wants to walk the walk of a young American during these disquieting times. It's far out, man!

—Dan Dowdy

Not the usual

One of the best things about being a book reviewer is discovering new and emerging talent. After reading *Veil of Civility* (Kirkgrim; 2013), I firmly believe I've unearthed an author who is going places.

The plotting is sumptuous as Graham weaves a trail of deceit and duplicity to drive the novel forward with a steadily increasing pace. While basically a chase novel, *Veil* is cleverly thought out and utterly plausible.



The characterization is surprisingly adept for a debut novelist, and I found myself giving the appropriate responses to characters as the story unfolded. While not a new concept to have a reformed terrorist as a lead, it does make a pleasant change from the usual ex-special forces soldier who populates bookshelves these days. The villains were suitably nefarious and the support characters were all drawn with aplomb.

With this thoroughly impressive debut, Ian Graham has announced himself as an author to keep a very close eye on.

—Graham Smith

Me, me, me

If there's one human characteristic I've never been fond of it is the super egotistical one. The chest thumping, endzone dancing just kind of ruins it for me, regardless of the accomplishment. In fact, I'm one of the few souls in the universe who is not a fan of Muhammad Ali, because I associate him with the first of the sport celebrity *braggadocios* who crossed the line and started the ball rolling on the "look at me, I'm the man" grandstanding. (He certainly wasn't the first, but he was... *the greatest*.) Isn't the whole point of boxing to knock the other guy down and win the bout? Isn't the objective of football to get the ball across the white line? Sure, a quick fist pump. A clap. An exhaled, YES! I know what it's like to score big in the moment. (I once caught a dropped peanut butter bread before it hit the kitchen floor—

with my *foot!*) But a whole center stage performance? Not what I came to watch.

Such is the case with Norman Mailer, particularly in this odd little find, a random collection of musings appropriately entitled *Advertisements for Myself* (G.P. Putnam's Sons; 1959). And yet, like Ali's boxing, the man can write. I had to read it, just like I have to watch Ali.

I'll say it again: the man can write. If you don't think he's perfect though, that's fine. He knows he is. Read his critiques of Kerouac, Capote, Salinger, Vidal, Ellison, Baldwin, Hemmingway, for crying out loud. And to prove how random and diverse this strange formatted book is, there is an intimate passage described in perhaps the most brilliant fashion I've ever encountered. I don't know whether to take a shower or build a monument. I do know when I finish this review, I might just jump up on my desk and scream, "I did it! I finished a book review! Sucks!"

—Tom Field

(**The reviewers:** Jane Rosen is a nationally recognized speaker on women's issues and the author of *My Life as a Corporate Goddess*; Dan Dowdy is a proofreader and a retired college professor who lives in Roanoke; Graham Smith, who lives in Lockerbie, Scotland, is an author and book reviewer for *Crimesquad.com*; Tom Field is an entrepreneur, creative director and publisher of FRONT.)



Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce

No kinks >

The **Massage Clinic of Salem** held its ribbon cutting on Sept. 26 with owners Anthony and Megan Ruggeri at the open house for the new business.



Tom Field



Throwing things >

Roanoke County's **Green Hill Highland Games** was held Sept. 27 at Green Hill Park, where spectators watched participants in traditional sports of the Scottish Highlands, including hammer throw and sheaf toss (above), stone put, and caber toss.



Berglund Automotive

Let's ride >

Here's a Facebook promotion that actually produced a winner. **John Cassidy** (right) of Buchanan wins two Polaris ATVs from a "Sportsman ACE" manufacturer's national sweepstakes, that he picks up from Roanoke's **Berglund Outdoors** as general manager **Pete Peters** hands over the keys.



Oh, Henry >

Henry's Public House will be opening at the Patrick Henry on Jefferson Street in downtown Roanoke as early as mid-November, featuring a restaurant and bar, serving lunch, dinner, and nighttime, seven days a week, and promising affordable prices. Building owner Ed Walker (center) introduces West Robison (left) who will serve as general manager and also runs Wasena Tap Room and Wildflour Restaurant & Bakery; flanked by chef Shane Dorry, also with Wildflour, at the press conference on Oct. 1.



Tool time >

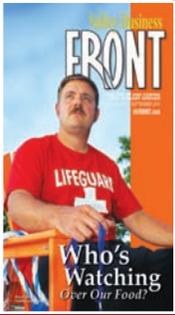
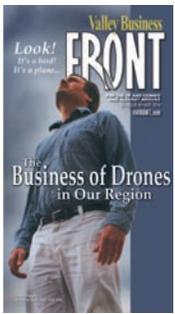
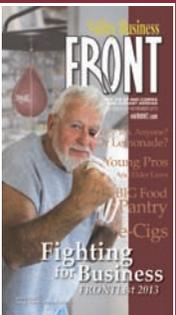
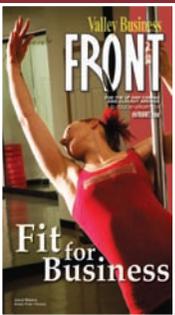
The **2014 Fall Symposium** "Tools for the Project Manager's Toolbox" by Project Management Institute / Southwestern Virginia Chapter was held at Hollins University on Oct. 10.



Stretch >

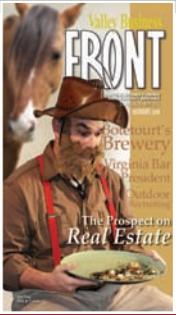
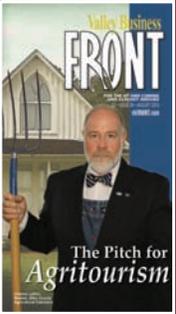
Construction Materials Group in Salem, in conjunction with www.concrete4u.com association, held its "Rocktoberfest" on Oct. 2, where customers in the construction and concrete business could review some of the latest supplies and heavy duty equipment, including this Putzmeister truck mounted concrete boom pump.

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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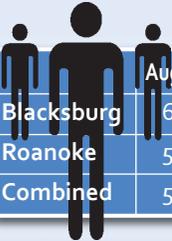


By the Numbers

While the overall economy is showing improvement the Roanoke and Blacksburg Metropolitan Statistical Areas showed some fluctuations in August over the month and the year. The housing and unemployment data for the region largely followed state and national trends.

Unemployment/Employment

Unemployment rates in the region in August followed Virginia's, and rose slightly over the month and the year. Virginia's unemployment rate in August was 5.7 percent, up from 5.4 percent in July and from 5.6 percent a year ago. The picture at the national level is rosier. The national unemployment rate in August fell from a full percentage point over the year from 7.3 percent to 6.3. The July national rate was 6.5 percent.



| | Aug. 2013 | July 2014 | Aug. 2014 |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Blacksburg | 6.1% | 6.2% | 6.2% |
| Roanoke | 5.9% | 5.6% | 6.1% |
| Combined | 5.9% | 5.8% | 6.1% |

The number of people **employed** in the region fell from July and from August 2013. Within the broader area, however, the number of people employed in the Blacksburg MSA rose to 76,615 from 75,049 in July and 75,451 a year ago.

| Aug. 2013 | July 2013 | Aug. 2014 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 224,380 | 226,811 | 223,735 |

Initial unemployment claims for the

region continue to fall, though not as fast as the state as a whole. For Week 40 (September 26-October 2) initial claims fell by 33.9 percent, well behind Virginia's 73.2 percent drop. Initial claims in the Blacksburg MSA fell by 48.3 percent, while the Roanoke MSA showed a 29.1 percent drop.

| Week 40 2013 | Week 40 2014 |
|--------------|--------------|
| 233 | 154 |

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Real Estate

The average local **home price** in August was \$204,625, down from \$212,939 in July (the highest average price since August 2010's \$213,944) and the average price a year ago. Nationally, home prices fell from \$267,500 in July to \$265,200, but rose 3.4 percent from a year ago. The number of homes sold locally and nationally was down over the month and the year. The National Association of REALTORS attributes the drop to investors retreating from the market, especially in the South and the West.



| Aug. 2013 | July 2014 | Aug. 2014 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| \$210,443 | \$212,939 | \$204,625 |

| Aug. 2013 | July 2014 | Aug. 2014 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 447 | 409 | 398 |

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

—By Anne Piedmont,
Piedmont Research Associates



Sarah Cox

Jonathan Hagmaier: "It was the teachers who made the difference."

The toolsmith goes to school >

Executive Summary:

Jonathan Hagmaier has successfully crossed the bridge between technology and education; and his company Interactive Achievement keeps building on it.

By Sarah Cox

Jonathan Hagmaier, CEO and founder of Interactive Achievement, knows from the

classroom floor up what a student and teacher need to be successful. He established this business in 2007 after years as a history and government teacher, and then an assistant principal in the Franklin County school system. Now he is reaching classrooms across the United States with software systems that provide resources.

The first one, Assessment Management System, allows a teacher "to assess students so they can immediately know where to help a child," he explains. This system generates reports on each SOL standard, and the teachers have the ability to build their own assessments.

The second one, Longitudinal Data System, takes all the data from a child over time such as his end-of-year SOL scores, attendance, discipline, and benchmarks, and looks at trends to find out what is working and what is not. "This allows districts to be proactive, rather than reactive," says Hagmaier.

His company's greatest challenge is to evolve as quickly as the districts that need his product. "We count on our districts being very proactive with us – that's how we build and evolve the products," he explains. Those products are in 112 out of 132 Virginia school districts, and can be found as well in South Carolina, Louisiana, Indiana, Ohio, New Jersey, Kansas and Washington, D.C.

The next challenge, he says, is to bring parents and students to the table, "in the sense of connecting data so that they can see and know where they actually need help and get the resources into the homes. Those resources can come from a third party, districts can develop their own, and there are many websites out there."

Hagmaier says the birth of his idea came in his classroom, where he realized "I needed to know what a student didn't understand after I taught something. ...teachers can make a huge difference if given the right tools. When I was the principal, it was the teachers who made the difference. Our goal is to create programs that give educators the most accurate assessment of student progress throughout the school year, so every student has the greatest chance of

In Brief

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Name: | Jonathan Hagmaier |
| Age: | 43 |
| Business: | Interactive Achievement |
| Location: | Roanoke |
| Family: | Married, daughter age 16, stepson age 31. |
| Background: | Established IA in 2007, along with Matt Muller and Mary Hagmaier; Teacher of history and government, then principal of Benjamin Franklin Middle School, Franklin County, VA. Bachelors of Arts in history/government; master's degree in educational leadership. |
| Mission: | To provide exceptional resources for the education community and to enable all to achieve success. |

success." He says that Interactive Achievement tools raise the bar.

Clients have a direct connection to a support team, and with the yearly subscription to the programs comes training. Interactive Achievement has a 100 percent retention rate in Virginia this year. To keep up with the demand of this product, Interactive Achievement has grown from 37 employees to 63 in 18 months. "We are constantly evolving updates to best service their needs." 



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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Steve Hildebrand has been promoted to vice president of marketing and **Teresa Rider** has joined as mortgage loan officer at Freedom First Credit Union.

Ashley Ratliff has joined as assistant vice president and branch manager at HomeTown Bank Colonial Avenue.

Debbie Coates, Evangeline Sherard, and **Alicia White** have joined as retail team loan officers at SunTrust Mortgage Roanoke / Lynchburg.

Hillary Wheatley has been promoted to senior associate at Dixon Hughes Goodman in Roanoke.



Rivera

Angela Rivera has joined Brown Insurance in Blacksburg as personal lines team customer service representative.

Paul Croston has been named managing partner of KPMG Roanoke office.

Stacey Deaton has joined Greystone Financial Group as a financial services representative.

LEGAL FRONT

Elizabeth K. Dillon has been nominated by President Obama for the bench of the U.S. District Court for the western district of Virginia.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Vellore

Shan Vellore has been named director of sales and marketing for Virginia Transformer Corp.

Johan Broekhuysen has been appointed executive vice president, chief financial officer and treasurer of Lumos Networks Corp.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Arthur

Anders Byrd, Lisa Gray, Monique Jefferson, and **Michelle Woodcock** have joined as sales

associates at Long & Foster Real Estate. **Julie Thomas Arthur** has earned the Certified Residential Specialist designation and is a sales associate with Long & Foster's Roanoke office.



Holmes

Celie Holmes has been promoted to sales and leasing agent at Waldvogel Commercial Properties.



Pugh



Stevens

David Pugh has joined as director of architecture and **Dennis Stevens** has joined as a construction administrator at Interactive Design Group.

Bill Poe, CCIM, SIOR, CPM has joined Hall Associates as executive vice president.



Poe

Janice Riggs has joined as a Realtor at Gwyn & Harmon Realtors.



Atkinson

Mark Atkinson, PE, LEED, AP BP+C has joined Spectrum Design as director of engineering - MEP and lead electrical engineer.



Rider

Tessa Rider, a mortgage loan originator for Freedom First Credit Union, received the 2014 Individual Affiliate of the Year Award from the Roanoke Valley Association of REALTORS.

Nadean Carson has joined S.C. Rossi & Co. as director of engineering.

John Hahn has joined

Environmental Options Inc. as executive vice president.

William Mason-Deese has joined Draper Aden Associates in Blacksburg as a staff geologist.

Kit Hale has been elected chairman of the board of commissioners for the Virginia Housing Development Authority.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT



Oehring

David Oehring has been named executive chef at the Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center.

Robin Sampson has been named director of sales at Hyatt Place Roanoke.

George "Skip" Subrod has been named interim chief executive officer and **Jack Wood** has been named interim administrator of the rehab center at Richfield senior living community while the board of directors conducts its search for permanent positions.

EDUCATION FRONT



Harnish



Ritorto



Conover

Ferrum College has announced the addition of: **Cherie Bond**, assistant professor of biology; **David Eichelberger**, assistant professor of art; **Christopher Harnish**, assistant professor of health and human performance; **Giuseppe Ritorto**, assistant professor of dramatic and theatre arts/musical Theatre;



Police



Borwick



Winge

Eric Vanden Eykel, assistant professor of religion; **Aaron Conover**, director of Ferrum Outdoors; **Ursa Johnson**, director of institutional research and effectiveness; **Marina Nasif**, foreign language teaching assistant; **Kimberly Police**, instructional design and technology / online learning administrator; **John Borwick**, director of information technology / University Libraries;

and **Donna Winge**, office manager / academic support specialist.



Pruden



Carmichael



Sterett

Virginia Tech has announced the addition of: **Amy Pruden**, associate dean for the Graduate School; **Ryan Briggs**, assistant professor of political science; **Katie Carmichael**, assistant professor of English; **Susan Sterett**, associate director of research, director

Have a career announcement?

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

Career FRONT



Myers



Arancibia



Daniels



Carlson



Plotica



Bombarely



Feng



Heflin



Cockrum



Flessner



Abaid

of the Metropolitan Institute; **Charles Dye**, assistant professor in the School of Performing Arts; **Randy Heflin**, associate dean in College of Science; **Cacye Myers**, assistant professor of communication; **Luke Philip Plotica**,

assistant professor of political science; **Ramon Arancibia** has been appointed assistant professor of horticulture at and specialist with Virginia Cooperative Extension; **Aureliano Bombarely** has been appointed assistant professor

of horticulture in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; **Rebecca Cockrum**, appointed assistant professor of dairy science; **Kristy Daniels**, named assistant professor of dairy science; **Xueyang Feng**,

appointed assistant professor of biological systems engineering; **Michael Flessner**, appointed assistant professor of plant pathology, physiology, and weed science; and **Kevin Carlson** has been appointed head of department of management at Pamplin College of Business.

Nicole Abaid, assistant professor of biomedical engineering and mechanics at Virginia Tech has been recognized as one of the "Brilliant 10"

Read the FRONT online

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in Popular Science magazine.



Gallemore

Senior Officer **Stephanie Gallemore** of the Virginia Tech Police Department has been recognized with the Governor's Award for community service and volunteerism.

CULTURE FRONT

Alzheimer's Association of Central and Western Virginia has announced the appointment of the following to serve on the 2015 national workgroups: **Jane Massie**, Walk to End Alzheimer's Advisory Council; **Mary Sandridge**, Concern & Awareness Advisory Council; **Suzanne Cresswell**, Direct Mail and Intermediate Gifts Advisory Council; and **Sue Friedman**, Mission Fund Advisory Council.

OTHER FRONTS

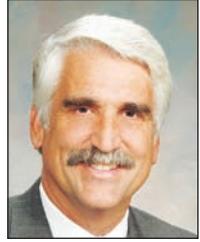
Dwayne D'Ardeene, CGM, stormwater utility manager for the City of Roanoke has been awarded the Public Works Manager credential by the American Public Works Association.

Ariel Lev has been appointed director of Grandin CoLab.

Ron Rordam, mayor of Blacksburg, has been elected president-elect of Virginia Municipal League.



Lev



Rordam

Compiled by Tom Field

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Members of the Visual Analytics team include (from left) Xinran Hu, Chris North, Leanna House, Scotland Leman, Lauren Bradel, Jessica Zeitz Self, Yong Cao, and Ian Crandell.

Where'd I put my data?

Virginia Tech 's Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science / Discover Analytics Center has received a \$1 million grant from the National Science Foundation for research on big data, including the Andromeda spatial relation model.

Get Out

Roanoke Mountain Adventures is planning to open in spring 2015, providing equipment, guides and tours for mountain biking, road cycling, kayaking, and other outdoor recreation activities.

Shoe space

Versona, a women's shoes and accessories store has opened at Valley View Mall.

Tobacco money trail

Virginia State Senator candidate Michael Hamlar (19th District) has called for an ethics policy from the Tobacco Indemnification Community Revitalization Commission, which

distributes funds from the federal government's billion dollar settlement with tobacco companies. Citing a 2011 audit, Hamlar raises a flag on the funding allocations, including the example of a large grant to a county economic group, awarded by a family member chairman.

Campus safety

LiveSafe, a mobile app for Virginia Tech students and staff, has released, allowing users to send tips and messages to Virginia Tech Police, share locations, and access emergency information.

Hokie hub

A Multi-Modal Transit Facility under proposal at Virginia Tech is coming closer to reality. Blacksburg Transit could begin building the 12,000 square foot, two-story facility as early as 2016. The site at Perry Street and north campus, would operate as a transportation hub, include indoor transit rider waiting area, and serve the bus line, the Hokie Bike Hub, and SmartWay bus.

Be happy

The Town of Blacksburg has been ranked fourth on a list of the "10 Happiest Small Places in America" by national real estate blog Movoto.com.

Peanut penalty

Former Peanut Corporation of America owner Stewart Parnell has been convicted of conspiracy during a federal trial in Albany, Ga., related to the salmonella-tainted peanut outbreak in 2008 and 2009 that was linked to nine deaths.

Floyd tech

Floyd Innovation Center has opened at the Floyd Regional Commerce Center and will service entrepreneurs and small businesses with flexible leases and space for small-scale production, research and technology.

Booze boom

The Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control reports record sales in the last fiscal

year. The VABC runs 350 stores and shows \$140 million profit — a 4 percent increase in gross sales (\$801 million).

Botetourt beckons

Botetourt County has received a \$30,500 grant from the Virginia Tourism Corporation's Marketing Leverage Program to help increase visitation and revenue.

Tri-credentials

Patrick Henry Community College, Danville Community College, and Southside Community College have entered a workforce collaboration called "Southern Virginia Works" to triple the number of credentials (certifications and licenses) in order to better meet regional employment needs.

Atom splitting

Babcock & Wilcox is considering a division into two publicly traded companies, where core operations would include energy for one and government and nuclear operation for the other.

No dates have been given on when or if the change will be presented to shareholders.

Motor to Motor City

Direct flights to Detroit are no longer available from Delta and the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport. Delta service has been expanded to the Atlanta hub by a 16 percent increase in outbound seats.

ROACT.org grant

Children's Trust Roanoke Valley has been awarded a \$15,050 grant from the Kathryn McQuade Foundation.

Another incubator

Roanoke City is negotiating a deal to acquire the old Gill Memorial Hospital

building on Jefferson Street across from the main city library to serve as a technology innovation hub for startup businesses; contingent on agreements with Carilion Clinic, a separate building exchange (former Navy Reserve building on Reserve Ave.) and a grant from Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

Bridges perking up

The Bridges multi-use complex on S. Jefferson Street at the foot of Mill Mountain has signed a Starbucks coffee shop to the site.

Electric company

InMotion, an Italian subsidiary global software company supplying power and control systems for electric vehicles, mobility

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devices, elevators, and similar products is opening a manufacturing facility at the Technology Manufacturing Building in Blacksburg, projecting \$5 million investment and 80 jobs.

Tri-lab

A new Virginia Intercollegiate Anatomy Lab is being constructed on the eighth floor of Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital; a \$2.5 million project collaborating Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, Radford University, and

Jefferson College of Health Sciences.

Walking up front

In conjunction with the fourth annual CityWorks (X)po social entrepreneurial and visionary summit in downtown Roanoke, developer Ed Walker was named 2014 Citizen of the Year by Roanoke City Council.

Luna larger

Luna Innovations is expanding its Blacksburg office to a newly renovated



Gill Memorial potential startup hub

FRONT Notes



NS Roanoke east end shops

41,000-square foot suite in the Technology Manufacturing Building.

Railroad work

Norfolk Southern has reported an increase in freight volume that has brought the business back to pre-recession levels, and will result in the hiring of approximately 900 new employees company wide by the end of the year.

Money state

According to a WalletHub survey of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, Virginia ranks 8th in income, 19th in GDP per capita, and 22nd in federal taxes per capita.

Upping the tab

Despite our “booze boom” report above on the record \$800 million

in alcohol sales in the latest fiscal year, Governor McAuliffe has directed the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control to raise the cost of alcohol, which will also trickle down from direct consumers to restaurant and bar supplies. The

price hike is part of a plan to close the \$2.4 billion budget gap.

Crossroads changes

CIBMM, a hotel developer, has proposed its new design for the future

razed site of the Holiday Inn at Prices Fork Road and University City Boulevard adjacent to Virginia Tech campus, which now includes a complex of two six-story hotels, a pharmacy, and two retail buildings.

Final play

Play by Play, a popular local sports tabloid published by John Montgomery has ended after ten years. The publication released 13 issues per year, from October 2004 to September 2014.

ECPI back

ECPI University has established a campus adjacent to the Townside Festival Shopping Center at 5234 Airport Road, offering Associate's, Bachelor's, and Master's degrees in technology, business, and health



Liquor sales hike



Foundation for Roanoke Valley presents \$50,000 check to New Horizons Healthcare.

programs, initially focusing on network security, medical assisting, and practical nursing. Skyline College (currently located in the same facility), will operate temporarily until its existing students complete their studies, and then cease operations, according to an ECPI spokesperson.

Smile

Foundation for Roanoke Valley has awarded a \$50,000 grant to New Horizons Healthcare for its Dental Clinic.

Rerouting

The Mountain Valley Pipeline project—a natural gas pipeline between West Virginia and Pittsylvania County, Va.—is looking at a revision that will no longer

run through Floyd County, but rather southwest Roanoke County, according to EQT Corp.

Kids business

The Junior Achievement of Southwest Virginia reports the agency reached 6,299 students in grades K-12, a 9 percent increase over the previous year, in its 2013-2014 annual report.

202 Not

Stefano's On The Market has opened "officially" at downtown Roanoke, under new ownership, new name, new offerings. The restaurant and nightlife and special event venue states in a press release that it "is not a thing like the former 202 Market" business that occupied the same

building with various troubling reports hitting the news over recent years.

Goldfield

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has awarded a \$93,674 grant to the "Fields of Gold" Agritourism Program to serve as a promotional boost to farmers and farmers market operators in the eight county, five city, Shenandoah Valley district.

Play it again

Mill Mountain Theatre received a citation from the 2014 Virginia General Assembly, recognizing the organization's 50 years of service to the Roanoke community and beyond. Also, under its Arts & Culture Initiative

program, the Foundation for Roanoke Valley awarded a \$40,000 grant to the theatre.

Close call

In a 4-3 vote, Blacksburg council agreed to a rezoning for a planned 37-bedroom, four-story condominium complex at Eheart Street at the edge of the downtown area.

Not by a nose

Colonial Downs horse racing track has closed, which affects off-track betting sites such as the one in Vinton (that hasn't been active this year anyway).

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

CONTRIBUTORS

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do great in everything — Page 42

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It was the teachers who
made the difference — Page 51

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