

Valley Business

FRONT

*The 2015
FRONTList:
Best In
Business*

THE SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEUR
CHAMPION IN VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE
FREE • ISSUE 87 • DECEMBER 2015

vbFRONT.com

Who's In
The Lead?

Jim Flowers,
VT KnowledgeWorks



Audi
Truth in Engineering



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Eighty-four. That's how many names we have on our 2015 FRONTList: Best in Business this year. Had we been a little more clever about it, we could have included three more on the list, just to match up nicely with our 87th issue. But that would have been forced. We could have easily added three more names; in fact, we know dozens if not hundreds of good folks who are clearly eligible for FRONTList designation.

We publish our "best of" list in an intentional manner, but without a lot of strict parameters. The compilation is the result of newsmakers who have made a positive impact during this year, improving our local and regional business climate, bettering our community, or elevating their own businesses—which provides residual benefit to all of us and represents the very essence of our magazine's mission and how business should work.

We don't follow a lot of the prescriptions most similar media embrace. We don't publish an editorial calendar or devise special features just to fit an expected schedule (even though that's a popular formula for boosting revenue). Last year, in fact, we didn't publish a FRONTList. You can't very well be out front with what's important if you're following a fixed outline. And yet we understand it's good to gather up your news from the year, put it all down for review, and take notice of what was done correctly.

Besides, what better thing can you do during the busy holiday season than make a list? And check it twice? Or 84 times just to be sure.



Tom Field

“ ”

Do we have the assets or resources to attract the kinds of businesses we want?

— Page 20

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DEPARTMENTS

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“ ”
It has to list
specific risks

— Page 40



Cover photography of Jim Flowers by Tom Field.

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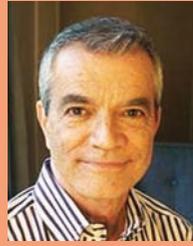
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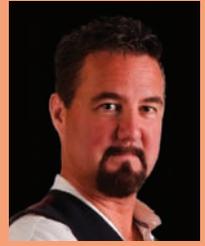
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DECEMBER



Dan Dowdy



Tom Field



Mike Leigh



Ariel Lev



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen

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. "They 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



Keith Finch



Rachael Garrity



Kathleen Harshberger



Jonathan Freedom



Jan Sessor



Caitlyn Skaggs

“”
Are we willing
to change?

— Page 20

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 44.

“”
There is a special
place in hell for
women who do
not help other
women — Page 23

2015 Members

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

You will note that the Board is comprised of experts in many different business / industry “fronts.” This is intentional, as we are reporting on all the areas that affect our regional economy and are important to you. In keeping with our policy of being “the voice of business in the valleys” we ask each reader to join us as an editorial partner by calling or e-mailing us your ideas. You know more than we know about your business—or you certainly should—and that inside knowledge shared with our readers will make us all better at what we do.

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Blog: morefront.blogspot.com



Jim Flowers

2015 FRONTList: Best in Business



Welcome to the seventh edition of FRONTList: Best in Business. This year's list is all about the people. The men and women who generate the energy that moves our region ahead. They join the ranks of an impressive lineup. If you only looked at our FRONTcovers for those seven previous issues, you saw representatives from the medical (Ed Murphy, Nancy Agee); technology (Victor Ionello, Mary Miller, Ken Ferris); and service (Marilyn Burrows, Jimmy Buck) sectors. The lists themselves included folks from all industries—but there's no question the "FRONTleader" on the cover tended to favor the entrepreneurial spirits, the innovators, or the individuals who acted that way, working their way up to a proven position of leadership.

With that seven year legacy in mind, our FRONTleader for 2015 crosses over a bit... to the education sector. And yet it isn't just an educator from the conventional model; it's the type of training and preparation that truly builds a business from the ground up. In other words, he's helping to develop the next recruits for tomorrow's FRONTList — or the best in business recognition that will latch on to them anywhere they choose to go.

2015 FRONTList >

Executive Summary:
FRONTList is our annual compilation of what moves the Blue Ridge Virginia region ahead; this year, it's all about the people.

By Tom Field

Photography by FRONT, from FRONT files or supplied by FRONTList winners

FRONTcoverProps

That slick TREK bike, helmet, gloves, glasses, and racing shirt on our FRONTcover was provided by Chris Betz of East Coasters. With shops in Blacksburg and Roanoke, you're ready to embrace another FRONTList 2015 winner: the popular and growing sport of bicycling on the best trails and greenways throughout Virginia's Blue Ridge. [eastcoasters.com]



Agee



Bishop



Brand



Bryan



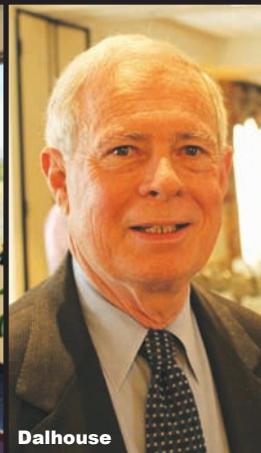
Carter



Chachra, Krisha



Chachra, Vinod



Dalhouse



Elliot



English



Eshelman



Fralin



Friedlander



Gray



Hagmaier



Hart

Leading the pack

Jim Flowers is in the front of the race. The director of VT KnowledgeWorks heads an organization that supports entrepreneurship. What's remarkable is that he was so far ahead before the race really got rolling in our region. Today, you can't miss hearing or seeing or reading the word "entrepreneur" every day in the Blue Ridge Virginia region, particularly if you have any connection to the business community. There has been an explosion in coworking environments, startup and innovation pitch engagements, financial and venture capital commitments, launch announcements, and countless seminars and workshops for the aspiring entrepreneur. On the one hand you have economic developers, municipal operators, business organizations, and schools getting in on the action. On the other hand you have new business startups, technology developers, microcosmic sector growth (like craft breweries) in the mix, along with the peripheral business that have created specific niches to serve the e-crowd; such as law firms, banks, and consultants. The theoretical and practical have converged.

Flowers manages this convergence as he oversees VT KnowledgeWorks at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center in Blacksburg. The small but effective organization is a subsidiary of Virginia Tech Foundation, provides an alliance between entrepreneurs and business resources, and operates entrepreneurial-building programs such as its head-turning Global Student Entrepreneurship Challenge and other support activities for startups. Flowers won the 2015 Small Business Advocate award from the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce, serves on the boards of the Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council and the Virginia Community Economic Network, and served as president of the Virginia Business Incubation Association.

In a video introduction of Jim, he concludes his story with the statement, "don't be scared; go for it." We continue to meet the entrepreneurs who have taken his advice.

Learning the course

Since our FRONTcover model is in the business of professional development, we'll start our 2015 FRONTList with the education sector.

Dr. Robert (Bobby) Sandel, president of Virginia Western Community College, heads a strong wave of attention this year as VWCC grows in both physical infrastructure as well as its continued service to high school graduates and adult students seeking an efficient and economical resource for career preparation.





On the medical education side, the efforts of **Dr. Michael Friedlander** at Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute gains global attention; and the leadership of **Dr. N.L. Bishop** at Jefferson College of Health Science is particularly noteworthy, with the recent acquisition of doctorate programs.

Radford University's **Penelope Kyle** also makes the grade as her retirement in 2016 follows significant upgrades at the school amongst a flurry of new construction.

Money moving

Frank Carter, president of MemberOne Federal Credit Union in Roanoke, has overseen a solid year of performance at the credit union, highlighted by construction expansion that greets I-581 traffic zipping around the edge of downtown.

Steve Musselwhite of Musselwhite & Associates Insurance not only provides financial acumen, but serves the business community with his work for the Roanoke County Economic Development Authority.

Susan Still, president of HomeTown Bank in Roanoke, not only got to celebrate with the community bank's tenth year anniversary this year, but she was also elected to the Board of Directors of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond.

Well now

Nancy Agee, CEO of Carilion Clinic (and 2011 FRONTList business person of the year), continues to rack up accolades as the \$1.5 billion healthcare group leads all business development areas in the area; her name appeared on more lists and nomination appeals than any other, not to mention her numerous board positions and leadership roles with American Hospital Association and the governor's board.

Anything connected to the upcoming neuroscience program at Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute is worthy of the 2015 FRONTList; and at this earliest stage, all eyes are on **Harald Sontheimer** (just transplanted from Birmingham) and the team he will direct and develop. Stakeholders in the neuroscience program belong in our education sector, but the impact will reverberate to the healthcare industry at large throughout our region with the medical advancement, the work, the students, the high level recruiting, and the peripheral services that accompany such an initiative.



NOT in FRONT

At the top of our blacklist is the departure (in full or in part) of some of our larger employers, making the economic hit noteworthy: Norfolk Southern (about 500), Advance Auto (reorganization), HSN (about 350).

Interstate 81 backups, shut downs, reroutes, and delays were about as frequent as they could be this year... at times it seemed like an alert was issued every single day—particularly on the stretch between Pulaski and Rockbridge counties.

The flea circus. One large flea market complex in Roanoke (Happy's) closes after nearly six decades of operation... primarily because the owners let it fall to pieces. And at the huge Labor Day Weekend Hillsville Flea Market, state and local police conducted a sting to bust folks for selling counterfeit merchandise... mostly perfume and clothing accessories. Really, there's fake stuff at a flea market?

The horror.

Airlines. We hesitate to point a finger at the Roanoke Blacksburg Regional Airport, as it's about the most pleasant, cleanest, quickest, and efficient mid-market airport you'll ever experience... but we meet nary a single business leader who isn't frustrated by the lack of flights and the higher rates. Some have gone as far as to say our inadequate air travel is the number one challenge to economic development. As we pitch new business and seek growth opportunities, we're eventually going to have to get the airlines here. Supply and demand has not been in our favor (or on the airlines' radar).

The worst news of 2015 was the tragic on-air shooting of WDBJ 7 television station's reporter Alison Parker and photographer Adam Ward on August 26. We'll never forget that feeling of sickness even as we rallied great support and forge ahead to heal and improve.

Who's In The FRONT?

FRONTList 2015: Best In Business

The Complete List

Education FRONT

N.L. Bishop

Jefferson College of Health Sciences

Jim Flowers

VT KnowledgeWorks

Nancy Gray

Hollins University

Penelope Kyle

Radford University

Mike Maxey

Roanoke College

Stuart Mease

Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech

Debbie Petrine

Virginia Tech Board of Visitors

Robert Sandel

Virginia Western Community College

Ray Smoot

Virginia Tech

Financial FRONT

Frank Carter

MemberOne Federal Credit Union

Vic Foti

Foti, Flynn & Lowen

Steve Musslewhite

Musslewhite & Associates

Susan Still

HomeTown Bank

Wellness FRONT

Nancy Agee

Carilion Clinic

Heywood Fralin

Medical Facilities of America

Michael Friedlander

Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute

Don Halliwill

Carilion Clinic

Cynthia Johnson

Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute

Craig Ramey

Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute

Sharon Ramey

Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute

Harald Sontheimer

Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute

Tech/Industry FRONT

Eddie Amos

Meridium

Vinode Chachra

VTLS (Innovative Interfaces)

Adam Donato

Card Isle

Bill Elliot

Davis H. Elliott

Jonathan Hagmaier

Interactive Achievement

Bonz Hart

Meridium

David Henry

Card Isle

Joshua Milas

Mindsense

Mary Miller

IDD

Marty Muscatello

CCS, Inc.

Alexander Obenauer

Mindsense

Stephan Sabo

Card Isle

Jeb Schiefer

Mindsense

Richard Willis

Soft Solutions

Bart Wilner

Entre Computer Center

Development FRONT

Ab Boxley

Boxley Materials

Sandy Davis

BCR Property Management

John Garland, retired

Spectrum Design

Jim McAden

Balzar & Associates

Joe Meredith
Virginia Tech Corporate
Research Center

Lee Wilhelm
McNeil Roofing

Legal FRONT

Thomas Bagby
Woods Rogers

James Creekmore
The Creekmore
Law Firm, PC

F.B. Webster Day
Spilman Thomas & Battle

Maryellen Goodlatte
Glenn Feldmann

Jeff Mitchell
LeClairRyan

Monica Monday
Gentry Locke

Mike Pace
Roanoke College

Retail/Service FRONT

Bruce Ferrell
Berglund Automotive
Group

Hunter Johnson
Lucky and Fortunato
restaurants

Blaine Lewis
Fleet Feet Sports Roanoke

Robin Lewis
Fleet Feet Sports Roanoke

John Lugar
Virginia Varsity
Transfer & Self Storage

Ashish Malothra
Blackstone Grill

Roger Neel
Corned Beef & Co, 419 West,
Frankie Rowlands

David Poteet
NewCity

J.P. Powell
Lucky and Fortunato
restaurants

Bob Rotanz
Mac & Bob's Restaurant

Mike (Keno) Snyder
Parkway Brewing

Culture FRONT

Waynette Anderson
Sponsor Hounds;
entertainment

Cabell Brand
(April 7, 1923—
January 13, 2015)
community involvement

Pete Eshelman
Roanoke Regional Partnership;
outdoor recreation

Dylan Locke
Floyd Country
Store; music

Beth Macy
Author; arts

Jim Sears
Center in the Square
(2015); science

Nicholas Taubman
Taubman Museum
of Art; arts

Sara Elizabeth Timmins
Producer; arts

Municipal FRONT

Krishna Chachra
Town of Blacksburg

Chris Morrill
Roanoke City

Bob Nicholson
Radford City

Lisa Soltis
City of Roanoke

Brad Stipes
Town of Christiansburg

FRONTLeaders

Bruce Bryan
B2C; community advocacy

George Cartledge
Grand Home Furnishings;
community involvement

Nathan Latka
Heyo; entrepreneurship

Ariel Lev
Grandin CoLab;
entrepreneurship

Jeff Marks
WDBJ 7; leadership in a crisis

Brad Stephens
Thriving Places Project;
community advocate

Dr. David Trinkle
Carilion Clinic;
economic development

Chris Turnbull
Carilion Clinic; business
communications leadership

Sheila Umberger
Roanoke City Libraries;
community improvement

Ed Walker
Entrepreneur / Developer;
community leadership

John Williamson, III
RGC Resources chairman;
community advocate



Kyle



Latka



Lev



Marks



Miller



Morrill



Ramey, Craig



Ramey, Sharon



Sandel



Smoot



Still



Trinkle



Turnbull



Umberger



Walker



Williamson

Technicalities

Jonathan Hagmaier of Interactive Achievement continues to make headlines on the technology front; and 2015 finds a contract award that brings even more jobs to Roanoke as the education services firm expands once again.

Developer group owners **Nathan Latka** of Heyo, a Lejure Media company; and **David Poteet** of New City — both in Blacksburg — made strides into 2015, as the former experiences growth in his platform apps, while the later moved his facility and celebrates 20 years in business.

On the startup front in technology, we're all watching **Alexander Obenauer**, **Joshua Milas**, and **Jeb Schiefer** of Mindsense (email platform app); and **Adam Donato**, **Stephan Sabo**, and **David Henry** of Card Isle (greeting card kiosk)—both companies out of Blacksburg.

Marty Muscatello has made significant contribution to the technology community in our region. President of CCS Inc (including FoxGuard Solutions and Qualtrax software applications), the Christiansburg-based computer business continues to hire and expand its service reach in vertical industries, even as it performs strongly in community involvement.

Developing along

Sandy Davis of BCR Property Management had a banner year, receiving the Ruffner Medal at Virginia Tech's spring commencement (billed as the university's highest honor). Her company provides student housing in Blacksburg and Radford; and her support of both Tech and numerous community organizations has demonstrated measureable contributions.

Ed Walker winds up his CityWorks (X)po effect on the Roanoke market by passing the torch after five years, stating his believe in the strength of next generation collaboration. In addition to the conference, the "social entrepreneur" renovated and repurposed several historic properties with high profile impact, and contributed to the revitalized music scene.

Service department

We have so many contributors to business and the progress of our region who cross over multiple sectors, that we decided to classify all of them in the broad sense of serving our communities.





Chris Morrill, Roanoke's city manager, gets the distinction of being our top public servant who actually takes big steps out of city hall to advocate on behalf of business. One associate cited Morrill's leadership skills to be the kind where business can thrive and described him this way: "Chris exercises judgment, not insane rule following... he also just has good sense."

Pete Eshelman has earned the outdoor promotions champion for our area as the branding guy for Roanoke Regional Partnership. He's the go-to guy for www.roanokeoutside.com, the Blue Ridge Marathon, the Go Outside Festival, and just about anything involving biking, hiking, greenways, blueways, and outdoor recreation.

Waynette Anderson brought her concert and special event venue to the foot of Roanoke's Mill Mountain in a big way this year. The Dr Pepper Park at the Bridges 2015 lineup specialized in tribute bands, but is especially notable as private venture instead of a public managed site.

Chris Turnbull recently signed on to the corporate communications role at Carilion Clinic; and the news from our region's largest employer elevated almost overnight. For any stakeholders worried about the institution not getting its share of positive news and impact in the community shared by the media — they shouldn't.

Bruce Bryan is another good cheerleader for our area. His "Roanoke Valley Conversations" radio show on WVMP 101.5 FM brings all the best happenings (and people behind the works) to the ears of engaged listeners who want the best for the Star City.

Krishna Chachra is vice mayor of Blacksburg, but beyond that and her other titles, she's probably better known as the college town's most public figure. She works with tourist, merchant, civic, and business committees, councils, and associations; and can be seen "up on the roof" at the most popular professional events... including "Up on the Roof."

Lastly, books and movies can fill in any gap left by business or commerce when it comes to making positive statements about our region. Although it takes years for these creative projects to materialize, we are still reaping the benefits from the book *Factory Man*, by **Beth Macy**—and the locally produced films of **Sara Elizabeth Timmins**, from *Lake Effects* to *Wish You Well* to *Coming through the Rye* to the anticipated and upcoming *Shoeless Wonders*. 

2015 FRONTList: Happenings and Newsmakers

The carilionclinicliving.com website is a pretty slick resource—check it out.

Roanoke's **Elmwood Park** is finally being put to good use. It looks good, it's bringing in noteworthy concerts, and hey... they even put in a little ice rink just for fun for the winter holidays.

Breweries. Not just popping up everywhere... but they're dang good.

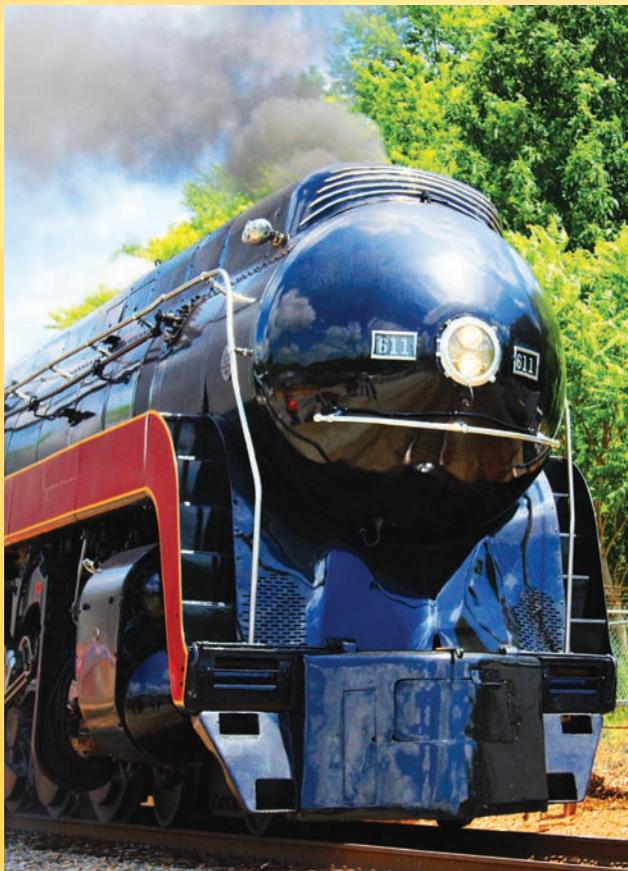
Movie releases. The two that brought the most positive attention to our specific neck of the woods... *Wish You Well* and *Big Stone Gap*. (Some pretty cool cameos in *A Walk in the Woods*, too.)

Look up. The first officially recognized **commercial drone delivery** happened with the help of Virginia Tech's permit to send a prescription off to some guy's house in the mountains.

The triumphant return of the **N&W Class J 611** steam locomotive was one of the best single event moments in Roanoke's history as the restored treasure (originally built here) rolled back into the city for thousands welcoming its homecoming at the end of May.

Greenways. They're simply grand in our region. And we continue to build and extend them. The popularity of biking, walking, and enjoying the outdoors and scenery here in the Roanoke Valley, New River Valley, and this entire area of the State—from central Virginia to the state borders of West Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina—can't be duplicated. They're writing books and making movies about our beautiful trails, in fact.

Entrepreneurism and tech startups populated our business news feeds... Blacksburg and Roanoke in particular are hotbeds for a promising future if the secret to economic sustainability is diversification (over reliance on a single large industry segment).



611 locomotive



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Image is important, whether it be personal or community.

Time for an image adjustment >

I love Roanoke. For 35 years it has been a great place for my family to thrive. Lately, however, when I think about Roanoke, a vague concern hovers at the edge of my thoughts. Like many others, I sense that we're losing mass, losing our presence as the largest city in this part of the state.

Recently we've lost Norfolk Southern and Advance Auto - and learned that the Commonwealth Games are going elsewhere. Our business community is shrinking and it seems time for us to have serious introspection about our image.

My column is about being mindful of the image we project with our personal appearance. Just as we update our wardrobes with fashion changes, we need to update our city's image when the business landscape changes. And these days it changes with warp speed!

Over the years local leaders have worked to keep Roanoke competitive. They strive to provide quality services and activities. The Greenway and our parks are lovely and constantly utilized. Our libraries and schools are systematically being upgraded. We're a very "green" city, with a user-friendly recycling program.

Many people relocate here for the natural beauty, access to outdoor activities, and friendly population. Countless newcomers have discovered us via the Internet and relocated here simply because they sought a better quality of life.

And still we lose big businesses. Why is that? Do businesses that leave Roanoke see us as passé?

As an image consultant it's natural for me to ask myself:

- What image are we currently projecting?
- What image do we want to project?
- Do we have the assets or resources to attract the kinds of businesses we want?
- If not, are we willing to change so we get what we want?

Our community leaders are working diligently to provide excellent hospitals, public schools, a medical school, colleges, etc. Roanoke has a lot going for it.

As my editor, Tom, reflected, "The negatives seem like the unraveling of buttons to me, on what is otherwise a very fine suit. We need to nip and tuck those poor threads — which could be the important adornments such as a robust consumer market or business-friendly airport or attractive industrial sites or available skilled workforce. They all have to work together to create a genuine working ensemble."

Thanks, Tom. I couldn't have said it better myself. 📧

Questions or comments? Email Kathy@peacockimage.com

Three countries, three cultures >

Mark Twain said, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime."

I recently traveled to Paris, Florence, Rome and Istanbul. Three separate countries, and three separate cultures. We've all heard the caveats: "The French are lazy;" "The Italians are incompetent;" "All Muslims are terrorists." Those are examples of ethnocentrism and/or xenophobia. Ethnocentrism has been defined as "the belief that one's own culture is superior to all others and is the standard by which all other cultures should be measured." Xenophobia is "an unreasonable fear or dislike of foreigners or strangers, or of that which is foreign or strange.

Let me tell you my experience. In Paris I noticed that the young woman behind the desk at our hotel, with whom my husband and I traded pleasant small talk before we went to dinner, was still there working the next morning. She told me it took her an hour and a half and two busses to get to work. The busboy who handled our luggage the first morning, was still working late into the night.

In Florence we discovered we had forgotten a voucher for a tour of a Museum. Our hotel clerk went out of his way to contact our travel agent in the States, and obtain the voucher via email for us.

In Rome we traversed the city by an "on and off bus." The driver navigated through streets that were filled with vehicles coming from all directions. Added to the chaos was the fact that the metro was on strike. We became concerned that we would be late for our appointment to tour the Vatican Museum, and voiced our concern to the driver. After thinking for a moment, he stopped his bus at a taxi stand, got out, hailed a taxi, and asked the driver to take us quickly to our destination. In Istanbul, where I conducted four business etiquette seminars, our Muslim hosts made sure we had access to a Christian church on Sunday.

In the cities I visited I noticed a common theme: most people with whom I interacted worked long hours, often under stressful circumstances. Yet in these three countries with three distinct cultures there was a common theme of hard work and kindness. There's a lesson here for us all, don't you think? 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey
Harshberger

Executive Summary:
Our columnist wrote this the very day before the tragic attacks in Paris; "My heart goes out to the beautiful people of the City of Light," she says.



KayTay Photography

Shawn and Kristin Allen, with their two daughters, 9 and 10, have dinner together "no matter who gets home late."

The balancing act >

Executive Summary:

Three couples share tips on how they manage the demands of work and life.

By Rachael Garrity

Since the recent publication of a book called *Lean In* by Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg and TV and magazine writer Nell Scovell, the issue of work/home life balance has become a topic of much discussion among young professionals — and not only those on the female side of the gender divide. As Sandberg so succinctly puts it: "Careers are a jungle gym, not a ladder." In the Roanoke and New River Valleys, scores of couples have proven that collaborative approaches underlie successful outcomes, among normal people committed to finding life balance whether they are self-employed,

working in a corporate environment or running a small business.

Making the Corporate Life Doable

Shawn and Kristin Allen, both native Virginians, met when they were working at New River Valley Mall, but employed in different places — she in retail and he in food and beverage. Now married with two daughters, 9 and 10, they have crafted a life that some would find daunting at best. Having risen through the ranks to become business manager at Duncan Automotive Group in Christiansburg, Shawn will also graduate from Virginia Tech in May with a dual major in finance and accounting. Kristin is now the store manager for Talbots at First and Main in Blacksburg. Both are candid in their admission that the school/work/parenting scene can be a challenge.

"I actually like to multitask and look at the big picture," Kristin explains, "but when he started back to school I realized that

I needed to simply deal with one thing at a time."

Her husband echoed that sentiment, which he phrased as "staying in the moment." For him, that means paying close attention to priorities by deciding what is urgent and what is not, then planning accordingly.

An abiding focus on communication both between the two of them and with their daughters is key to maintaining a sense of balance. Kristin chuckles when she admits that their neighbors often kid them about grilling out at 9 p.m. "We have a commitment to having dinner together every night, no matter who gets home late," she explains. Shawn adds, "For the girls, that can be both positive and negative. They really want to stay up and participate."

And how about at work? Like many women, Kristin muses that her years in retail have proven that often it is other women in managerial positions who may be tough to convince that the pulls of parenting and personal responsibilities can sometimes create stress. Once known as the "Queen Bee syndrome," this is a pattern that *Lean In* author Sandberg roundly disparages when she writes: "There is a special place in hell for women who do not help other women."

For his part, Shawn says he has on more than one occasion run into a situation where being a minority sensitizes him to how a corporate environment can feel exclusionary. "The idea of dealing one-on-one first, and not bracing issues in a group setting is crucial," he explains, "especially to those whose race or gender may put them in the minority."

He sums up what is clearly a high-energy, but can-do approach this way: "Two working parents have to find a way to work together, and that means careful scheduling, consistent focus on tasks at hand, and an awareness of what the other person needs. More than once, I've taken a look at her face and said, 'Go get some 'you time.' As for me, I don't really need time for golf or exercise or hobbies, as much as I have to have a chance to quiet down and just think. She sees that and makes it happen."

Building a Business and a Life

When Julie Magyar met Cliff Potter, he was working in the Virginia Tech Equine Medical Center in Leesburg, VA, and she was finishing her senior year Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech. Today the parents of three children, 17, 15 and 11 years old, they own Riverside Veterinary Clinic in Radford, a business they started 11 years ago. For most of those years, the couple has been on call 24/7. Now, there is an emergency clinic for animals in the area, so there is technically less time pressure, but Julie, who serves as manager of the business side of the enterprise, is quick to point out that does not mean a leisurely 9-to-5 schedule. "Once office hours are over, each day brings another two to three hours spent with documentation and other administrative tasks," she explains.

One way the couple has chosen to manage the issue of balance is to divide their week so that one of them is always available to work with the children's schedule. Typically, Julie is in the office Monday and Tuesday, Cliff works Wednesday and Thursday and they decide each week who will work Friday and Saturday, based on what is needed at home.

"To be honest, I am not sure every couple could do this," Cliff quietly points out. "First, our profession is truly demanding. I struggled long and hard before I decided to go to vet school, having witnessed when I worked at the Equine Center how demanding this career choice is. Second, to do this you have to be someone who is willing to put yourself second – clearly and convincingly. I know I am exceptionally lucky to have found this woman."

With equal fervor, the two insist that the key to success is a "burning desire to do this kind of work."

Julie sees finding and hiring the right kind of help a particular challenge. "We are at the stage that we really don't quite need another fulltime vet, and finding a good, devoted, caring person who is able to work just part-time, even with all of the vet school graduates in this area."

Faced with the fact that they share both personal and professional parts of their lives, the couple admit to a need to make sure that they are not totally encapsulated with the dual pull on their time and talent. As Cliff puts it, "I very much want to be good at what I do, but I also want to be able to turn it off when I need to."

"It is easier now," Julie says, "because the children are older. I feel okay about finding a couple hours just for me, and that means riding horses in my case."

For Cliff, personal time is for exercise, and he admits "when there is a lawn to mow, I still find it tough to put that off while I get

the more pleasurable exercise worked into my schedule."

Then, he adds, gently: "I remember when I was struggling with the idea of Vet school, one of the guys at the Equine Center insisted, 'Anything you do is going to demand a lot of you.' And indeed it does."

Room for Creativity and Growth

The typical story about blending the personal and professional sides of life revolves around the pulls of parenting, but even before children arrive on the scene, some couples grapple with how to make room for what



Cliff Potter and Julie Magyar — with three children, ages 11, 15, 17 — switch between each other's time at their veterinarian practice and parental activities.



Bea Gutierrez, Paul Clements, and pet Lola, who Bea says "is an essential part of our life and great company in quiet hours in the studio."

they wish to do and what they must do. Beatriz Gutierrez and Paul Clements met at Penland, a famed school for artisans in the mountains of North Carolina. She had traveled from her native Canary Islands to study in the pottery program there, and he was working as an assistant in the pottery studio. Visits back and forth between their native countries followed and eventually they decided to marry. Three years ago they bought acreage in Bedford County and moved into a cabin that dates back to the 1790s, and is now their home and shared studio, although both also work in Lynchburg.

"What we are trying to do is create stability," Bea explains, "and I am most thankful to say that everything seems to be on track. The key, I believe, is discipline. Not that I feel I have completely mastered it, but I now see that it is not just the power of will, but also one of curiosity and passion. Of course, getting married is an adjustment, but Paul is my greatest supporter, so we together are able to figure out ways to continue to follow our respective vocations."

For his part, Paul admits to feeling just a bit jealous of his friends who know what their income will be week to week, because they are salaried. "I do not want Bea to have to find a job to provide that kind of security any more than I want to find one," he elaborates,

"but I have to admit that working from project to project can be scary."

Perhaps best known locally for his LOVE sculpture in downtown Lynchburg that was commissioned by the James River Council for the Humanities and Arts and by Discover Lynchburg in 2013, Paul more recently has been acting as what he calls a "fabricator," creating a series of bike racks, also for the city of Lynchburg, based on the award-winning designs of someone else. He discovered that the project became much more than a way of paying the bills. "These designs are not mine, but as I get into the details, I feel a real sense of accomplishment."

At the same time, he is bothered by the fact that days filled with project completion can sometimes slow down his creative impulses. "When I am working on my own stuff," he says, "I have more ideas than I have time to articulate. When I am not, it seems my mind goes to more corporate kinds of thinking."

Perhaps former Chairman and CEO of General Electric Jack Welch encapsulates the work/life balance issue most succinctly – and in at least two ways. First, he insists "You've got to eat while you dream." And then, with his trademark bluntness: "There's no such thing as work-life balance. There are work-life choices, and you make them and they have consequences." 



Young Professionals

By Ariel Lev

Executive Summary:

Podcasts are not only growing in popularity, but we have ample examples of successful practitioners here in our own region.

Podcasting: Why it works >

What does your checklist look like before you leave for a long trip? You'll need to pack a bag, of course. Don't forget the snacks, and double-check to make sure you've got the passport or license. Oh, and don't forget to download the latest episode of that podcast you love.

Podcasts, like Audio Books, have been around for many years. They are prolific; accessible from anywhere with phone service or an Internet connection. They update as frequently as every day and range from minutes to hours in length. The subject matter exists intentionally and completely in its own niche, captivating those with unique interests all over the world

"Podcasting is the fastest growing mode of entertainment with over 46 million Americans listening," says Ryan Munsey, Chief Optimizer at Natural Stacks, a natural supplements company that delivers "optimal performance, zero compromise," as well as a popular podcast called Optimal Performance, which Munsey hosts. Munsey is a native of Roanoke and is the owner of House of Strength gym.

"It's a great way to expand your audience, engage with active customer base and provide continuing education on topics your customers care about," says Munsey, who records this podcast out of Oration Recording at the CoLab, where he is a long-standing member.

Patrick Kelly, host and producer of Blue Peg, Pink Peg, explains, "We started our podcast in order to become more engaged within the board gaming community. Our podcast has helped us make vital industry connections, take advantage of rare opportunities, and carve out a reputation as a trusted voice."

Kelly, who has produced and hosted this podcast since July, 2013, knows the importance of being a trusted voice. Listening to a podcast is an intimate experience for the listener. He or she is generally alone and feels very committed or close to the hosts. The subject matter is also likely near and dear to the listener. There are hundreds of thousands of podcasts available for download, so the listener need not compromise on his or her podcast desires.

"Our listeners become and remain engaged with us — and one another," says Kelly, demonstrating one of the many ways that podcasts work to promote and strengthen the target industry.

One trait that characterizes millennials and Generation Z'rs is their ability to discover their niche community,



CoLab's podcast studio

regardless of physical location. Podcasts are one way that businesses and community developers are able to tap into those communities, by providing valuable, fresh content that increases awareness through education, humor and storytelling.

At the CoLab, we have a front-row seat for this emerging and exciting medium. Oration Recording, founded and managed by Eddy Communications and housed at the CoLab, is helping to produce podcasts like Optimal Performance, mentioned above, and "The TOP," founded by Heyo CEO Nathan Latka, which was listed as a top 10 Business podcast by Inc. Magazine.

In summary, podcasting is what you make it. By combining valuable content with expert production, plus targeted promotion to the right audience, you can make a more meaningful connection with your target demographic. 



Podcasting is the fastest growing mode of entertainment with over 46 million Americans listening

— Ryan Munsey



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Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:
When you fail in your delivery of product or service, make it right.

When customer service misses the mark >

I was flying out of town on a business trip as the deadline for this article approached, and I had not yet decided on a topic to write about. Luckily (or unluckily, depending on how you look at it), the subject for this article screamed out at me all day...the importance of good customer service. The following is a true story.

My first flight out of Roanoke was delayed due to "mechanical reasons" (the flight crew couldn't get the door shut.) I arrived at my destination 10 minutes before my connecting flight to find the boarding door shut, no agent, and the plane was still at the gate. The airline wouldn't let me on the flight ("Sir, you will need to go to customer service.") At customer service, I was told, "We took care of you. You are already re-booked!"

When I arrived at my final destination three hours late, the rental car company considered me a "no-show" ("Did you call us to say you would be late?"). The rental company would no longer honor my reservation rate and forced me to pay for an upgrade ("The upgrade is \$60/day, but we will give you a good deal for only \$20 more per day!")

Finally at the hotel, I arrived in my 2nd floor room and could hear loud music coming up through the floor. I called the front desk to learn there was a reception going on directly below me, but the staff would get the music turned down. After a 15-minute wait with no results, I went to the front desk asking again for either the music to be turned down or a new room. They said it was "getting turned down". After 15 more minutes, I had to demand a new room.

It was a perfect trio of poor customer service (airline, rental car, and hotel). Not only did I not receive a single apology, but all three companies pretended they were going above and beyond to take care of me (rebooking, cheaper car upgrade, new hotel room). I will no longer use two of these companies because this was not the first time I had poor customer service from them.

Anyone who works in a service industry understands the importance of good customer service. So why is it so rare?

Stuff happens. Sooner or later, an unforeseen circumstance or poor planning will result in sub-par service for your customer. How will you react?

It is not enough to simply fix the issue. Your customer has already had a poor experience. Good customer service should compensate customers for your mistake, and let them know you are sorry for any inconvenience. Did you deliver a cold meal? Fix the problem and offer a free dessert. Did your customer have to wait past the

PERSPECTIVES

appointment time? Take 10% off the bill. And don't wait for them to ask. Just do it.

Here's what should have happened on my trip. The airline could have said "Sorry we did not meet our obligation. Here is a meal voucher while you wait." The car rental company could have said, "We are sorry you were delayed. Please accept this upgrade at no extra cost." And the hotel could have said, "Sorry you had to change rooms. Here is a free meal voucher in our restaurant." Those three little tokens of goodwill would have made all the difference in the world, and kept my future business.

Many years ago, my wife and I went to a restaurant with three other couples. Due to problems in the kitchen, our meals came out extremely late. The manager came out and informed us our entire visit was "on the house". Needless to say, that restaurant kept our business and we recommended it to dozens of people.

When stuff happens, don't simply fix the problem. Apologize and compensate your customers for their inconvenience. It is much better for business to create and keep loyal, happy customers than to find new ones. 



Anyone who works in a service industry understands the importance of good customer service. So why is it so rare?

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**"There should be a better way"
AppTech president Dan Early said that was the question that moved the business from an engineering development firm to a design and manufacturing company**



AppTech sits off I-81 in Roanoke County near Glenvar schools

Ahead of the wave >

Executive Summary:

Apptech Solutions in Salem is attracting a lot of attention; from engineers, innovators, developers, and business leaders with a stake in tomorrow's water / wastewater systems.

By Tom Field

Dan Early is not a prophet. You can tell that because he rubs his forehead at times and doesn't mind sharing uncertainties. Whereas prophets share their good or bad news in absolute decrees, Early admits he's learning as he goes.

But there's something eerily prophetic about what he's doing. You feel it when walking around the plant. And you hear

it when he describes the projects designed and installed by a company that, quite frankly, is banking on a future market—even as its solutions are already being successfully applied all over the world.

Apptech Solutions designs and manufactures industrial plastic components and systems for water and wastewater uses in virtually every industry. The company's systems are working at residential developments, commercial, institutional, and industrial sites, agricultural applications, military bases, schools, utility and municipal systems, even specific business sectors like breweries and distilleries. They perform in self-contained, decentralized configurations.

And it all came about in a splash, of sorts.

"Our foundation began as an engineering and consulting firm," Early says. "Conventional





87

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“ ”

You immediately
double or triple
the lifespan

"It's not concrete!" This self contained unit drew the attention of engineers at a recent industrial trade show; those thinking beyond conventional concrete, steel, and fiberglass materials.



Inside the manufacturing area at AppTech

water and wastewater systems use concrete, steel, or fiberglass. Each has its limitations. You can't really build and then transport systems that are concrete; steel is subject to corrosion; and fiberglass is expensive and brittle."

With plastic (AppTech wants to get the acronym SRTP—for "structurally reinforced thermoplastic" material—branded as a mainstream term), Early says you immediately double or triple the lifespan of the system.

This is the moment when the old consulting firm was ready to commit to a new direction.

The company would adopt its new name, and expand from design to inventing product, acquiring patents, securing IP rights, and then march head first into a bold new market. An unproven, but potential "promise land" of engineered infrastructure that could last 100 years.

AppTech's patented SRTP packaged vessel-based systems are being applauded. Engineers will inspect the product and say, "why didn't I think of that?" says Early. The systems have been picked up by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to provide sustainable treatment solutions to underserved



This pipe stands ten feet tall; more than 50 feet long; all plastic

“ ”

Apptech systems have been picked up by the Gates Foundation and received Virginia's SPQA.



AppTech currently employs just over 30 people; primarily in engineering and manufacturing



An AppTech plastic welder at work; the long line from the spool is plastic feeding the tool.

nations. And most recently, Apptech was one of four recipients in the Virginia “Ones to Watch” program—an initiative by the U.S. Senate Productivity and Quality Award that administers a rigorous evaluation process for businesses expected to “improve operations, deliver financial results, effectiveness, customer loyalty, job creation, and create an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports competitiveness of Virginia businesses.”

Who will embrace Apptech Solutions? It seems more natural to ask “who wouldn’t?” The engineers agree that the product reduces maintenance requirements and extends the lifecycle. And from an economic and efficiency standing, it has superior qualities to other substrates.

Early says the team jumped on this path by constantly thinking “there should be a better way.” How quickly and fully this new holistic infrastructure will go is anybody’s guess at this early stage. He’s especially excited about applications like rural schools, where SRTP is particularly advantageous over conventional water and wastewater systems.

And it seems almost prophetic that Apptech employs 31 people now, when there were only seven this same time last year. But even with Early’s excitement about developing a business ahead of the future, he calms the water with a dose of reality:

“We’re building an industry that doesn’t exist.” 



AppTech product awaits shipment



Your liability waiver is worthless >

One of our clients set up a public paintball field on his farm. We didn't know about it until he got sued.

"This guy claims that he's lost the hearing in one ear because of a defective helmet," our client said. "He rented one of our helmets, but it looks like a previous customer had ripped the foam padding out of the ear protectors. Some people do that because the foam can make the helmet feel too tight, or too hot. Anyway, this guy got hit in the ear, and now he's suing."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I said.

"But he signed our liability waiver, and so I want you to use the waiver to make the lawsuit go away," he said

"OK, got it," I said. "Can you send it to me?"

He'd gotten the liability waiver from a friend who owned a paintball range in Texas. It contained the same sort of language that you've probably seen dozens of times, if you've ever signed up yourself or your child for any type of athletic activity, outdoor event or school trip. In huge, boldface letters, it said:

"I HEREBY WAIVE, RELEASE AND FOREVER DISCHARGE ANY AND ALL RIGHTS AND CLAIMS FOR DAMAGES WHICH I MAY HAVE, OR WHICH MAY HEREAFTER ACCRUE TO ME, AGAINST QUESENBERRY PAINTBALL, THE QUESENBERRY FARM, OR THEIR OWNERS OR EMPLOYEES, FOR ANY AND ALL INJURIES SUFFERED BY ME IN PLAYING PAINTBALL."

I called the client back. "I'm sorry, but this liability waiver isn't going to help," I said. "It's not enforceable in Virginia."

"But he agreed in writing not to sue us!" he said.

"Unfortunately it doesn't matter," I said. "In every state, certain types of contracts are void because they are considered to violate a strong public policy. The Virginia Supreme Court decided a long time ago that if you have someone sign a release before being injured, and the release states that you will not be held liable for your own future negligence, and then the person is hurt, the release will not be enforceable."

"Negligent? I wasn't negligent!" he said.

"I got that," I said. "Of course, the attorneys for your customer are going to argue that you were. For example, they might argue that you should have inspected your helmets regularly to ensure that no foam had been torn out of them. In any event, that's something that will have

Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

Executive Summary:
Most liability waivers are worthless in Virginia; still, a well-drafted assumption-of-risk form may offer your business a measure of protection.

PERSPECTIVES

to be decided by the court — by the jury. This release will not stop him from suing you.”

“Are you telling me that all those waivers that people sign all the time are worthless?” he said.

“They nearly always are,” I said. “One lower court case did find that a waiver for high-speed automobile racing was enforceable because it is an inherently dangerous activity. Otherwise, liability waivers like this are pretty much useless. That’s why we suggest that our clients instead have their customers sign a assumption-of-risk form.”

“Assumption of risk?” he said.

“Yes, a person is not allowed to sue over an injury if the person assumed the risk of the injury,” I said. “For example, everyone knows that there’s a risk of being hit by a baseball at a baseball game.”

“Right,” he said. “That’s why you can’t sue if a baseball hits you.”

“Exactly,” I said. “Except that you only are prevented from suing if you personally knew about the risk. So for example, we had a client from Denmark in our suite at the Salem Red Sox stadium. This guy had never seen a baseball game before, not even on TV. He had no idea what the rules were, and did not know that there was a risk of being hit by a ball. If a ball had hit him that night, then he probably would have been able to sue, because he could not have assumed a risk that he did not know about.”

“But everyone knows that paintball is dangerous,” he said. “It’s obvious. You’ve got these hard pellets flying around at high speeds, and everyone wears protective gear. So this guy clearly assumed the risk.”



If you’ve ever sent your child on a school trip, or participated in an athletic event, then you’ve signed a liability waiver. However, most of them are worthless in Virginia. Virginia courts will not enforce a pre-injury release of future negligence for personal injury. Still, a well-thought-out and well-drafted assumption-of-risk form may offer your business a measure of protection.

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We had a client from Denmark in our suite at the Salem Red Sox stadium. This guy had never seen a baseball game before, not even on TV. He had no idea what the rules were, and did not know that there was a risk of being hit by a ball. If a ball had hit him that night, then he probably would have been able to sue, because he could not have assumed a risk that he did not know about.

"Ah, but to mount a successful assumption-of-risk defense, you have to show that the customer assumed the specific risk that injured him," I said. "For example, courts have held that a spectator at a baseball game, who would not have been able to sue if she had been hit by a foul ball, nevertheless was able to sue when a player who was practicing with his bat in an unscreened portion of the field hit a ball into her face."

"So I'd have to show that this guy assumed the risk of being hit in the ear?" he said.

"Precisely," I said. "That's what an assumption-of-risk form does. If your form just says 'I understand that paintball is dangerous and I assume the risk,' it won't help. It has to list specific risks. It should lay out in detail all the risks associated with your activity and have the customer acknowledge that he or she is assuming all of them."

"That doesn't sound too hard," he said.

"Actually, an assumption-of-risk form can wind up being a real monster," I said. "Think about it — how many ways are there to get hurt playing paintball?"

"Dozens," he said. "Hundreds."

"Right, so ideally your form would list them all," I said. "We suggest that clients brainstorm and try to come up with all the different ways their customers can get hurt, and then we put them all into the assumption-of-risk form. So perhaps your form might say something like, '(1) I assume the risk of being hit in the eye with a paintball. (2) I assume the risk of being hit in the eye by high-pressure air from an unloaded paintball gun. (3) I assume the risk of being poked in the eye by the muzzle of a paintball gun. (4) I assume the risk that my eye might be injured because my goggles are incorrectly fitted. (5) I assume the risk that my eye might be injured because my goggles are cracked or broken' It would go on and on like that. Then you'd have the customer initial each one. Do you get the idea?"

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“Damn, that would be a very long form!” he said.

“And it would take your customers several minutes to complete,” I said. “And if course, if a customer is hurt in a way that’s not on the form, then the form won’t help. But that’s the best you can do under Virginia law.”

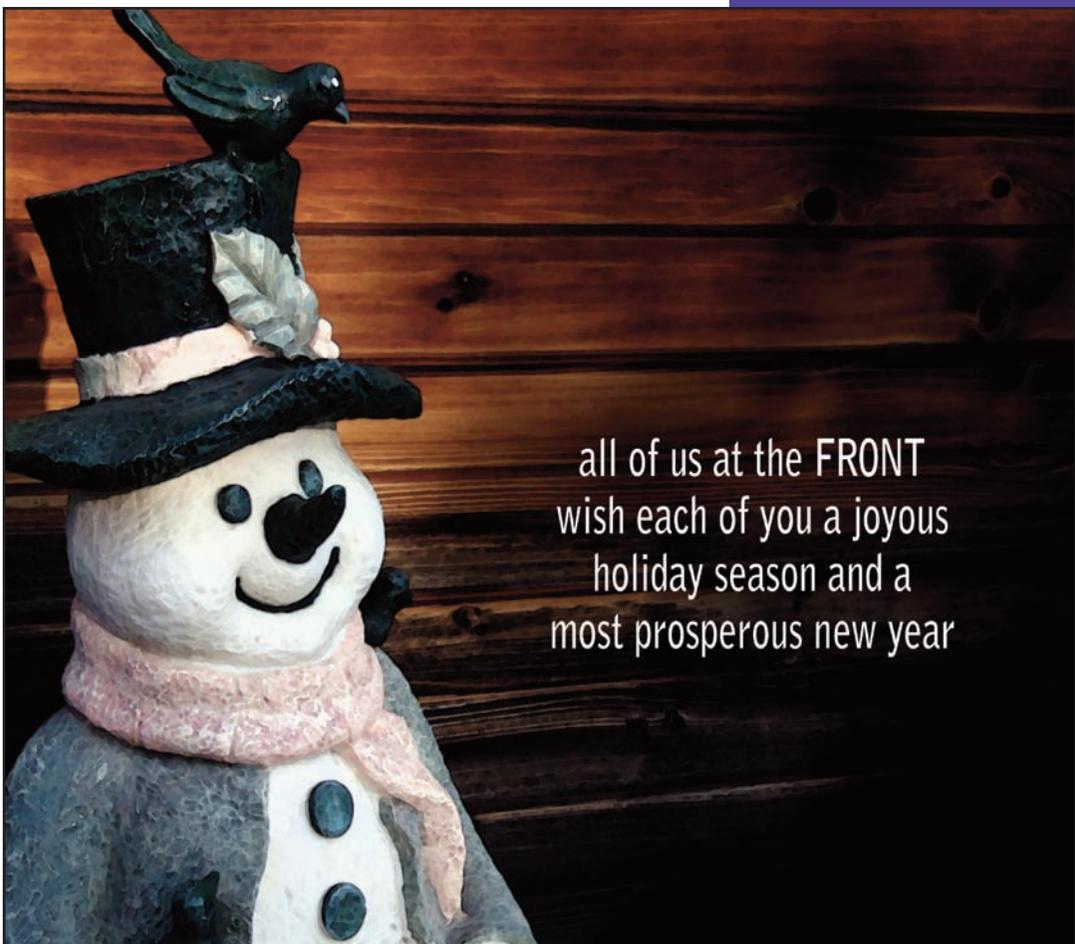
In the end, our client was able to settle the negligence suit after several months of in-court maneuvering. In the meantime, we prepared a detailed assumption-of-risk form for him, listing all the myriad and grotesque ways that one of his customers might be injured playing paintball. It was long, and cumbersome, and more than a little scary, and it was not a 100% guarantee that he could never be held liable — but it was better than nothing, and it certainly was better than one of those worthless pre-injury liability waivers.

Keith can be reached at keith@creekmorelaw.com

Note: *facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn’t legal advice—you should consult a lawyer about how to prepare an assumption-of-risk form or any other kind of waiver or release, etc.* 

“““

If your assumption-of-risk form just says ‘I understand that paintball is dangerous and I assume the risk,’ it won’t help. It has to list specific risks. It should lay out in detail all the risks associated with your activity and have the customer acknowledge that he or she is assuming all of them.



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wish each of you a joyous
holiday season and a
most prosperous new year



**Life in
Balance**



Your part in the balancing act >

Executive Summary:

You can be proactive in creating more balance in your life, says Life in Balance Counseling and Wellness at its conference in Christiansburg.

By Caitlyn Scaggs

In this fast paced world we live in we often find ourselves along for the ride and helplessly unable to slow down the pace that keeps us tripping. Between work demands, family, the dings, chirps, and beeps of technology, and our need for health, it can feel impossible to keep up and catch up. One organization, the Life in Balance Counseling and Wellness Center, witnesses how this hurried speed of life can negatively impact individuals. That is what prompted Angella McGoldrick, the creator and executive director of the center, to host a conference designed to educate participants about achieving life balance.

This is the first conference of its kind and was designed to foster "relaxation, refreshing, and rebalancing," according to McGoldrick. She pointed out that, "So many people in our society are overwhelmed by life demands and work demands. This conference was

designed to give people an opportunity to get away from life for a piece of the day and to learn skills and tools to help balance stress." It presented overall concepts to lead to a more balanced life but also equipped the attendees with practical steps they can implement in their lives.

One consistent theme was the need to slow the pace at which we move. McGoldrick explained that when our lives move at a hectic pace we leave very little time for self-care and life tends to happen to us. It was also noted that when we rush from one responsibility to the next we forget why we are doing those things in the first place. McGoldrick emphasized that "knowing your why" is critical for being effective, motivated, and happy.

One of the most practical sessions discussed how to get a grip on out-of-control workdays. McGoldrick contended that achieving a healthy balance during the workday begins long before; it begins the night before to be specific. She gave the practical advice of spending time the previous night envisioning what you would like the next day to look like. Mentally prepare for what may happen and most importantly what you hope will happen. McGoldrick stated, "there is power in setting intentions to at least start the day in the right direction." She explained that starting the day in a stressful manner typically sets the tone for the rest of the day, but starting the day in a calm and controlled way has



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CONTRIBUTORS

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There was a common theme of hard work and kindness — Page 21



Collaborative approaches underlie successful outcomes — Page 22



the opposite effect, it sets a positive tone for the rest of the day.

Other practical tips related to the work day included only checking emails intermittently so that interruptions are limited and streams of thought can continue without having to shift focus. Additionally, participants were reminded that it is okay to say no to opportunities, even great ones, if that opportunity would cause stressful consequences in other areas of life or inhibit time for self care.

A great component of this conference is that leaders and presenters stood by the lessons they were teaching by incorporating practical exercises. For example, after welcoming remarks, McGoldrick walked the group through an “arriving” exercise

in which all focus was turned towards being fully present in the moment. The location also embodied the ideals of the information being taught. The fall foliage encompassing the Crosspointe campus was at peak, and attendees were encouraged to visit the waterfall garden during breaks; it was serene.

Attendees left with encouragement and affirmation that they can and should take initiative in their lives for self-care. They were also reminded that striking balance is not a final destination but a continuous journey requiring regular inventory. Regardless of the season of life you find yourself in, it remains true that much of work and life balance comes down to intentionality. With that being said, what will you do to take a positive step towards balance in your life? 

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Sounds of blessings >

It's Thanksgiving Day, and I'm sitting on my front porch, enjoying two of my favorite vices: a fine Nicaraguan cigar and a local craft brewed IPA. What I don't have for the moment, is a mobile phone. My porch session keeps me out of the kitchen and more importantly, away from the cook in that crucial time slot between the Thanksgiving meal and its preparation.

Guess what? As it turns out, there are other sounds than the beeps and tweets from messages and posts on a digital device. Quite a few, actually.

We don't always hear all that much in our neck of the woods. The birds like to talk a lot, and the goats up the road like to pretend they're real kids crying, as all of nature competes against the occasional chainsaw whining in the distance, or the lonesome train whistle, a hill and dale beyond that.

But Thanksgiving Day provides quite the orchestra on Wildwood Road. To the west, I hear children playing outside. One youngster is belting out the Adele song the previous Saturday Night Live show just parodied... "Hello from the other side," she croons. Just across the road I hear multiple car doors shutting as family members leave the driveway to a home that celebrates its dinner at midday instead of evening, like us. I'm certain the momma there wishes her guests would linger. "Do you really have to go?"

To the east, I hear laughter from a large group of people living a little larger than usual, I suspect. And interrupting all of these ensembles, is the rumbling of big off road tires as a redneck pickup passes, even as a far off neighbor to my north chimes in with his bam-bam-bam-bam semi-automatic gunfire. A neon-clad bicyclist glides by like a zephyr that I would have missed, even with the gentle whirring, had it not been for the flashy colors. And the squirrels rustle up the last bit of sound from crisp new fallen leaves, in harmony with the fluttering birds chattering high above in the hardwood boughs.

Are these the sounds another man hears in a far off land in another part of the world?

I fear he does not.

"I've forgotten how it felt before the world fell at our feet," Adele sings in that same song I hear from the little girl singing down the road. "There's such a difference between us. And a million miles."

There's hope. Here. And on the other side of the door on this porch where I'm about to join my kids and family.

You just have to listen to the sounds... closer than ever. 

On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:

The celebration of Peace is the big hope of our holiday season; even in the midst of global turmoil and uncertainty.

Increasing prescription prices >

With additional changes in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) just a couple months away, Universal Rx hosted a roundtable discussion addressing the unanticipated consequences of the ACA. With a goal to further educate members of the Virginia State Legislature on rising drug costs as well as new developments coming about for healthcare in 2016, Universal Rx gathered key stakeholders in an effort to prepare our decision makers on how these regulations will affect Virginia. Employers can expect higher premiums, rising out-of-pocket maximums for employees and numerous other repercussions.

One goal of the roundtable was to address the issues surrounding drug manufacturers and how their practices of spiking drug costs trickle down, affecting health insurance companies, employers and consumers. By educating those who can make a difference we hope to bring solutions to the growing issue.

Manufacturers continue to leverage co-pay forgiveness programs to drive market share to more expensive drugs that are exponentially increasing prices while leaving employers and health plans to cover the bill once they meet a \$6,600 annual out-of-pocket. This practice and the costs associated with the results is not sustainable. Statistically, the United States is the most expensive country in the world to obtain prescriptions; and our inflated prices, caused by poor design and execution of ACA, are substantially subsidizing the other countries around the globe.

As drug manufacturers continue to increase the cost of life saving medications, insurance companies are forced to change alongside them. While these unprecedented price inflations filter throughout the necessary junctures, the manufacturers continue on unscathed.

The event included 2016 Senate Candidate Nancy Dye, District Representative Jennifer Faulkner with Congressman Goodlatte's office, Virginia House of Delegates Greg Habeeb and Chris Head. Licensed insurance experts were also present to explain the significances of the ACA, including: Burman Clark, President of Muneris Inc.; Virginia Clark, Managing Director of Expatriate Prescription Services; Amy Mutter, Sales Executive, Innovative Insurance Group; Chris Pyle, V.P. of Marketing and Government Relations at Delta Dental of Virginia; Jan Sessor, President of Universal Rx and Allan Zaenger, President and Owner of Pharmaceutical Horizons.

Identifying the magnitude of changes being made in the healthcare industry and educating lawmakers is the best way to encourage positive change. Universal Rx plans to hold more discussions surrounding these topics in the future. 



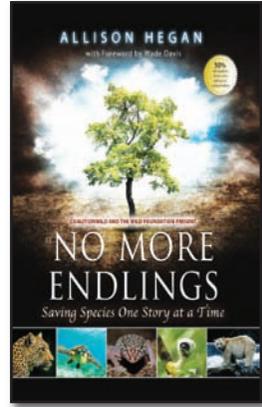
Guest Commentary

By Jan Sessor

Executive Summary:
A local managed care prescription service and privately owned drug card company hosted a discussion with various stakeholders on the rising costs of prescriptions under the Affordable Care Act.

Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our contributors and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit short reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to news@vbFRONT.com



Survival guide

Allison Hegan's first book, *No More Endlings* (Motivational Press; 2015), is an engaging and important look at the last survivors of some of planet Earth's species and the scientists who are working to save them. Equal parts adventure novel and nature guide, *No More Endlings* introduces us to living things struggling for another tomorrow on every continent but Antarctica. Subjects range from glamour mammals like the grey wolf in North America and South America's jaguar, to less dramatic but equally important species like Africa's Malagasy yam and Europe's field cricket. Sharing the spotlight are conservationists like England's Dr. Jenny Daltry, who comes to the aid of the unassuming Antigua racer, thought extinct on the island nation due to the importation of mongooses to control stowaway black rats on sugarcane plantations. Daltry's success story is just one of many in this approachable and enjoyable book that the nature lover in your circle will cherish.

—David Perry

Summer of our discontent

Remember that summer when everything went to pot? We lost the house. Our marriage finally dissolved. We met those two younger versions of ourselves. And we had those deep discussions that circled around our suicidal tendencies. That was quite the summer. That's the synopsis of *Summerlong* by Dean Bakopoulos (HarperCollins; 2015);

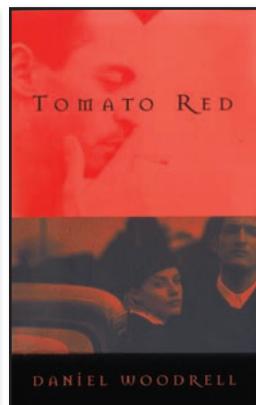
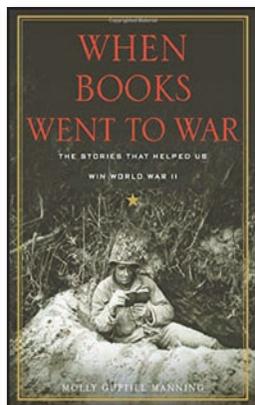
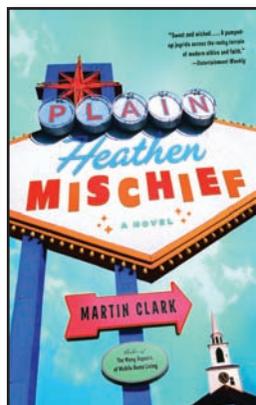
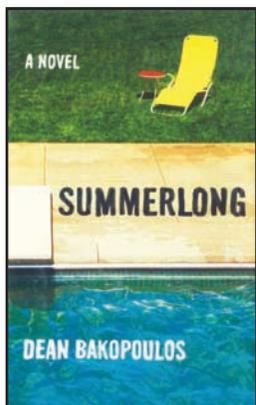
and it's all wrapped up in rather adept setting in an Iowa college town.

The internal hemorrhaging and dismantling of our Don and Claire hits squarely at moments in this story; but their hookups with Charlie and the hip chick "ABC" along with the grand comingling of desperate relationships seems a bit forced and soap-operatic. Still, *Summerlong* is captivating in its tone and setting. If this were a movie, it would be the kind where you love the soundtrack and cinematography, even if the plot was a little rough. The forced inclusion of "sultry" only clouded the backyard swimming pool. You can't just plop Tennessee Williams in the middle of a cornfield that easily.

—Tom Field

Local antics aplenty

Experience the fall from grace of a young minister of a Roanoke (as in Virginia) church and the poignant, gripping, and sometimes humorous ramifications that accompany his endeavors to right a wrong. The story of *Plain Heathen Mischief* (Vintage; 2005) by Martin Clark at times is set in Southwestern Virginia with references to locations and businesses sprinkled here and there that any local person will quickly recognize. The antics of other colorful characters intertwine with the defrocked reverend's life and take the reader on a cross-country ride full of adventures and twists and turns.



Martin Clark is a circuit court judge in Patrick County. His knowledge of the law is evident, as expected, throughout the book. His knack for story-telling and his ability to keep the reader engaged as well as entertained make this a good, fun read.

—Dan Dowdy

The war of books

Molly Guptill Manning, a district court of appeals attorney in New York City, has written a small chapter of World War II that I had never come across before—and I've come across a lot about that particular conflict. It's called *When Books Went to War* (Houghton Mifflin Company; 2014) and begins with the Nazi book burnings of 1933 and the U.S. response to it once the war began.

This is a fascinating statement about our democracy, one that, on the whole is uplifting, but which has its potholes, as well. American soldiers, it would seem, were voracious readers and when the war began, the government didn't even have enough guns and uniforms for them, let alone the latest Hemingway. But that changed rapidly as the public mobilized and began contributing books in the same way it saved metal and rubber. Pretty soon the book industry adjusted and began publishing ASEs (Armed Services Editions, 1,200 different titles). Doubleday even invented the paperback at the time.

On the dark side, Republicans in congress tried to restrict political references in the ASEs, bowing to what we were fighting.

—Dan Smith

Ozarkian ode

With endless descriptions like, "Her dress was a size low or so and she got that white fabric slamming from side to side like it was a sack she'd trapped a poodle in" it's near impossible not to get trapped by Daniel Woodrell's *Tomato Red* (Henry Holt; 1998). The trailer trash genre here (Woodrell's *Winters Bone* was reproduced as a wonderfully moody film)—which he self-labels as *country noir*—will trap you to each character as if duct taped naked to their gritty bodies. The deliberate lack of building plot elements will surprise you as significant happenings are treated no differently than the minor ones. I almost see that technique as a commentary on people of lowest means. Bad luck is our main ingredient, whether or not we contributed to the recipe.

—Tom Field

(The reviewers: Dave Perry is the executive director of Blue Ridge Land Conservancy; Tom Field is a creative director and publisher of FRONT; Dan Dowdy is a professional proofreader, retired college professor, and FRONT representative who lives in Roanoke; Dan Smith, a Roanoke writer, is founding editor of FRONT.)



The doctor is in >

Jefferson College of Health Sciences announced at a press conference on Nov. 2, its offering of new doctoral degree programs (in Nursing Practice and Health Sciences) that will begin in fall 2016; and the new School of Graduate & Professional Studies. President Nathaniel Bishop said 250 students are enrolled in the doctoral and graduate programs; about 1,100 students are currently enrolled in the 25 degree and certificate programs.



Stairway to funding >

Duncan Ford Lincoln in Christiansburg raised \$5,620 for Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Training Center with its "Driven to Give" fundraiser on Oct. 10; where donations were made for each registered test driver; ladder trucks drew attention to the event.



FRONT

November home game >

Salem Red Sox Festival was held Nov. 15 on a blustery Saturday; mascot "Mugsy" entertains as a young fan enjoys her ride.

Piggy went all-the-way-home >

HomeTown Bank celebrated its 10th Anniversary on Nov. 14; reporting its assets have grown to nearly half a billion dollars through its six branches in Roanoke, Salem, Smith Mountain Lake, and NewRiver Bank in Christiansburg; company mascot "Homer" poses with president Susan Still at the main branch on Jefferson Street in downtown Roanoke.



HomeTown Bank



Courtesy of United Way of Roanoke Valley

Generosity incorporated >

United Way of Roanoke Valley announced its *50 Most Generous Workplaces in the Roanoke Valley* at a breakfast ceremony on Oct. 30; Advance Auto Parts (shown) won the #1 position, followed by Norfolk Southern, Carilion Clinic, Kroger Mid-Atlantic, and Wells Fargo.



CIO informants >

Cox Business hosted an inaugural CIO Forum at the Hotel Roanoke on Thursday, Oct. 15; panelists included moderator, Jonathan Whitt, Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council; Kendall White, Carilion Clinic; Carol Reed, Hollins University; Rick Pevarski, Virginia Utility Protection Services; and joined by Jeff Merritt, Cox Communications.



Workin' on the railroad >

Roanoke Valley Model Engineers held their open house in their basement space at the Virginia Museum of Transportation on Nov. 14; visitors viewed the HO, N, On30 and O gauge train layouts.



Check it out >

Roanoke County's new **Vinton Branch Library** has opened in downtown Vinton at 300 South Pollard Street; the new building replaces the old library off Washington Ave.

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

Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT



Ransdell



Eads

Aaron Ransdell has joined as customer service representative and **Chris Eads** has joined as sale agent at Brown Insurance.

Kevin Sutton has joined as relationship manager at Farm Credit of the Virginias.



Clark



Leffel

Allen Clark and **Scott Leffel** have both been promoted to senior vice presidents at BNC Bank.

Karen Hankins has been named branch manager of Atlantic Bay Mortgage in Roanoke.

Tammy Aldridge has joined as senior mortgage banker at HomeTown Mortgage.

Justin Barnes has joined as vice president and commercial lender at First Bank and Trust Co. in Rocky Mount.

Paul Lindamood has been hired as assistant vice president and branch manager at First Bank & Trust Company's Wytheville office on North Fourth Street.

LEGAL FRONT

Monica Monday of Gentry Locke has been inducted as a Fellow of the American Academy of Appellate Lawyers.

WELLNESS FRONT

A. Paul Dallas, MD, FACP, received the American College of Physicians Virginia Chapter's Paul Florentino Volunteerism Award.



Moskal

Joseph Moskal, MD,

has been inducted into the Hip Society.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Tracy Nester has joined as vice president of human resources at Lawrence Cos.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Patti Dickerson of Virginia Title Center won the 2015 Individual Affiliate of the Year Award from the Roanoke Valley Association of REALTORS®.

Violeta Page, Amanda Potter, Dana Smith, and **Cyndi Sledd** have been appointed sales associates at Long & Foster Real Estate.



Wise

Matt Wise, corporate controller for The Branch Group, has passed the Certified Construction Industry Financial Professional exam.

Chris Becker has been promoted to vice president at G.J. Hopkins, a subsidiary of The Branch Group, Inc.

Joe Patrick Kraft has joined as a real estate



Becker



Kraft

sales associate at Lichtenstein Rowan.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT



Boettcher

Bradley Boettcher has been selected as director of marketing and air service development at the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport.

Julee Goodman has joined as director of development at Virginia Lutheran Homes.

Vicki Love has joined the sales department of Pure Water Technology of Southwest Virginia.

Meg Stone has joined the board of directors at Warm Hearth Village.



Stone

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.



Smyth

Brian Smyth has been appointed enologist and winemaker, and



Brunk

Cooper Brunk has been appointed chef at Chateau



Munn-Lively

Morrisette Winery. **Liz Munn-Lively** has been hired as business

development specialist at Access Advertising.

Kevin Sands, RN has accepted the position of director of quality assurance at Warm Hearth Village.

Jason Storey has been named store manager at U.S. Cellular, Salem and

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Career FRONT



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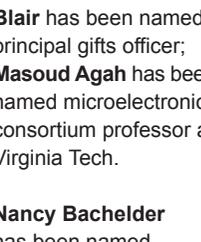
Cahoon



Warburton



Sharakhova



Wheeler

Glenda Gillaspy has been named head of Department of Biochemistry; **Steve Clark** has been hired as assistant vice president of gift planning; **Charlie Cahoon** has been appointed assistant professor of plant pathology, physiology, and weed science;

Olga Isengildina-Massa has been named associate professor of agriculture and applied economics; **Cristina Fernandez-Fraguas** has been appointed assistant professor of food science and technology; **Travis Mountain** has been appointed assistant professor of agriculture and applied economics; **Tim Warburton** has been named the John K. Costain Chair at the College of Science;

Laura Strawn and **Hannah Scherer** have been named Extension specialists and assistant professors; **Menah Pratt-Clarke** has been named vice provost for inclusion and diversity and vice president for strategic affairs; **Maria Sharakhova** has joined the entomology faculty at the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; **Carlin Rafie** has been appointed assistant professor of human nutrition, foods, and exercise; **Kim**

Blair has been named principal gifts officer; **Masoud Agah** has been named microelectronics consortium professor at Virginia Tech.

Nancy Bachelder has been named educational testing coordinator at Jefferson College of Health Sciences.

Susan Wheeler has been named director of major and planned giving at Hollins University.

Regina Meredith of Salem City Schools has been named Counselor of the Year by the Virginia Counselors Association.

CULTURE FRONT

Pearl Fu, a leader in Roanoke's Local Colors organization and champion of diversity, was honored with the first Cabell Brand Hope Award on Oct. 23.

Laura Conte has been named visitor services coordinator for the O. Winston Link Museum.

Josh Baumgartner has joined as vice president of public policy and strategic issues at Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce.



Baumgartner

JDRF has announced its new officers: **Sally Southard**, president; **Mike Wray**, president-elect; and board members: **Mary Lou Bruce**, **Chris Dodd**, **Randi Carpenter Earls**, **Matt Elliott**, **Cheryl Facciani**, **Mimi Kemp**, **Richard Pettit**, **Tony Robie**, and **Trish Young**.

Ashley Webb has been named curator for the History Museum of Western Virginia.

Robert Day of Patrick Henry Family Services received the 2015 Strengthening Faith and Family Award.

Sheila Strauss was honored as a stalwart supporter of Opera Roanoke at the Ruby Anniversary Gala.

Keisha Graziadei-Shup has been appointed to the Virginia Latino Advisory Board.



Gilmer

MUNICIPAL FRONTS

Blacksburg Mayor **Ron Rordam** has been elected president of the Virginia Municipal League.

Christopher Bever has been appointed director of the office of management and budget at Roanoke County.

Jake Gilmer has been selected as director of Western Virginia Workforce Development Board.



Griffith

Christopher Griffith has been promoted to deputy chief of the Roanoke County Fire & Rescue department.

Marla Akridge has been named executive director of Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corp.

Compiled by Tom Field

Read the FRONT online

vbFRONT.com

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

FRONT Notes



GolfAR's PuttAR hyper-real golf simulator for smartphones and tablets

Green game

GolfAR, a technology company at Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, has released PuttAR—a golf performance app for Android mobile devices that assists putting and helps golfers "understand the architecture of the green."

SW VA playmates

Friends of Southwest Virginia has received a \$275,000 federal grant to use in its role in economic diversity from the declining coal industry; primarily in areas of creative businesses, tourism, and outdoor recreation.

Swapped on course

Preston's restaurant has replaced Bull & Bones Brewhaus & Grill at the Pete Dye River Course of Virginia Tech.

Speed zones

Virginia Telecommunication Planning Initiative (VATPI) is providing \$50,000 in joint grants for the development of broadband and internet connectivity improvements to the counties of Allegheny,

Botetourt, and Craig, the city of Covington, and the town of Clifton Forge; the projects to have management support from Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission.

Slick

An ice skating rink has opened at Elmwood Park in downtown Roanoke just in time for the winter holiday season; named **ROA's Elmwood on Ice** and sponsored by Roanoke Blacksburg Regional Airport.

Best science employer in the world

Novozymes has been ranked number one on Science Magazine's annual top employers list in global biotech, pharmaceutical and related industries; the company has a plant in west Roanoke County, employing 151 specializing in microbial products for cleaning, wastewater, aquaculture, and bioculture.

Work off the donuts

Anytime Fitness has leased the corner retail space at Spartan Square and **Dunkin Donuts** has leased property in front of

Walmart in Salem; expected opening and dates have not been announced.

Bank branch opens

HomeTrust Bank has opened a new office at 316 South Jefferson Street in downtown Roanoke.

It's good to be 10

HomeTown Bank celebrated its tenth anniversary on Nov. 14; the bank began when local business leaders chartered a community model with extended hours and localized services.

Call me doctor nurse

Jefferson College of Health Sciences is adding two new doctorate-level programs (Doctorate of Nursing Practice and Doctorate of Health Sciences) and is opening the School of Graduate & Professional Studies, beginning fall 2016.

Good hands in stone

Allstate Insurance Company will be the new tenant at the Stone Printing

Building in downtown Roanoke (adjacent to Hotel Roanoke and Roanoke Higher Education Center).

More accountability

Brown, Edwards & Co., accounting firm is merging Wytheville-based Hodges, Jones & Mabry; the expansion to result in nearly 300 associates in nine offices in Roanoke, the New River Valley, West Virginia and Tennessee.

Skin shop

River Ridge Dermatology has opened a new office in Roanoke, adding to its offices in Blacksburg and Narrows.

Mini monkey money

Mill Mountain Zoo has received a \$30,000 gift which will be used in the construction of a new Marmoset exhibit, managed by Hill Studios.

Coupler

Norfolk Southern's potential acquisition by Canadian Pacific is speculative at this stage, but merger talks have been confirmed by multiple sources; a deal that would involve a \$24 billion valuation of NS and its 30,000 employees if it were to happen.

Pick a plot

Roanoke County Economic Development has deployed its new Site Selector web application for reviewing industrial /

commercial properties; accessible at www.yesroanoke.org and the County's GIS page.

2 Roanoke Facebook site, as stakeholders and advocates wait to see if the effort pays off.

Women contribute

The **Roanoke Women's Foundation**, a fund of Foundation for Roanoke Valley, awarded \$306,000 in grants to nonprofits for its 11th year, including distributions to Turning Point, CHIP, Family Promise of Greater Roanoke, PLENTY!, Roanoke Children's Theatre, and The Ronald McDonald House.

Nervous anticipation

Virginia Tech's decision to open a **school of neuroscience** in collaboration with VT-Carilion Research Institute in the fall of 2016 would be the first of its kind in the nation; initial projections indicate 1,000 new students, 30 faculty members, and \$24 million in tuition revenue and grants.

Money train

This historic return of the **Norfolk & Western Class J 611** steam locomotive contributed an estimated \$4 to \$7 million in economic impact from its inaugural return to Roanoke and the 2015 scheduled excursions, according to a report by the Virginia Museum of Transportation.

Name dropping

Virginia Restaurant, Lodging and Travel Association (VRLTA) is the new name of the state's tourism industry group, a change from Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association; its advocacy efforts include opposing local meals and lodging taxes, defending post Labor Day school openings, and business-friendly ABC laws.

Bring me a beer

Oregon-based **Deschutes Brewery** is certainly getting its share of calling cards from Roanoke as it considers its expansion to this area of the country; the campaigning from citizenry to private businesses and organizations has exploded beyond the usual economic development initiatives at unprecedented levels, some of which is represented on Deschutes

Refugee fleas

Happy's Flea Market in Roanoke has announced its closing as of Sunday, Nov. 22; the building and inside market had been closed for months after being shut down for safety violations, but the remaining outdoor operations are now permanently closed unless something else develops or replaces the business.

Have an announcement about your business?

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

Movin' on

Lawrence Transportation Systems will be paid \$1.4 million in a settlement from the Virginia Department of Transportation as a result of an eminent domain act that forced relocation of a truck repair shop at the construction project at Exit 150 in Botetourt County.

Terry, Genetic Alliance; and Mary Hatten, Neurobiology lab at Rockefeller University.

Salem run

The City of Salem will host a new **LewisGale Salem Half Marathon** on Oct. 15, 2016.

Smart talks

Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute's sixth annual Distinguished Public Lecture Series will feature global leaders in the biomedical field including Marie Bernard, National Institute on Aging (Dec. 10); Sharon

Tough, scrappy brand

Roanoke Rail Yard Dawgs was announced on Nov. 19 as the name of Roanoke's new Southern Professional Hockey League team; colors are blue and gold.

Compiled by Tom Field



Courtesy of Roanoke Rail Yard Dawgs

Roanoke's new pro hockey team is scheduled to start 2016-17 season.

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, also available by link at vbFRONT.com.



Machine-like progress >

Executive Summary:

MDCI in Salem has turned out 65 years of precision parts; winning a legacy award this year.

By Jonathan Freedom

MDCI, a Salem-based family owned and operated business for the past six decades, was the recipient of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce's Legacy award for 2015 (nominated by Sun Trust Bank). The company was able to accept this award due to the dedicated work of both past and present employees and continued loyalty of their customers.

In 1950, MDCI was founded when Paul Powell and Roy Spain joined forces in pursuit of machining excellence. At the time they met, Spain worked as an engineer with Eaton Corporation and Powell was the vice president of a local machine shop. Both men saw the other embodied the skills and talents they lacked, which was the recipe for success. Like most businesses, success did not come without hard work. MDCI started in Spain's basement, but it was not long before the company moved into their first machine shop in 1953, a short distance from where they operate

today. It was not until the 1960s when operations really took off. The dramatic uptick in the company's growth came because Roy Spain innovated what many would consider an everyday device. Spain developed the MEDECO lock.

Why did this "simple" invention launch the company forward? Prior to Spain's lock, most lock and key combinations were limited to few potential combinations. Spain's invention dramatically improved the security of the lock by greatly increasing the number of possible combinations.

The lock was so successful that MDCI created another division named MEDECO for the development and sales of the lock. The name MEDECO comes from the first two letters of each word in MDCI; MEchanical DEvelopment COmpany. Through the support of loyal customers both MEDECO and MDCI grew. On March 2, 1984 MEDECO was sold and MDCI continued its focus on providing superior machining craftsmanship through the development of tools, dies, fixtures, jigs, and prototype work.

The sale of MEDECO did not stifle growth. MDCI continued to push forward. There may have been new equipment and new faces throughout, but MDCI was doing what it had done for years; employ highly skilled employees to provide clients with precision machined parts and equipment. In fact,



MDCI can machine parts to within one eighth of the width of a human hair. Though MDCI is unable to release client or product information due to non-disclosure agreements, having the ability to machine parts and equipment to such precise specifications allows MDCI to be incredibly marketable while providing superior quality. This ensures their customers come back over and over again.

Industries MDCI serves include those in the food, aerospace, fiber, medical, and transportation sectors, among others. According to John Powell Sr., (current president) MDCI clients choose to work with them because "of our highly skilled

employees; and they have confidence in us."

Currently MDCI is reproducing a large number of foreign OEM parts because unlike foreign manufacturers, in many cases, MDCI can produce the product for the customer faster than their foreign counterparts, and suggestions can be made to improve the part, allowing it to last longer.

Where does MDCI go from here? If the company's legacy is any indication, it should be here for a long while. With the next family generation already employed with MDCI, we could see them for another 65 years. 



In the inspection room highlighting the use of the CMM machine to accurately determine a part's dimensional tolerances



Grinding a part on one of the largest grinders of its kind in southwest Virginia

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Don’t simply fix the problem...
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