

Valley Business

FRONT

THE SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEUR
CHAMPION IN VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE
FREE • ISSUE 76 • JANUARY 2015

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Ethnic Grocers

Angelica Quintero,
La Estrella Latina



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WELCOME to the FRONT

Welcome to 2015! If you're new to FRONT, climb aboard. If you're a recent or longtime reader, you'll notice some changes in our first edition of the new year. New perspectives, new lineup, new approach to stories. As innovative and progressive as we are (and were, when we started the magazine), we know we have to be open to change to keep up, much less stay in front. How do we know that? Our own stories! That's right. How silly would it be to publish hundreds and hundreds (thousands if you go back to our origin) of articles about businesses of all shapes and sizes that come and go, and not pay attention to what it takes to continue providing a service of value to a local market that is also evolving?

The biggest change? We're still refusing to establish an editorial calendar; our commitment to bringing you the better stories of the day instead of assignments based on some publisher's agenda. But today, we're opening up the coverage even more. We're still watching all the "fronts"—the nine principle industry classifications in our region; but each month's lineup will feature the stories with top interest, diversity, and relevance. No rigid template to obligate content formatting. Another change? You're likely to notice even more focus on small businesses and entrepreneurs (always a hallmark of our product).

What isn't changing is... well, frankly... our style. The way we tell stories. The way we do business. The soul of the FRONT remains intact.

We appreciate your patronage as much today as we did in 2008. And 1988. As you move into the new year and do whatever you do to stay in front, we would consider it a privilege to come along for the ride.



Tom Field

“ ”

Raw milk in Virginia is more illegal
than alcohol, tobacco or firearms

— Page 38



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A Taste of the World. *Right Here.*

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“ ”
Imitate Jesus and
Socrates

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Cover photography of Angelica Quintero by Anne Sampson.

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JANUARY



Andrea Brunais



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Kathy Surace

Editorial Advisory Board

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

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

CONTRIBUTORS



Sarah Cox



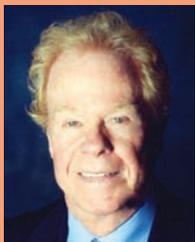
Dan Dowdy



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Dan Smith



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Randolph Walker

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

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Nicholas C. Conte Woods Rogers (Legal)
Warner Dalhouse Retired (Seniors)
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Nanci Hardwick Aeroprobe (Tech/Industry)
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Nancy May LewisGale Regional Health System (Wellness)
Stuart Mease Virginia Tech (Education)
Mary Miller IDD (Tech/Industry)
Ed Walker Regeneration Partners (Development)

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

“

If I allowed one individual's sentiments to enter my brain as fact without a measure of critical thought, I am being lazy

— Page 30

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A Taste of the World. *Right Here.*

Roanoke attracts people.

Over 100 countries were represented in this year's Local Colors festival, a celebration of all the places Roanoke Valley citizens come from. They come for all kinds of reasons, often with very few possessions and a clear sense of starting over.

But one thing people bring with them from all over the world: a taste for food from home.

J&L Oriental Food Mart 3109 Brambleton Avenue

I make my way through floor to ceiling shelves holding noodles wrapped in cellophane and household supplies to find Mrs. Li Wang behind the counter at J&L Oriental Food Mart. She and her husband have owned this market for 13 years. They are still its only employees, keeping it open 365 days a year.

The store is dense with products, colors and textures from all over Asia. Mrs. Li gives me the list in accented English: "Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Philippines, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos and a little bit of India." She apologizes for her English.

She gives me the tour, starting with crispy flavored seaweed snacks from Thailand. She opens a package of Tom Yum Goong (a spicy shrimp soup) flavored seaweed and gives me a taste. I know instantly that I will now be unable to live without these airy, crunchy little wafers in my life. And there are five more flavors.

She hands me another Thai product to wash it down: a lychee fruit-flavored aloe vera drink with a fresh taste, delicate fragrance and real aloe vera pulp.

A customer comes in looking for shrimp. Mrs. Li takes her to a deep chest freezer in the back, where they discuss, in English, the relative merits and cost of what's on hand. The customer decides to come back tomorrow when there will be more shrimp. Another customer's questions are answered in Chinese.

The Li's came to the U.S. in 1997. They both worked at Burger King for four years before starting their business. She says

Ethnic Grocers In Roanoke >

Executive Summary:

Look no further for that special ingredient to make your recipe authentic to its cultural attribution; here are five stores from around the globe in our own back yard.

By Anne Sampson



all photos: Anne Sampson

they didn't borrow any money. How could they do this? She smiles. "Asian people are good at saving money."

As we walk the aisles together, Mrs. Li tells me the medicinal properties of various foods. A tea made with dried lychee and chrysanthemum flowers is good for the eyes. Black fungus, a tree fungus known in Asia and Africa, is good for the heart and unblocks arteries. She talks about the Five Flavors of Chinese Medicine: sweet, sour, bitter, salty, spicy.

"Asian people try to balance these. Americans don't do this. Some foods warm or cool the body. Older people need warming; children and young people are already warm."

We tour the aisle of refrigerators. There must be a dozen. One holds dumplings: Korean, Chinese, every kind of filling. Two others hold twenty different kinds of sausage. A third contains shrimp, scallops and whole red snappers. One is for Thai foods, another is for Indian foods. One is just for ice cream.

Adjoining the grocery, Mrs. Li has a little clothing department. Pretty Asian style dresses and jackets hang in rows, and a little counter spinner displays large freshwater pearls. She says these things sell very slowly, and that she needs more customers. She doesn't advertise because it's expensive.

As I prepare to leave, Mrs. Li packs a bag for me with seaweed, dragon fruit, fresh pears and persimmons. She won't accept money.

"I like you to try these things. I give people things, I keep candy here for the children," she says. I ask her about her favorite food, and she laughs.

"When I cook, I want something simple," she says. "I like

Mrs. Li Wang: "Black fungus is good for the heart."

Anything can be made into ice cream





Harsh Patel

dumplings, because you get everything; vegetables, meat, sauce. But I am here with all this food, and I like everything.”

Ambika Indian Grocery 4520 Brambleton Avenue

Twenty-one year old Harsh (Hersh) Patel is minding the store when I stop in at Ambika. It’s a family business, and his mother is visiting in India right now, so Harsh has been taking final exams, running the store, working at Radio Shack and taking care of the house. He’s a little tired, but a gracious and enthusiastic tour guide.

“We have primarily Indian customers, but we see people from Southeast Asia, Nepalis, Sri Lankans, people from the Middle East,” he says. The neatly arranged shelves hold the raw materials for traditional Indian food, and coolers against one wall contain frozen prepared foods. Each aisle in the brightly lit store has a distinctive fragrance. The spice aisle, laden with bags of cumin, paprika, fennel, turmeric and more, is appetizing in its aroma.

“You should come back and talk to my mom,” he says. “She loves to help people with recipes. She knows a lot about food.” When I arrived with a notepad in my hand, he says, he thought I was on a hunt for ingredients for a recipe. “We get that a lot.”

Ambika started in the back room of a convenience store on Wildwood Road in Salem. Harsh’s parents had come from Gujarat state in Western India and found that “we had to drive to Jersey or Richmond to get groceries. There was nowhere local to get Indian food. And we already had the convenience store.”

As the Indian community grew, so did the store. In a few years, they moved to the current location on Brambleton. Harsh remembers helping his father, who has since passed away, set up the store.

As we talk, a woman rushes in and heads straight for the cooler. Her name is Lakshmi, like the Hindu goddess of wealth and beauty, and her daughter is making a presentation at school about Diwali, the Hindu Autumn festival which includes prayers to the goddess.

"I'll be making Samosas tomorrow morning," she says, filling her arms with frozen, vegetable-filled pastries. "I need it to be fast."

Is Ambika her go-to place for traditional food?

"Oh, gosh yes," she says. "I've been coming here for forever. I shopped with them when they were on Wildwood Road." She asks when Harsh's mother will be back from India, and says she will come by and see her.

Another customer, newly arrived in Roanoke, is excited to see fresh vegetables from home.

"I haven't tasted some of these in two-and-a-half, three years," she says. She shows me tindoor, small and green-striped, and baby eggplant. "Sauté these, and it tastes so good!" She breaks a fresh curry leaf for me to smell – it's light and citrusy.

I point out her bag of bitter gourds, a green, deeply ridged vegetable. "Oh yes," she says, "this is very good for people with diabetes." Ambika sells the juice as well as the fresh vegetable. Harsh says his mother used to give it to his father as tonic.

Harsh, who was born in New Jersey, sees his generation eating everything, and his parents' contemporaries preparing more



Ganesh, god of wisdom and new beginnings

Lakshmi buys Indian foods for her daughter's presentation





Duoc Nguyen

traditional foods. But he shows me his favorite sweet – Shahi Gulab Tamun, a fried dough confection soaked in flavored sugar water. This one is filled with cardamom seeds.

“These are pretty good,” he smiles.

As I’m leaving, a Caucasian woman comes in with a list. She’s looking for the ingredients in a recipe.

Oriental Market 3637 Williamson Road

Duoc Nguyen (Doh Nwen) has owned the Oriental Market for 20 years. He caters to a lot of cultures: Southeast Asian, Chinese, Japanese, African, Caribbean, Mexican. Products from different parts of the world sit cheek-by-jowl on the shelves, interspersed with coconut openers and fish scalers. Mr. Nguyen started small and just kept adding.

He doesn’t always know what people do with the food he sells, only that they buy it.

“People look for things,” he says. “I ask what kind of food they want, and I get it for them.”

Mr. Nguyen left Viet Nam about 1980. He left the hard way: as a South Vietnamese Army officer, he was jailed for years by the North Vietnamese before escaping by boat, first to Thailand, then to the U.S. via the Philippines. He worked for 14 years at a steel mill on Shenandoah Avenue. He got into the grocery business because he saw people driving to Washington, D.C. to buy groceries.

I’m studying the frozen squid when a Caucasian man comes in asking for fish. He’s directed o the next freezer. He’s looking for smelt. Is he a chef?



Kroger doesn't carry goat



Flours for African Dishes

"No, my mother's Italian," he says. "I come here to get fish you can't get at Kroger. Right now she's making Seven Fishes for Christmas (a Southern Italian tradition) so I'm looking everywhere for smelt."

If he had needed oxtail, I could have directed him to a cooler with another cultural mish mash of meats, including goat, beef bones and feet, and beef tongue.

Mr. Nguyen helps me pile produce on the counter so I can take his photo with it. He arranges with precision and an artistic eye, and looks into the distance when I click the shutter.

Caribbean Spices





Shoppers at Asian Market

Asian Grocery 3623 Williamson Road

Nandi Mishra owns the only Bhutanese / Nepali grocery in Roanoke. Housed in the old post office on Williamson Road, it's a gathering place for the Bhutanese community – “180 families,” he says – while also serving people from Africa, Burma, India and the Middle East. It's a busy place the morning I'm there, lots of laughing and talking, but I get the tour of favorite foods.

Nine Elements Oil



He shows me the pickle shelf – anything is likely to be pickled in Asian cuisine – and points out “the king of pickles,” Lapsi, made from a small plum, and next to that, the pickled chilies. Then come containers of dried radishes, a commonly used soup base. From a cooler comes a package of betel nut. Similar in appearance to nutmeg, dried betel is chewed as a mild stimulant in Asia.

Artificial garlands of leaves, fruits and flowers hang festively from the ceiling. These are decorations for Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights, which took place in October this year. Mr. Mishra describes a special Diwali dish: a batter made with rice flour and chickpea flour, sweetened with jaggery, a sweetener much like brown sugar, and fried in a special griddle- like pan “like a doughnut.”

“This is called Nine Elements or Components,” he says, indicating a red box labeled ‘Navratna Oil.’ “It contains nine oils and it is good for all these diseases,” The list on the box details the common distresses of modern life: stress, sleeplessness, muscular aches, migraines.

“I have personal experience with this. I had migraines and took every kind of treatment. My doctor at Carilion was

COVER STORY

Indian, and he suggested I find this product. It has been two years now since I had a migraine.”

One section of the store is devoted to clothing, shoes and accessories. A young woman named Diya, who is shopping with her grannie, explains which ensembles are worn in Bhutan and which in Nepal. She shows me jeweled red shoes intended for a bride, and we look at posters of Lakshmi and Vishnu. She lets me take their photos.

The sign on the front says Asian Grocery, but on the side of the building, in peeling letters, is sign reading “Baghdad Market.” Two aisles are devoted to products from the Middle East, as well as a bank of freezers containing halal meats. ‘Halal’ is an Arabic word meaning ‘lawful’ or ‘permissible.’ Animals providing halal meat are to be raised and slaughtered according to criteria found in the Qur’an. These halal meats come from the D.C. area.

Mr. Mishra followed his brother to Roanoke. Diya’s family started out in New Hampshire, but there was no work, so they moved to Pennsylvania. She came to Roanoke when she married, and became part of her husband’s family.

“We don’t say ‘my husband’s grandmother’ like Americans do,” she says in beautiful English. “When we marry, his parents and grandparents become mine, so she is my grannie.”

When I leave, the animated talk continues around the counter, and more customers are coming in.





Butcher at La Estrella Latina

La Estrella Latina 3728 Williamson Road

Angelica Quintero is sending a wire for a customer when I walk into her store. It's bright and airy, and looks a little bit like a cross between a grocery store and an open air market. Colorful displays of fresh produce draw the eye, flanked by stalks of sugar cane and bags of dried beans and pasta. Orderly ranks of dry goods lead to a well-stocked meat case manned by a real butcher and a pastry case filled with turnovers and cookies. Angelica and her sister do the baking.

"I opened the store ten years ago," she says, "because it was hard to get these foods here. Now you can get some of these things at Walmart."

Angelica is from Honduras. A friend lived in Roanoke and she checked it out. "It was quiet. A nice place to live and raise a family. It's changed a lot, it's getting bigger."

Fruit turnovers





**Fresh produce gives
an open-air market
atmosphere**

Her two little girls are playing in the aisles as the butcher, a man from Guatemala, stocks shelves and her husband rings up a customer. Angelica comes in the morning to open the store at 9, then comes back with the girls in the afternoon. The store is open until 9:30, every day, including Sunday. She works 60-70 hours a week.

Like most ethnic groceries, there is a lot of cultural crossover in cuisine. "African people like yamas" (African yams, NOT sweet potatoes) she says, and people from the Caribbean buy mélanga (a dark-skinned, starchy root). She sees customers from all over South and Central America, Mexico, Africa and the Caribbean. The spices she carries reflect this mélange of cultures too: curry powders, cinnamon, hibiscus, dried corn silk.

Customers come in a steady stream to browse the aisles or place orders at the meat counter. The butcher will cut to order and the cases are stocked with tenderloins and seasoned flank steaks, as well as whole catfish, chicken feet, shrimp and pickled pigs ears. A sign announces "jalal (halal) meats available, goat and lamb, just ask."

Angelica banter in Spanish with a customer who is telling a long story. She is everywhere, minding the girls, straightening the produce, sending wires, cleaning the catfish for a photograph. She sends me away with an aloe drink and pastry. A little taqueria (taco stand) sits in the parking lot; a red trailer strung with lights. I ask Angelica's husband if the taqueria guy rents the space from them.

"No," he says, "he's a friend of my wife."

I feel as if I've been around the world in the time it's taken to drive to five ethnic markets in Roanoke. With only the smallest sense of adventure, it's possible to learn recipes, try foods you've never heard off, and find new ways to use foods you know. The people you meet will be eager to tell you about their homes and something about their lives, and you'll see what a rich and varied place this valley is. 🍷



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

*The signature look—
a model of efficiency
among other benefits*

Establish your signature look >

Recently I read an intriguing post by Paul Petrone on LinkedIn called “The Genius of Wearing the Same Thing Every Day”. I couldn’t agree more with his premise. Adopting a signature look is the perfect way for a businessperson to save time, energy, and space – while marketing his or her brand.

Five reasons to adopt a signature look:

- Eliminates a daily decision about what to wear and how you want to be perceived today. You know what you feel best in, what you look best in, and what you continually choose to wear day after day. So, select and buy enough of it, coordinate it into outfits that are ready and waiting in your closet and move on to the important work you need to do.
- Cuts down on shopping trips that may take you off task or off brand. We all have gone to a store with a specific purchase in mind, but after a few minutes find ourselves distracted by interesting ideas and wandering aimlessly. Fewer shopping trips eliminate this time waster.
- Reduces clutter. Buying items without a plan leads to clutter from items you don’t use or forget to use, taking up space and causing mental distraction. On the other hand, avoiding clutter leads to more creativity and productivity.
- Establishes your brand. Consider a few world-famous people and their appearance. Take Donald Trump. He wears exquisitely tailored business suits and a tie – and is seldom seen in casual attire. Apple’s Steve Jobs chose to wear a turtleneck, jeans and sneakers. Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg sports his hoodie and jeans. Each man’s brand creates immediate recognition by his clients or investors and conveys reliability, just as our brand should do for us. According to Petrone, William Arruda, a branding expert, encourages having a trademark look, asserting, “It makes you memorable and distinctive.”
- Allows you to completely focus your creativity on your real work. Thinking about your wardrobe daily takes time and mental energy. Free up that effort and time by streamlining the options and eliminating unnecessary decisions. Use that extra energy to meet your business goals.

Wearing the same thing every day won’t appeal to everyone. Some actively avoid repeating an outfit in a week or a month. However, for others adopting a signature look helps them look their best, use their time efficiently and gain public recognition. I like it. 

Send comments or questions to Kathy@peacockimage.com

New Year's resolutions >

Well, we've rung in the New Year with some sort of libation – lively or not – and most of us made New Year's resolutions. This tradition dates back (as traditions usually do) to the Babylonians and Romans. Ancient Babylonians promised their gods each year that they would return borrowed objects and pay their debts. The Romans started the year by making promises to the God, Janus, after whom the month is named. In Medieval times, knights re-affirmed their chivalry by taking the "peacock vow" during the final feast of Christmas. Each would place his hand on a peacock (roasted or live) and re-dedicate himself to the principles of chivalry for the coming year.

There are other religious equivalents to this tradition. During Rosh Hashanah and ending on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Jews meditate on their transgressions of the past year, asking for forgiveness. Some Catholics fast during Lent, and in fact this writer as a little girl, used to give up candy for Lent. So the concept is fairly universal. But regardless of religion, it has to do with annual reflection and promises of self-improvement.

When Benjamin Franklin turned twenty, he developed a method to improve his character. These were his thirteen virtues. Here they are, with the original grammar and spelling intact:

1. **Temperance.** Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
2. **Silence.** Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
3. **Order.** Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
4. **Resolution.** Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
5. **Frugality.** Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.
6. **Industry.** Lose no time; be always employ'd in some thing useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. **Sincerity.** Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. **Justice.** Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
9. **Moderation.** Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. **Cleanliness.** Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloaths, or habitation.
11. **Tranquillity.** Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. **Chastity.** Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.
13. **Humility.** Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

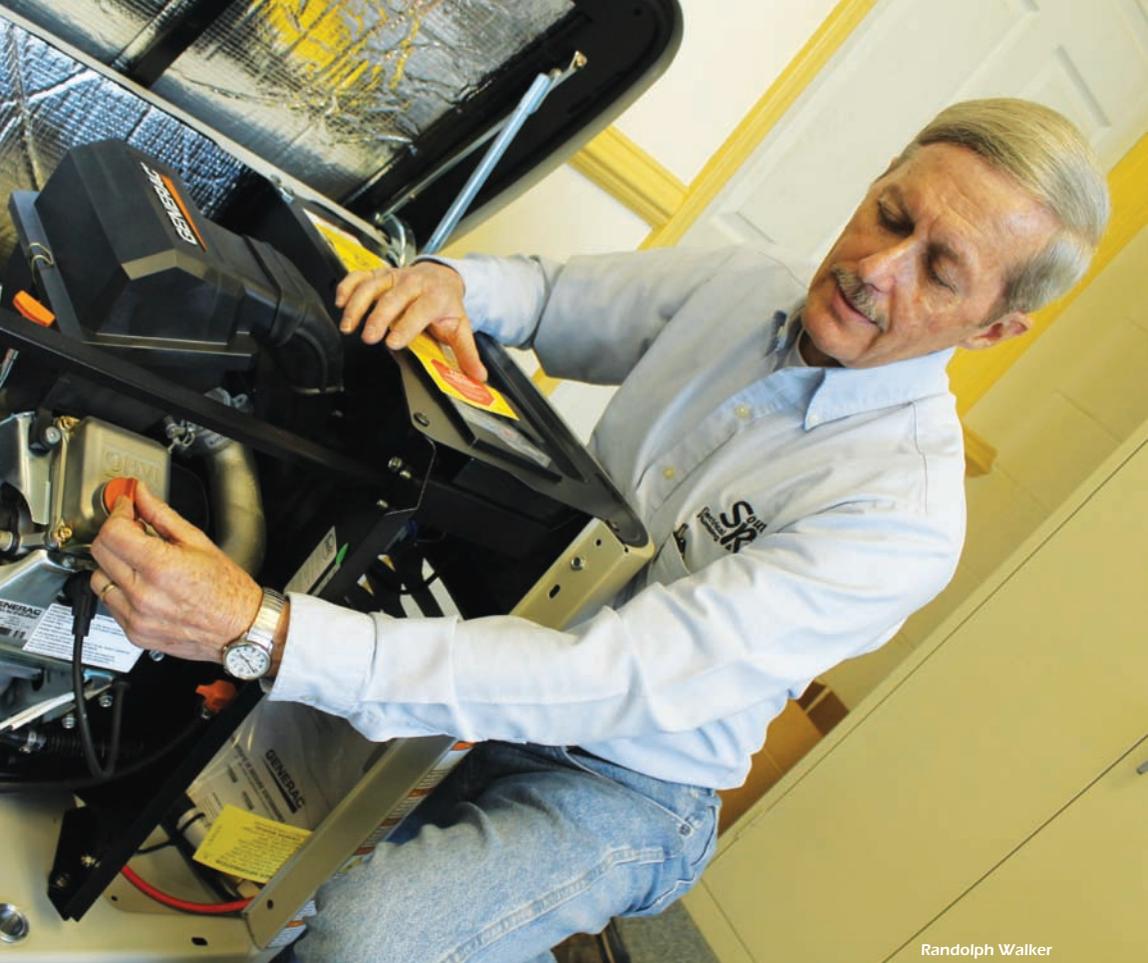
Good luck with your resolutions, and Happy New Year! 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey
Harshberger

Executive Summary:
A new year is a perfect time to consider character improvement.



Randolph Walker

Fred Corbett with the display model Generac at South River Contracting

Standby for power >

Executive Summary:

Automatic standby generators power a business surge for a Roanoke contractor.

By Randolph Walker

How's this for generating profits: an up-and-coming technology goes from a few units per year to 50 percent of your gross sales in three years.

That's what automatic standby generators have done for Fred Corbett, president and owner (with his wife, Peggy) of South River Contracting of Roanoke (www.southernriverinc.com).

Maybe you've seen one of these in somebody's backyard and didn't know what it was. It's a box about four feet wide, two feet deep and 30 inches tall.

The Generac brand generator has about

70 percent of the market. It's for people who are serious about having power when AEP goes down. Depending on the customer's needs and budget, it can power just the essentials, like a water pump and refrigerator, or it can keep the whole house running for a week or more.

Portable generators require extension cords and use gasoline that goes bad if it sits for a year, and they have to be started manually, unlike Generacs.

"They switch the power automatically from the utility grid," says Corbett. The power goes out, and after a 10 second delay, the Generac kicks in.

A car battery turns the starter. Air-cooled Generacs running at 3600 RPM output 22 kilowatts of AC at 60 cycles per second.

Generacs are powered either by natural gas (in urban areas) or propane (in rural areas). For rural customers, "I recommend they get at least a 500 gallon propane tank. A good size generator might consume two gallons per hour. You've got about a week's worth

of propane. If you don't throw clothes in the dryer, don't turn the oven on, don't take long hot showers, the propane will go a lot further. You do have access to everything in your home, but use it within limits."

About 95 percent of units are going into existing homes. "But I'm finding more and more contractors and people building houses are wanting generators in their homes, because it's a lot cheaper to do it that way than 'Let's go back and do a lot of retrofitting and run gas lines later.'"

Depending on whether the owner just wants backup for essentials like a well pump and refrigerator, or wants whole-house backup, the prices range from \$6,000 to \$12,000. A propane tank, if not already installed, is extra.

Some customers have health issues requiring reliable heat, AC or power. One customer didn't want to worry about her sump pump cutting off and her basement flooding if power failed during a rainstorm.

About 60 percent of Corbett's business is in rural areas, 40 percent is in town. Only about 3 percent of homeowners have

backup generators, so there's a huge potential for growth. "Generators today are like air conditioners were in the late '60s and early '70s," says Corbett. "I didn't even know what an air conditioner was when I was growing up. Now I dare you to find a house anywhere that doesn't have air conditioning. They're predicting this is where generators are going to be in the next 10 to 15 years."

While most of his business is residential, he does sell some to businesses which need to serve customers during power outages. One of his customers is Rand Wright, owner of Carlton Wright Insurance Agency.

"The derecho of 2012 was an eye opener for us," says Wright. "It made it very difficult to serve our customers in the absence of power, telephone and internet, so we purchased a Generac to keep all systems online."

Corbett takes a gloomy view of the power grid's sustainability, and sees rolling blackouts on the horizon. That's yet to be seen, but who wouldn't want insurance against the occasional three or four days of a cold, dark house? Says Corbett: "We're selling comfort and peace of mind." 



Inside a Generac: See if you can identify the dipstick, oil fill cap, and oil filter (Hint: They're all orange)





Small Business

By Samantha Steidle

Executive Summary:
Convert online followers to offline clients—that's the social media strategy.

What does it mean to “do” social media? >

If you're a small business owner, you know that people expect you to have a presence on social media. People may suggest you “do” Facebook but few people actually “do” it well.

I talked with Sherry Blythe, owner of Roanoke, Va.-based Virtual Assistance to answer that question. Blythe specializes in helping small businesses establish an online presence to win customers.

Make them want to meet you

“Great social media should be: entertaining, inspiring, or informative. But, above all, it should make people want to stop by and see you.” The best way to go achieve this is to understand who your clients are and what they want.

Your ultimate goal is to convert online followers into offline clients. Invite followers to seminars and trade shows where you will be speaking. Hold coffee shop get-togethers or meet-ups every month.

Strive to achieve a local following while supporting a local non-profit. Be a Toys for Tots or Coats for Kids drop-off location. “That way, you are associating yourself with something everyone can feel good about,” says Blythe. “They don't even have to talk to you.” The next time those followers see your place of business, they will more easily have a positive association with it, because they've been there. They'll feel like they're getting to know you.

Promote the businesses around you. It's called forming strategic alliances, and it's one of the best ways to call attention to one another. Sometimes it's even worth it to promote a sister business even if your effort isn't reciprocated immediately.

Finally, online tools can help you monitor the conversations going on around you. Hootsuite, for example, lets you look at “tweets” from people within a radius of 25 miles or more. You can also narrow your scope to find people with Klout scores of a certain range and above. Klout is a website that measures online influence. The more influential the person is, the more valuable he or she is likely to be to you. If he or she promotes you, your message will reach more people.

You can also set up searches to find Facebook posts and tweets that contain only certain keywords and “hashtags” (content indexing words). And if you do all of that, you will be “doing” social media very well, indeed. Do not be surprised when more customers turn up to meet you, and soon. 

Creating a more effective business plan >

In numerous meetings I have held and attended with business owners and CEOs, when the subject of a strategic business plan comes up, many don't have a clear idea of what a strategic business plan should consist of.

Ask 10 CEOs and you are likely to get 10 different ideas of what the elements of a plan should be. Part of the reason for this variety of opinions is likely that business literature suggests a number of different strategic business plan formats. Another probable reason is that various CEOs have identified which elements of a plan they think will achieve results and be most effective for them.

My business experience of 30+ years includes stints as CEO of seven companies (most with multiple business units: one a NYSE company and two I owned, as well as numerous consulting assignments. During this time, I've written and implemented over 50 strategic business plans and have had the opportunity to determine those that worked well and some not so well. Based on my experience (good and bad), I've put together several thoughts for creating successful Strategic Business Plans. This article will address two of these suggestions:

- A Strategic Business Plan should be written, and
- A Strategic Business Plan should be based on relevant, actionable data inputs that provide a foundation for the plan.

Put it in writing

As much as business literature suggests that businesses should have a strategic business plan, it is surprising how many businesses do not have a plan, and many that say



Business Operations

By Hank McHale

Executive Summary:
The strategic business plan should begin with a well built foundation.

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they do, do not have one in writing. A written business plan helps guide an organization's actions, decisions on resource allocation priorities, products and market segments. The discipline and rigor required to put thoughts in writing result in a more in depth and complete business plan that identifies more sales and profit opportunities.

Types of data inputs for providing the foundation

- Identify core competencies - specific, concrete causes for your market share
- Identify competitive advantages
- Identify strengths and weaknesses - self and competitors'>
- Compile Market Segmentation sales by: types of customers (e.g. demographics, distribution channels, geographic location)
- Determine opportunities and threats - internal and external (social, political, technological, industry, economic)
- Define the company/industry margin profile - reflects a company's ability to increase prices to cover increased costs. In general, a company's ability to increase prices is greater: the greater a company's market share; the higher an industry's sales growth rate; the higher the level of a company's and industry's technology; and the higher the level of an industry's capacity utilization.

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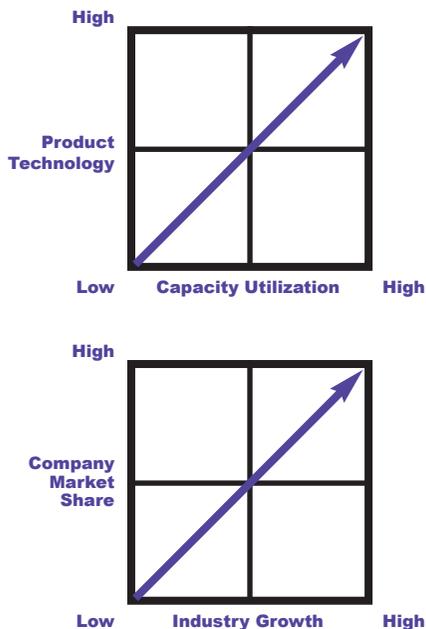
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PERSPECTIVES

This margin profile can be depicted in the graphs to the right.

On both graphs, generally the farther a company's margin profile moves up and to the right, the greater a company's ability to raise prices. If a company finds itself in the lower left quadrant, it will most likely be stuck with lower margins unless it can find a way to create a competitive advantage such as a new product or targeting different types of customers. On the other hand, a company whose profile is in the upper right-hand quadrant should have more flexibility for higher margins.

In summary, putting the plan in writing and basing it on a relevant, actionable data foundation should result in a more in depth, complete and effective strategic business plan. 



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Dan Smith

Pedro Szalay works with a student in ballet class

Immigration: A family tradition >

Executive Summary:

Ballet has given the director of the Southwest Virginia Ballet the keys to the world.

By Dan Smith

Even though Pedro Szalay's family has a tradition of immigration, he was not intent on immigrating to the United States ... until he visited. Then it was assured.

Szalay's parents emigrated from Hungary to Venezuela, a small town south of Caracas, before he was born and he, therefore, became a native South American with the Spanish first name. As a child, "I loved to dance, but I was in such a macho country" that male dancers were frowned upon. So, he engaged in karate and the martial arts, as well. Kind of a defense mechanism, so to speak.

But it was dance that held his interest and upon graduation from high school—having spent a great deal of time with modern dance, jazz and ballet—he wound up with a scholarship to a dance school in Caracas and that led to a place with the National Ballet of Caracas after just one year. He was with the company for four years and touring the world was part of the deal.

He eventually wound up in New York City, studying with several highly respected teachers and after his first visit, "I said, 'some day I'm going to live there.'" That happened after his second visit.

"A friend of mine worked with Merrill Lynch in New York City and took me in." He found a job coaching and dancing for the Richmond City Ballet and worked there for 10 years and was a guest teacher in several states during that time.

Finally, in 1996, he joined Terri (now Tess) Post at her school in Roanoke and in 1997, he took over the lead teaching role. "Professionally," he says, "America opened so many doors. My parents were immigrants; my sister immigrated to Mexico and my

other sister and brother immigrated to Panama." Finding and adjusting to a new country was natural for him.

"Everybody here opens doors," says Szalay. "If you are humble and you work hard, there isn't a hard adjustment to this beautiful culture. In essence, I am Hungarian, but I have three cultures and I apply all of them. I have three languages and I enjoy that, but dance is the universal language."

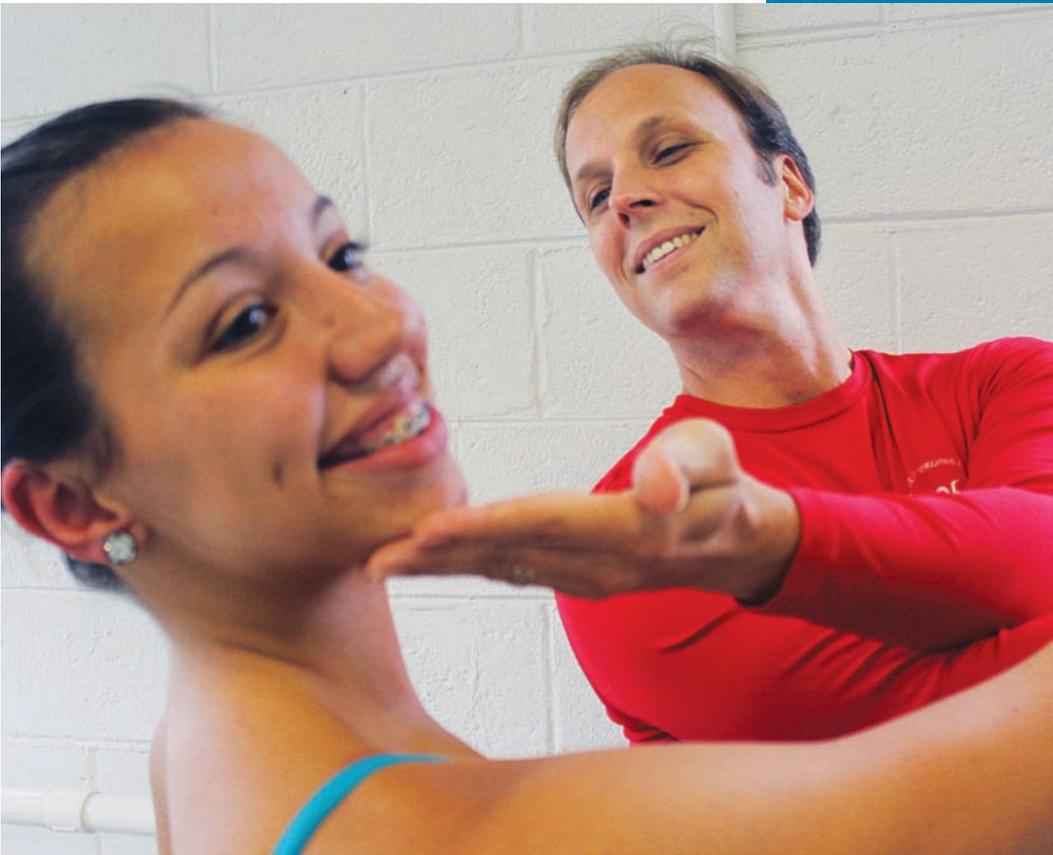
This, he says, "is my home, my roots. Not just with the arts, but with the community as a whole."

Szalay specializes these days with younger students, creating programs that make sense to them and that "make them want to learn." Some of those kids will become professionals, he says, and "some just want to feel better with the dance."

He hopes at some point to have his own school ("I'm looking for an opportunity") and to continue to "spread the love of dance." 

In Brief

Name:	Pedro Szalay
Age:	43
Position:	Artistic Director Southwest Virginia Ballet
Hometown:	LaGuaria, Venezuela
Education:	National Ballet of Caracas, New York City Dance Theater, various other dance schools, groups.
Personal:	Longtime relationship with Roanoke artist Mark Shepherd.
Community Involvement:	Collaborates with Roanoke Symphony, Mill Mountain Theatre, Opera Roanoke, Taubman Museum of Art, Thursday Morning Music Club, artist in residence, Carillon Clinic.
Immigration Status:	American citizen, 2000.







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Opportunity: Uneven pavement ahead >

As an adolescent, I was taught to respect the wisdom of my elders and to learn from them as much as possible. As I grew, my mentors shaped my education and helped me understand the structure of the world around me. After all, who understands the wily ways of the world more than folks who have spent years navigating inside it?

As a professional, I continue to look to my elders. Learning from those more experienced than I, regardless of age, is a sure-fire path to success. This symbiotic dynamic exists outside of the constraints of generation gaps and dates of birth and stands to positively impact everyone in the workplace or community.

For many folks, myself generally included, the story ends here. The unwritten rule sits glowing in our mental marquees, "Respect Your Elders: They Get It!" This is the protocol within which I act. It is a rule we continue to impress upon those younger and less experienced than we are.

Recently, I have had the opportunity to question this rule. Not in a subversive way or as an act of rebellion, but as a thought exercise to further my understanding of the status quo, specifically in Roanoke, Virginia. The old rule unraveled to expose something novel and uncomfortable to me: no one has it completely figured out. Rather, everyone has his or her set of assumptions and standards against which he or she acts.

By standing on my side of the generational or experiential divide and intercepting all that was tossed over as facts, I've done myself a great disservice. I was taught to respect and learn from those around me, not blindly absorb everything as truth. If I allow one individual's sentiments to enter my brain as fact without a measure of critical thought, I am being lazy. I have much more to learn by questioning and then agreeing or disagreeing than by blank acceptance.

Those who paved the miles we now walk deserve as many miles of respect. Those miles, though, will ultimately have cracks and potholes from overuse. The ultimate disrespect is to assume that those before us built a flawed road. Though challenging and sometimes uncomfortable, we have the opportunity to mend the cracks and fill the potholes with our own experiences and understandings. Years from now, there will be a novice walking along the same path, doing her best to learn from, understand and patch the uneven pavement my experiences will leave behind. 

Young Professionals

By Ariel Lev

Executive Summary:
Listening to those with considerable experience still requires critical thinking.

New Year's resolutions >

Each and every year millions of Americans set new year's resolutions. The New Year brings inspiration for change in many aspects of their lives. The number one New Year's resolution is weight loss. After months of poor eating and lack of exercise due to the holidays, people decide to put their foot down and lose all the weight that they have put on.

New Year's resolutions are great. I love to hear the inspiration and motivation in my patients' voices as they tell me how they are going to change. The problem is that most of these resolutions only last two to three months and then people fall right back into the habits that they were previously in. People set very large and unachievable goals, they lose interest or are not making the gains as quickly as they would like, and they give up on the resolution.

This year as you set up your New Years resolutions, instead of setting up a specific goal for weight loss or more exercise, why not set up goals that are not going to disappoint you if you are not reaching them as quickly as you would like? How about a goal of improving your lifestyle each and every day so you can achieve optimal health and wellness. We do this by focusing on the 5 Essentials for Optimal Health.

- 1) Maximized Nutrition
- 2) Maximized Exercise
- 3) Minimizing Toxins
- 4) Maximizing Mind
- 5) Maximized Sleep



Wellness

By Chris Lauria

Executive Summary:
Let's start the new year off right, with a look a nutrition and what you're putting in your body.

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As we set easy and achievable goals in each of these areas our health will improve on all levels. Weight loss will be achieved without making that your focus.

Here are some simple things to focus on to Maximized your Nutrition in the New Year.

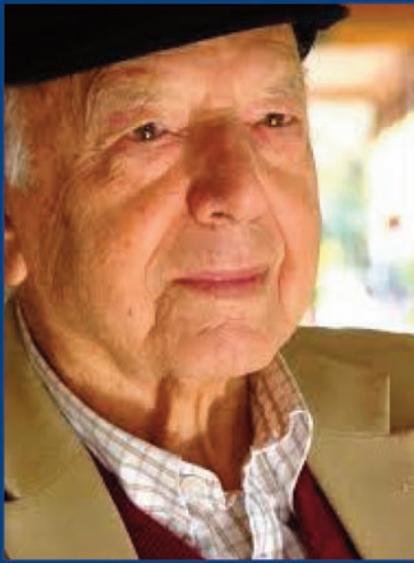
Remove sugar and artificial sweeteners from your diet

This is tough. It is not just eliminating junk food and soda from your diet. You must read your labels to look for sugars that are added to the food you are buying. Sugar is added to many things that you consume each day and you do not even know it is in the ingredients. Artificial sweeteners are just as bad for your health. You must look for those too. A simple

way to look for sugar is anything that ends in “-ose” in your ingredients is a form of sugar.

Minimize toxic chemicals in your food

This also requires you to read your labels. The longer the label usually means there are more chemicals in the food. When ready a label look for ones with fewer ingredients. Anything that ends “-ite,-ous,-ate” is usually some form of chemical that is added to the food. Spend more time buying fresh organic produce that is not treated with harmful pesticides. When buying meat buy free range meat and dairy in which the animals have not been treated with hormones or antibiotics which could be contained in the products you are eating.



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Eat the right fat

Eating bad fats can have very detrimental effects on your overall health and wellness. Foods containing hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil, trans fat and rancid vegetable oils are not good. Corn oil, canola oil and vegetable oils can be at the root of many health problems. When reading your labels stick to products that contain good fats such as olive oil, avocado or avocado oil, coconut or coconut oil, raw nuts, seeds and fresh fish.

These are simple lifestyle changes that you can make this year. Plan to make these changes forever. If you commit to these changes you will not only lose weight but will notice improvements in your overall health and wellness as well. 



This year as you set up your New Years resolutions, instead of setting up a specific goal for weight loss or more exercise, why not set up goals that are not going to disappoint you if you are not reaching them as quickly as you would like?

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A heavy load >

Executive Summary:

Some people complain about doing laundry; but when you own or work in the business, you put everything in to it.

By Sarah Cox

Air-Lee Cleaners and Skyline Cleaners, purchased by David Mays of WDM Ventures, Inc. on January 1, 2012, have been operating dry cleaning and laundry services in the Roanoke and Salem areas since the mid 1900s. Since Mays' purchase of two different businesses comprised of storefronts, laundromats and plants, he has put his business background

to work—consolidating, streamlining processes, and expanding into new market areas. But he has also insisted that the people behind the extensive list of services remain the face of his enterprise. These have always been family-owned businesses, and still are.

General Manager Mark Terry and Branch Manager Dottie Wiseman run the day-to-day side of the business that now, with some purchases and some merging, includes two laundromats in Salem, and storefronts on Williamson Road and Brambleton Avenue, as well as in Vinton, Clifton Forge, and at Old Country Plaza. They also manage Skyline Peacock dry cleaner and plant (the merger of two separate businesses) in Salem, and provide service to a Lewisburg dry cleaner.

WDM Ventures offers pick-up and delivery,



dry cleaning and laundry service, alterations, wash-and-fold in Salem, wedding dress preservation, band and choir uniform dry cleaning, household goods cleaning for area rugs and draperies – which can be taken down and reinstalled – and fire restoration.

It is not a great climate for the dry cleaning industry, points out Terry. The economy has affected discretionary income spending, fabric for clothes is more washable, and utilities and dry cleaning solution is increasingly expensive. While the dry cleaner uses “an accepted type of solvent for today’s world,” says Terry, meaning it is not the perchloroethylene carcinogen that was under the radar of the EPA, it is still expensive, as is the water, electricity and gas to run the operations. “We have had to reexamine our game plan for growth for the future,” he says.

As a consequence, WDM Ventures has branched out into areas that have little competition, such as Clifton Forge, as well as offering dry cleaning service, pick-up and delivery to an independently-owned cleaner in Lewisburg, WV. They have a cooperative agreement with the Shoe Doctor in Roanoke to bring him repairs from remote locations. And they have marketed to the hotel industry as well as some hotel patrons to do personal and housekeeping laundry and dry cleaning. Mays and Terry are trying to examine new ways to reach different areas, some without the overhead such as the service they have extended to the dry cleaner in Lewisburg.

The employees – there are about 32 full time and eight part time – act as if they all have a stake in the business. Terry will drive to Lewisburg if needed, Wiseman will check orders, sew buttons and do touch up ironing. The plant workers, said Terry, are the backbone of the operation, putting in long hours in the summer while the heat from the plant is exacerbated by the humidity in Roanoke.

“The reason I work is for my employees, to make sure we have a place for them to work. That has been my biggest goal since I’ve been here. It’s challenging. Everything costs a fortune to do. It’s expensive to process an item of clothing,” said Terry. That process entails checking the items



in, marking spots, spotting them with a cleaner, marking missing buttons, then getting all that work done. Afterwards, there is touch-up ironing, assembly of the order, and then another person who inspects, again.

Meanwhile, there is the juggling of hiring new employees, a mountain that is steep and slippery, as well as the logistics of making sure your shirt gets to you at the right store at the right time, with the right amount of starch in it. That takes seven vans and a lot of dedicated workers. Terry says some will just work for one day and call it quits. “It’s a factory. There’s steam running to make the machinery work. It’s incredibly hot in the summer, but you never hear the plant people complain about the heat or the long work days.” He said one 60-year old employee’s parents worked prior to him at the plant. This is not the scene from out of the movies, there are no set caricatures. It is a hands-on business run by people who are black, white and brown, male and female, Hispanic, Asian and American.

And at the end of the day, they do it to make a difference. It’s done, said Terry, “the way things should be done.” 

CONTRIBUTORS

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America opened so many doors — Page 26



Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal are on the marquee in this photo at Second Street, looking west. Seeking to recreate the good times, Pulaski's leaders have landed some modern-day manufacturing deals.

The Pulaski approach: Treat 'em like royalty >

Executive Summary:

A lineup of incoming manufacturers boosts city and county.

By Andrea Brunais

Pulaski proves that rolling out the red carpet for manufacturers large and small can be a winning game plan.

Despite Caterpillar's closure (job loss = 200), the picture is promising. Companies that recently established plants have pushed

past Caterpillar's decline, including Phoenix Packaging Operations with more than 600 jobs. Other companies in the bag are Blue Bird Resins, Red Sun Farms, Korona candles in the town of Dublin, and Falls Stamping and Welding, says Shawn Utt, town manager.

An hour from Roanoke, Pulaski sits near the junction of Interstates 77 and 81. Mayor Jeff Worrell brags on the scenic beauty of the town situated amid ridges and valleys. But what really lured incoming corporations, many setting up their first plants in North America?

"Relationships and luck," according to Utt. It didn't hurt, of course, that some of the companies were able to move into the vacant buildings formerly occupied by furniture and textile manufacturers. 

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all photos: Cara Cooper

Jeff Henderson milks one of his 148 cows at Cave Hill Dairy Farm in Botetourt.

An illegal substance >

Executive Summary:

Virginia Food Freedom wants to help farmers and consumers have access to raw milk.

By Cara Cooper

When Bernadette Barber bought a milk cow for her family it was purely for economic reasons.

"I had teenage children that were drinking me out of house and home with milk. And at that point in time milk was almost \$5 a gallon," Barber said.

So her family bought Maybelline, their first milk cow, and soon they were making homemade cheese and ice creams, and eventually had no more need to continue buying milk from the store. At the time she bought the cow to save money, but soon

realized that she could make money too.

"I had neighbors and friends that were banging my door down when they found out we were milking the cow," she said. "They wanted to purchase her milk and were offering up to \$10 a gallon. And I'm like 'good lord!' This is nuts! And then I learned about the health benefits associated with raw milk."

Barber's family lives on a farm with horses and pastures in Lancaster, Va. She soon found out that although the business of raw milk can be lucrative, it is also illegal in the state of Virginia. Barber's website states that "raw milk in Virginia is more illegal than alcohol, tobacco or fire arms."

It was because of this Barber teamed up with other small farmers to create the group "Virginia Food Freedom". The group's goal is to help small farmers be able to expand their markets and provide more food options to their neighbors.

Virginia Food Freedom has created a bill

that will be introduced to a Virginia State Legislature subcommittee in January. House Bill 1290, or The Virginia Food Freedom Act, would allow the sale of locally grown foods and raw milk by small farmers to consumers without restrictions. All the food would need is a label stating who produced it, where it's from, all the ingredients and a note stating that it was not government inspected.

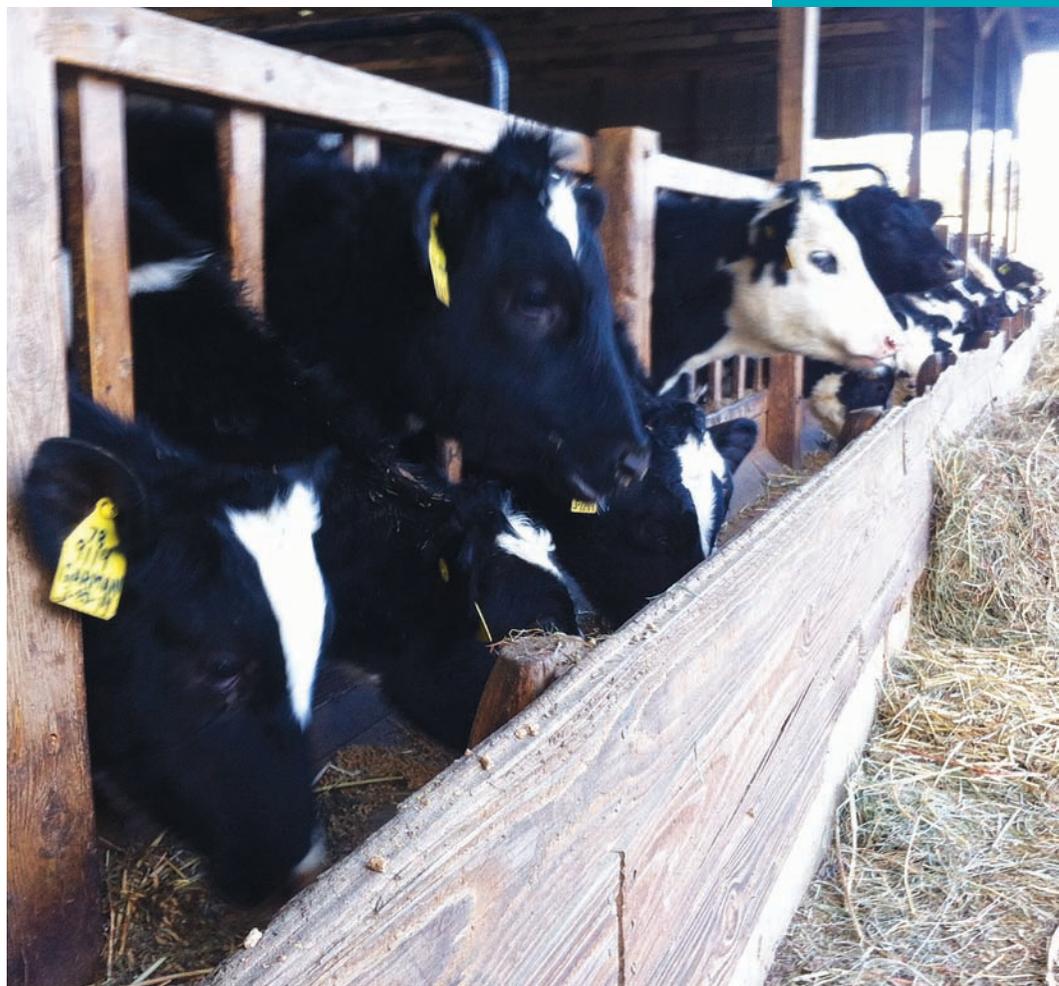
They first created a petition to get the Virginia Food Freedom Act passed last January and within five days they had acquired more than 5,000 signatures. The petition now stands at close to 9,000 signatures.

"Right now it is legal in Virginia to process, meaning slaughter and butcher chickens and package it up and sell it to your neighbor, but

what's not legal is turning that chicken into a chicken pot pie with the very vegetables that you grow in your own backyard," Barber said. "So essentially we would be allowed to do that with this law, and that's what we're looking forward to do."

But it's not just for farmers living out in the country with acres of farm land. Barber says the beauty of the bill is that it is inclusive of everyone, even those living in the city.

"They can purchase their food from local farmers markets or they can even grow them in their own back yards," she said. "Whether they have a postage stamp townhouse or an apartment with some herbs on a window sill, they still have the ability to make things in their very





Cows get ready for their afternoon milking at Cave Hill Dairy Farm in Botetourt.

own kitchen and sell them to their neighbors.”

The subcommittee will have eight members, and Barber is hoping the group can have as many people at that subcommittee meeting as possible to continue to push the bill along through the legislature.

It all comes back to when Barber’s family first purchased Maybelline, and the economic benefits that cow provided for her family. She hopes the bill will allow other small

farmers to have greater economic benefits for the food they produce, as well as let consumers have full freedom to choose where their food comes from with no restrictions.

“Pass that bill and come back to our farms so we can enjoy our families and the land and make some money and stay on our land,” Barber said. 

Information for Virginia Food Freedom can be found at www.VirginiaFoodFreedom.org.

Read the FRONT online
vbFRONT.com

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

Three little words >

Watch what happens when someone picks a cat up that doesn't want to be picked up. What that person thought was such an adorable looking, cuddly, soft, little fur ball suddenly becomes a beast, growling and stiffening up. The ears go back and the claws come out. Not very endearing. More often than not, we hear two words from the unfortunate cat holder:

Be nice!

Brother and sister fighting in the back seat of the car. Mom can't separate them or send them to their rooms as she's driving; so her only recourse is to shout a simple command:

Be nice!

Animal lovers and mothers want the same thing: creatures that get along with one another. A reasonable expectation? We all want that.

Or do we?

Sometimes I think our schools, our churches, and our businesses have forgotten the power of those two little words. Maybe we need a refresher course: Be Nice 101.

If a student was prepared to be nice, schools wouldn't have to complicate the task with layers upon layers of gender studies and zero-tolerance policies.

If a congregant was encouraged to be nice, churches wouldn't have to manage the mission with compulsory handshake greeting sessions and formulated outreach campaigns.

If an employee was trained to be nice, companies wouldn't have to institutionalize the objective with diversity initiatives and community service incentives.

All of these programs are... well... nice.

It's just a shame it takes so many committees and campaigns and pages in manuals to accomplish what's summed up in two little words.

Our world has more "not nice" than it needs right now. I'm naive enough to believe improvement and a change in direction is possible from one individual being nice—than a massive, orchestrated campaign.

I guess I just discovered my New Year's resolution.

I'll try to be nice.

Happy New Year. 🍷



On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
The Golden Rule is simple; applying it seems more complicated than it should.

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

Recalling greatness

Visions of Virginia Military Institute's football legacy often begin and end with frustration. Coach John McKenna belies that image. For 13 years during the late 1950s and through the '60s, he brought not only respectability to the Keydets, but also an undefeated season (1957), NFL draft picks (think Pete Johnson of Roanoke among others) and national respectability.

Best Regrets: VMI's John McKenna and the Lost Age of College Football (VMI Keydette Club) is a recollection of the McKenna era by noted sportswriters Roland Lazenby and Mike Ashley. Lazenby, who lives in Roanoke, has the current hot-selling *Michael Jordan: The Life and Ashley, who was raised in the Star City*, is a Washington D.C. writer of note. Lazenby actually played football as a freshman at VMI, following the McKenna era and has included a chapter near the end of the book on Coach Bob Thalman's successful tenure there.

This is a book primarily aimed at VMI alumni, but it is a good read about a by-gone era by two excellent writers. Lazenby says Ashley did the bulk of the writing, but the book is entertaining and informative throughout. McKenna was part of a dying breed, a taskmaster who loved his players and who elicited fear, respect and love from them.

—Dan Smith

Red planet adventures

Andy Weir's *The Martian* is a combination of classic science fiction like Ray Bradbury's stories and survivor tales like Robinson Crusoe and Tom Hank's *Cast Away*.

In the near future, the U.S. successfully lands a manned spacecraft on Mars with the intention of having six astronauts live on the surface for

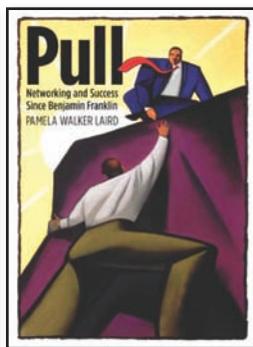
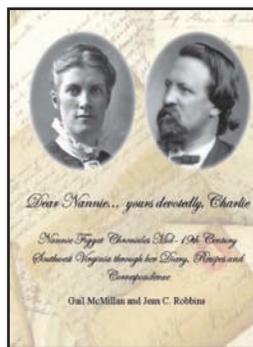
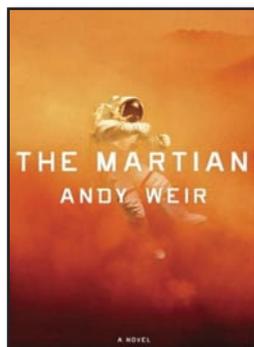
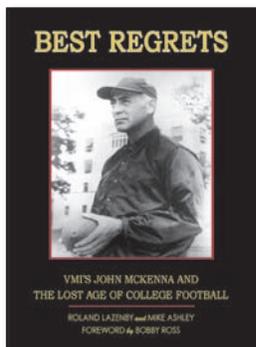
several weeks. Not long after the team lands and sets up its habitat, a massive wind storm lifts the communications antenna and slams it into one of the astronauts. The remaining five assume he is dead and leave the surface immediately. The only problem is, he isn't dead. Stranded, Mark Watney, the only botanist on the team, must use his wits to let Earth know he's alive. More important, he has to stay alive until he can be rescued. Watney uses his wits and his vast onboard computer library to figure out where the next Mars landing will occur, rig up a Rube Goldberg-style rover and decide how to travel many kilometers to the site which has been provisioned in advance of the landing. Using science and math to his advantage, Weir makes the science both thrilling and understandable. Watney has a wonderful voice, from the opening line ("I'm pretty much f**ked.") until the last page, readers will rejoice in the freshness of Watney's perspective, ride beside him over every dusty pebble, learn why a botanist would be on Mars, and keep fingers crossed that he is rescued.

I recommend this book for anyone who likes adventure stories with a gritty, dusty twist. *The Martian* won the Goodreads 2014 readers' choice award for science fiction.

—Betsy Ashton

From food to fugitive

Dear Nannie... yours devotedly, Charlie by Gail McMillan and Jean C. Robbins is a superb book that almost defies reviewing. First of all, it's a compilation of handwritten recipes by Nannie Figgat and her mother, living in Fincastle and Lexington about the time of the Civil War. So you can see what and how folks ate. Plus a few selected recipes have been updated for a reader to use, with modern measurements



and directions. Back then, most home cooks would know how to make these items and only need some reminder about ingredients, such as for Confederate Sauce or Sally Lunn Tea Cakes.

Then, the love story between Nannie and her Charlie comes out, with the texts of their correspondence before they married, and then some from while he was serving with the Confederate army. You follow the family in her diary as their children were born and sometimes lost to disease.

But the shocker comes at the end. Actual newspaper clippings tell the story of how the devoted Charlie absconded with bonds and cash from the Lexington bank where he was a trusted cashier, never to be heard from again. News of his death did reach her eventually. Poor widow Nannie had to leave her home and move to Roanoke with her children, where she eventually ran a fancy grocery store. Its advertisements show the difference between the earlier foods made from scratch at home and some "store bought" items years after the war.

You follow the writers McMillan of Virginia Tech and Botetourt resident Robbins as they discovered these letters and recipes, to put together the Figgatts' lives. Altogether, a volume of new and fascinating insight into the period and its people.

The publisher, the Botetourt County Historical Society, offers the book for sale only at the society's museum in Fincastle. Cost is \$50.00 if you go by the museum in Fincastle next to the courthouse (open 7 days a week). For mail order, send your check to P O Box 468, Fincastle VA 24090, and include \$7.00 for shipping for each copy. For further information, (540) 473-8394.

—Priscilla Richardson

Not your own bootstraps

If you subscribe to the notion of that oft repeated mantra that "success is all about who you know," then *Pull: Networking and Success since Benjamin Franklin* (Harvard University Press; 2006) offers all the confirmation and evidence you would ever need. The value of social capital simply cannot be overrated, according to author Pamela Walker Laird. You can pickpocket all the examples you want from historical figures you may have erroneously thought were self-made men. Their achievements—much like the not so distant campaign rhetoric that affirmed "you didn't build that"—were the end results of effective networking. Hands shaking hands. And hands pulling one another along the way.

You can't dispute the premise of this book. Most thinking people know success doesn't bubble up out of an abyss. But in 439 pages, Laird is not going to leave out the other side of the equation. She spends adequate time in identifying those who weren't pulled. Those who didn't have social capital. Those who could have contributed, but were pushed away due to injustice and discrimination.

Is *Pull* just a historical study? A diatribe against inequality? An unrealistic view of how the world works? Or a propaganda piece for reshaping the system? I'm not going to pull you into that discussion right now. Read the book.

—Tom Field

(The reviewers: Dan Smith is a writer and former FRONT editor; Betsy Ashton is the author of *Mad Max Unintended Consequences* and president of the Virginia Writers Club; Priscilla Richardson is the author of *Speak Don't Freak: Six Secrets of Mastering the Fear of Speaking*; Tom Field is a marketing professional, creative director, and publisher of FRONT.)



ID check >

The **Market Gallery** in downtown Roanoke has opened its "Identity" show, running through February 28, and featuring one hundred artists and a wide variety of media on 9 by 12-inch panels; examples above.



New dressing >

The former Pino Gelato in The Shoppes at West Village on Electric Road has transformed into a new entity, **Oliveto Cafe**, an extension of Oliveto Artisan Oils and Vinegars.

Platelet count >

In December, the **American Red Cross** / Appalachian Blood Services Region recognized local platelet donor Cecil Boone of Roanoke County; the 84-year-old contributed his 500th platelet donation.



Courtesy of American Red Cross



Family Service of Roanoke Valley's Teen Outreach Program

Serving family >

The 2014 Family Volunteer Day with **Family Service** was held Saturday, Nov. 22; Maxine Regland with granddaughter Asia were among the volunteers who put together comfort packages for elderly residents at Villages at Lincoln community in Roanoke.

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

Samuel Campbell has been named to First Community Bank board of directors.

Rick Webster has been appointed Southwest Virginia regional president of Union First Market Bank.

LEGAL FRONT

Elizabeth Dillon has been confirmed for a federal judge seat on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia.



Johnson



Murchison

Joshua Johnson has been appointed president and **Abigail Murchison** an officer of the Federal Bar Association's Roanoke chapter.

Nicole Poltash and **Scott Stephenson** have joined as attorneys at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore.



Poltash



Stephenson

WELLNESS FRONT

Christopher Turnbull has joined Carilion as senior consultant for public relations.

Jeanne Armentrout, RN, MSN, has been appointed to the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Scott Sink of Blacksburg was elected to a second two-year term as vice president of the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation.

Clay White has joined as systems engineer at PNS.

Joe Meredith, Ph.D., president of Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center was presented with the Career Achievement Award by the Association

of University Research Parks (AURP).

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Susan Roberts has joined as assistant property manager at Waldvogel Commercial Properties.

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



Coffey



Kingery

Vic Coffey has been named president of Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors (RVAR); **Betty Kingery** won Realtor of the Year Award and **Jerry Cohen** won Community Service Award at RVAR.

Danielle Poe has joined in commercial and residential sales and leasing, including Charter Hall at Roanoke City Market Building at Hall Associates.

Court Rosen has joined as vice president

of strategic initiatives at Smith/Packett Med-Com.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT

Aaron Kelderhouse has been promoted to creative director at B2C Enterprises.

Captains **Rick and Nancy Ellet**, co-owners of Sea Tow Smith Mountain Lake, received the first-ever Sea Tow Foundation Hero Award by Sea Tow Foundation.



Basham

Jeremy Basham has joined as interactive designer at Firefli digital media agency.

EDUCATION FRONT

Debbie Stump has been promoted director of major gifts and education state tax credits at Roanoke Catholic School.

Dr. Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, DO has been appointed president of Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM).

Virginia Tech has announced that: **Dr. João Soares** joined



Soares



Santos



Priya



Sands

Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine as assistant professor of anesthesiology; **Dr. Marcos Santos** joined as clinical instructor of large animal surgery; **Shashank Priya** named Robert E. Hord Jr. Mechanical Engineering Professor; **Laura Sands** joined Center for Gerontology; **Tracee de Hahn** named director of alumni relations for College of Architecture



White



Harris

and Urban Studies; **Pamela White** named executive director of equity and access; **Carolyn Harris** named director of academic advising for College of Architecture and Urban Studies; **Eleanor Nelsen** named communications manager for Critical Technology and Applied Science; **Michael Nolan** received Master Teacher Award at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine; and **Devi Parikh** of Bradley Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering received nearly \$1 million Allen Distinguished Investigator Award for teaching "common sense" in image analysis.

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.

CULTURE FRONT



Hentschel

Linda Hentschel has been appointed inaugural chief operating officer at DePaul Community Resources.

Shannon Cavendish has been named director of development for the Roanoke Heart Ball and Roanoke Go Red for Women Luncheon.

Ellen Crandell, Chris Whisnant, Heather Neff, Paul Economy, and Terry O'Shaughnessy were elected new board members of Greater Blue Ridge Chapter of Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF).

Jeffrey and Roxanne Marks received the 2014 Maestro Award by the board of trustees of Opera Roanoke.

Pamela Irving of Feeding America Southwest Virginia, has been named a member

of Commonwealth Council on Bridging the Nutritional Divide.

MUNICIPAL FRONTS

Kevin Boggess has been appointed Chief of Police and **Mike Crawley** has been appointed Deputy Chief for the City of Salem.

Melvin Sanders has been promoted to Deputy Chief of Roanoke Fire-EMS.

Thomas Gates has been appointed County Administrator for Roanoke County Board of Supervisors.

OTHER FRONTS

Frances Brennan Rice, World War II Army nurse veteran, received the French Legion of Honor in the rank of Knight at a ceremony at Warm Hearth Village in Blacksburg.

Erica Musyt has joined as national sales manager at Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Compiled by Tom Field

FRONT Notes



South Harbour Entrance

Lake life

South Harbour, a new residential community is opening at the former Lakewatch Club property off Scruggs Road at Smith Mountain Lake; a multi-owned site by The Willard Companies, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, and the Amos Estate.

Stage right

Mill Mountain Theatre is upgrading its sound and lighting systems with a complete replacement on its Trinkle Main Stage; tapping into a combination of over \$120,000 in recent grants and donations.

Suit altered

Thompson's Men's Clothing Store has moved to 351 E. Third Street in Salem; a change from its earlier announcement that it was closing.

Natural chemistry

DanChem Technologies and Innovations of Danville has announced a new manufacturing

partnership with Rivertop Renewables.

City park award

Roanoke's **Elmwood Park** received the Best New Renovation/Addition Award at the annual conference of Virginia Recreation and Park Society; the new amphitheater and its design components were cited.

Bare compensation

Gold & Silver, a private club on Franklin Road in Roanoke has been sued by three exotic dancers over a wage and employee versus contractor dispute.

Cookies at (online) door

For the first time in history, the Girl Scouts are selling its popular cookies online; **Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline** is deploying the platform at the first of January, accessible at www.gsvsc.org/cookiesale.

Opened and shared

NuSpark's **Follow My Vote**, an open source

platform to ensure transparency in election processes, has moved into a shared office space at Virginia Tech's Corporate Research Center with BitShares.

Cleaner water

The **Town of Altavista** and the **Institute for Advanced Learning and Research** are considering a \$36,000 proposal to remediate contaminants in the town's overflow pond.

Battle of band

Virginia Tech's eCorridors program has launched an **Accelerate Virginia** internet connection evaluation for residents in the New River Valley; the two-minute test at www.acceleratevirginia.org/speedtest.

Kitchen build out

LEAP for Local Foods received a \$100,000 grant from Roanoke Women's Foundation to build a community kitchen inside the West End neighborhood Freedom First Credit Union branch; serving

as a business incubator and supplemental support program for the local food market.

Banked together

Shareholders have endorsed a planned merger of **Franklin Community Bank** in Rocky Mount and its parent company into American National Bankshares Inc. of Danville.

Vet border crossing

The **Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine** at Virginia Tech has moved its Center for Public and Corporate Veterinary Medicine from College Park, Maryland, to Blacksburg.

Brazilian focus

Foundation for Roanoke Valley awarded a \$40,000 grant to Taubman Museum of Art to underwrite the Brazilian photographer artist Vik Muniz exhibit as part of the Arts & Culture Initiative.

Calling 300 in Stuart

The Results Companies in Stuart, a multilingual call center, is expanding its workforce, announcing the hiring of 300 new employees.

Transformed

Virginia Transformer Corporation has announced a strategic alliance with Caravels, a company that also

announced its agreement to purchase Efacec Power Transformer; the move is expected to produce the nation's second largest transformer business (by capacity and size) according to company information.

Bigger bank

First National Bank is expanding its headquarters in Lynchburg with the construction of a four-story building on Odd Fellows Road; the bank also has headquarters in Altavista.

Cleaner work

The **Volvo truck assembly plant** in Dublin has completed its conversion of electrical power to a methane gas system, fueled by 13 landfills in the region; the company reports a total conversion, carbon-neutral output.

Kicking it

Soccer Shots has been named the number one children's fitness franchise in America by Entrepreneur Magazine; Soccer Shots of Southwest Virginia is offering winter training and support to coaches, players and teams.

Lab explosion

CoLab (often referred to as Grandin CoLab) entrepreneurial incubator has expanding its operation to an additional

location on Kirk Ave in downtown Roanoke (former Kirk Avenue Music Hall).

Orange gym

Planet Fitness is opening at the Orange Avenue and King Street interchange in Roanoke; constructing a 35,000 square-foot facility.

Moving kid stuff

Once Upon a Child in Roanoke has moved to Madison Square Shopping Center on Electric Road.

Losing loosies

The Virginia State Crime Commission has endorsed **licensing of cigarette retailers** as a way to combat illegal trafficking; proposing to the General Assembly the enforcement duties to ABC agents.

Moving beer

Roanoke Railhouse Brewing Co. has moved and reopened its tasting room to a 3,000 square-foot facility at 3106 Franklin Road.

Bridges rock

The Bridges, the new development community at the foot of Mill Mountain in Roanoke, will soon include a concert and

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.

events venue; entitled **The River Stage at the Bridges.**

Sunnyside

Scrambled, an all day, late night breakfast diner, has opened in the Roanoke City Market Building.

Associating

Businesses on **Brambleton** Avenue, which spans both Roanoke County and Roanoke City, have planned the formation of a new merchant's association.

Tee up

The Westlake golf resort has transitioned from a semi-private golf course and country club to a full public course.

New fit name

Carilion Wellness is the new name of the fitness facility consortium known as the Roanoke and Botetourt Athletic Clubs, RAC Xpress, FIT Rx and FIT Rx 90 programs.

Tiny sweet shop

Dolce Diva Gourmet Baked Goods has opened a cupcake shop at 203 Roanoke Blvd. in Salem.

Snack machine

Monogram Food Solutions in Henry County is expanding its meat snacks production and intends to hire 200 new jobs.

Chipped award

Community Housing Partners (CHP) was named nonprofit of the year by the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce.

Hokie march

Virginia Tech Marching Virginians is getting a new \$4.75 million practice and storage facility, currently under construction.

Compiled by Tom Field

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



Lucas Still

Turning the tables >

Executive Summary:

Lucas Still and Evernaut tablets are poised to reinvigorate the dining industry.

By Whitney Puckett

Everyone has moments when you think, “someone should make a thing for that.” But only the “someones” who actually get up and design “the thing” earn the title of *inventor*. And only those who find a way to turn ideas into a profit making business earn the title of *entrepreneur*.

Lucas Still is both.

The 28-year-old, married, father of two has just launched his local technology company, Evernaut, at Virginia Tech’s Corporate Research Center; and what began ten years ago as a simple idea for improved customer service has finally taken off into reality.

Evernaut promises to reinvigorate the local restaurant industry with their line specialized dining tablets while providing targeted advertising space for local businesses.

Check, please

Evernaut’s genesis began more than a decade ago when Still was in high school. He, like so many others, became anxious to get in contact with his server and settle a bill or ask for a refill, and he wondered if someone could just “make a button for that.” From there, the idea for Evernaut was born.

As an industrial and systems engineering student at Virginia Tech, Still worked to develop, a small call-button that could sit tabletop. But the call-button technology didn’t provide enough function, so Still morphed it into a tablet form and added a digital menu among a host of other features.

In 2011, branding and other legal matters for Evernaut were established, and from December of 2013 to June of 2014, Still worked non-stop to finish developing the software and hard product.

As of August 18, 2014, Evernaut tablets went live at the Bull & Bones Restaurant in Radford, VA. One week later, Frank’s Bar at 622 North in Blacksburg also started handing out tablets to their customers.

New menu

Fifteen years ago, computer tablet technology was still the stuff of Star Trek. Now, however, tablets are so common that they are replacing or enhancing some of our most common items. One such item is the restaurant menu.

Tablet use in the dining industry has become quite en vogue. Some restaurants will use them exclusively for entertainment

purposes, while others may only use one or two per table as a way of encouraging specialty food orders, like cocktails or desserts.

Evernaut tablets, however, are designed with a broader use in mind, one that seeks to maximize upselling, customer satisfaction, and flexibility.

There is no limit on the number of tablets a restaurant can utilize. The tablets are available on lease to restaurants and bars for a \$99/mo. fee, and Still encourages restaurateurs to take advantage of the technology, using the tablets as a total digital replacement for their paper menus, both food and cocktail.

Another advantage is that the menus may also contain pictures or videos, which may aid restaurateurs in the upselling of specialty items, appetizers, desserts, and alcoholic beverages.

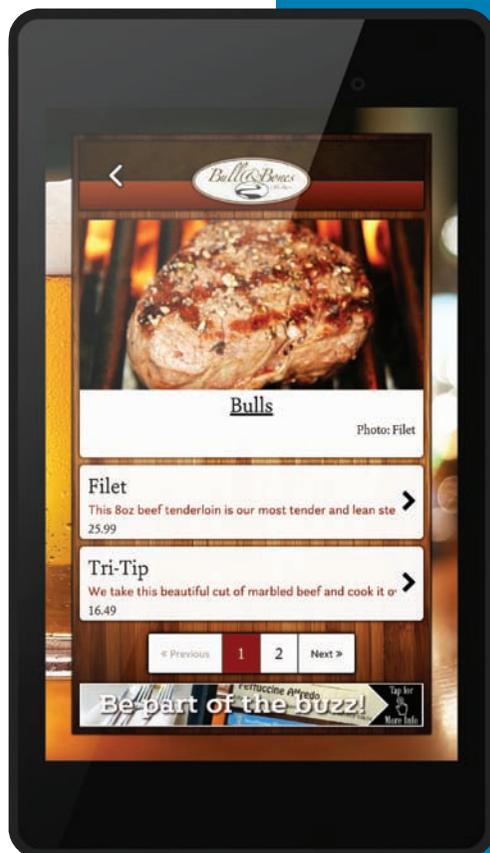
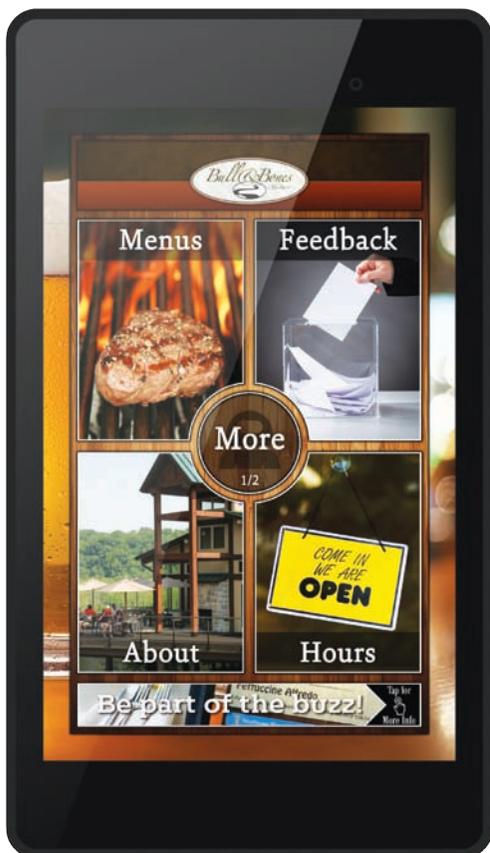
But, one thing that Evernaut tablets won't do is take customer orders. Still is insistent

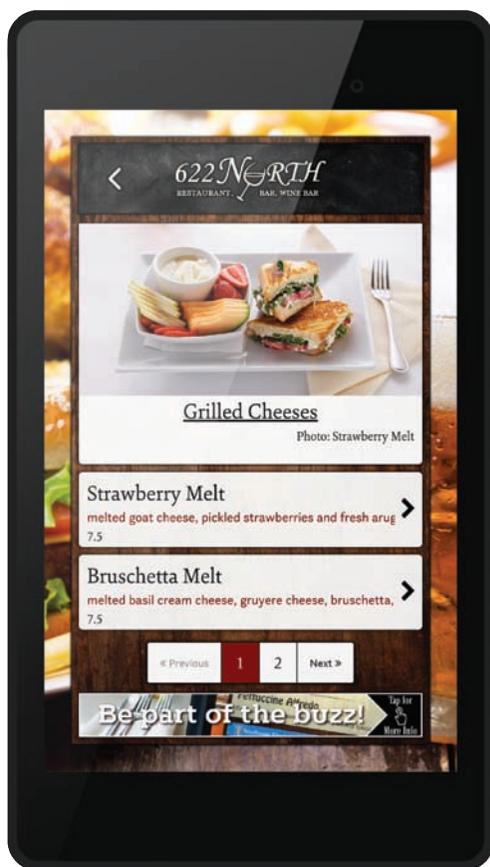
In Brief

Name:	Lucas Still
Age:	28
Hometown:	Radford, VA
Education:	Va. Tech – Industrial & Systems Engineering
Family:	wife - Miranda, son – Carter (2 years old), daughter – Riley (6 months old)
Hobbies/ Interests:	spending time with his kids; hiking/walking
Website:	www.evernaut.com

on this principle, saying, "I don't want it to take away the jobs of the wait staff, their abilities as servers, or the social experience of dining out with friends."

Evernaut also provides an online dashboard space where restaurant owners and managers can instantly customize their tablets'





contents. Features like the “Call Server” button can be turned off and on, and menus can be modified whenever the need arises. This ability for clients to manage and update their tablets in real time is a major selling point for Still.

“Being able to keep up with market pricing, especially for product like beef, is a huge benefit to restaurants who would normally have to reprint their menus with each change in the market,” notes Stills.

Additionally, customers have the option of playing a trivia game, providing customer feedback, browsing job postings from local businesses, reviewing the restaurant’s upcoming events, and of course, calling their server whenever they are needed. This keeps the customers interested in the tablet throughout the meal, which Evernaut utilizes to the other end of the business – local business advertising.

Fries with that

The leasing fee that restaurant and bar owners pay for Evernaut tablets is not the core of the company’s cost-revenue model. That comes primarily from ad sales generated

from local businesses seeking to use Evernaut’s targeted client base to their advantage.

At the bottom of each Evernaut tablet home page, there is a small banner ad section that displays the at-a-glance advertising of local businesses.

Unlike the online pop-up ads that most of us are used to, these banner ads are intentionally designed to be unobtrusive. “One of the core foundations is that I’ve been wanting to design something that I would use. And if there’s one single pop-up, I don’t want to use it,” promises Still.

Advertisers are not paying “by the click.” Their monthly fee is assessed at 3 cents for each time their ad is viewed, whether the customer engages with the full add or not. They also have the option of posting jobs, internships, and co-ops at 49 cents each.

To manage their advertising budget and coverage, advertisers are also given an online dashboard where they can control many aspects of their advertising and job postings, from specifying which restaurants and bars their ads appear in to determining a price ceiling for the month.

There is also a built in DIY advertising platform, which allows advertisers to build their own ads using prefabricated templates. The advantage, of course, is that advertisers "...never get stuck with an ad that isn't exactly what you want it to be. Your advertisements can be updated every business day."

For a small or start-up business, the opportunity to circumvent the hassle of hiring graphic artists or marketing firms is obviously huge. But really, any business can reap the benefits of utilizing targeted digital marketing that reaches customers at times when they are relaxed and receptive.

Coming soon

In addition to the two original launch locations, Evernaut tablets are coming soon to many local area restaurants,

including Sharkey's, 622 North Restaurant, and Cabo Fish Taco in Blacksburg and Carlos's Brazilian Restaurant in Roanoke.

What does the future hold for Evernaut? When asked what his future goals are for the company, Still responded that he would like to see Evernaut tablets in 20-30 additional locations around the Roanoke and New River Valleys in the next year, and with any luck, he hopes to branch Evernaut services out to surrounding Virginia areas and neighboring states in the next five years.

Evernaut is one of those ideas that makes the inventor and entrepreneur in all of us wish we had thought of that, but thanks to the ambition and endurance of Lucas Still, many local businesses can benefit from Evernaut tablets being placed in restaurants and bars around our community. 

Roanoke Regional Writers Conference VIII

**January 23–24, 2015
Hollins University / Roanoke, VA**

**Friday Evening Reception, Introduction & Presentation > 6:15pm
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Generators are like air conditioners were in the late 60s and early 70s... I didn't even know what an air conditioner was when I was growing up

— Page 21

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