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THE SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEUR
CHAMPION IN VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE

FREE • ISSUE 80 • MAY 2015

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Becca Parish,
Organize It Roanoke

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WELCOME to the FRONT

Come on, just admit it. You brush and floss your teeth a little better than usual on the morning you have a dentist appointment. We've never used a cleaning service at our home, but I know if I were to tell my wife I have one coming by, she would run around like a mad woman, "pre" cleaning everything before they arrive. Most of us don't like to be engaged or even seen by others when we are in a messy or disorganized state.

Of course, you could just hide those bad areas.

That's what we did at the ol' FRONT studio when our three professional organizers dropped by for the interview in this month's FRONTcover story. They didn't cross the threshold into my personal office, because any number of props or implements could have fallen on them. And we certainly didn't invite them to our storage and second work area upstairs. Even the smartphone GPS goes berserk up there. "Make a U-turn, now! Re-Calculating! Re-Calculating!" she screams, the auto voice seeming to have a louder volume and human personality for the first time.

A professional organizer can be as valuable and comforting as a masseuse, I think. And for many of us, her services wouldn't just be a perk. It could be a matter of safety. Or sanity.


Tom Field



The scary place: FRONT upstairs office.
Is that an overhead projector in there?



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Your Space

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MAY



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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



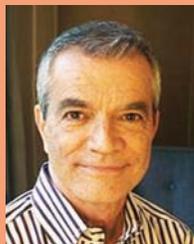
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Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 38.

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Nicholas C. Conte Woods Rogers (Legal)
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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.

“”
In person, most comments are helpful... even when expressing doubt or disagreement — Page 36

“”
A cash bar?
Oh my. Very bad form

— Page 21

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ORGANIZING

Your Space

"Your office is a mess."

"Boy, your office looks about like mine."

"Somebody's been busy."

"How do you keep your office so neat and orderly?"

People notice the condition of an office. It's a funny thing. The greatest reactions are almost always reserved for one of two situations: you step into an office that's very well-organized — or one that is completely disorganized.

One could argue that both offices have character. But the state of your office certainly affects everything from your productivity and efficiency, to your mood. And should your office accept visitors or clients, the statement is amplified even more for them.

According to a recent post by David Caolo at unclutterer.com, the benefits of being organized cover everything from less stress, more relaxation, more time with family, better preparation for the unexpected or overwhelming activities, greater productivity, and even

The Office Organizer >

Executive Summary:

It's that time of year (maybe it's always that time of year); when we clean up and straighten out and de-clutter our offices. Someone who's tackled messy—and knows the benefits of pristine—can help: the professional office organizer.

By Tom Field



TIP: If room allows, separate your work station or desk from other desks or tables where you plan or engage others.

improved health. On the flipside, the disorganized individual is usually characterized with the exact opposite attributes. Extremely disorganized people can cross over the line from a “packrat” to a hoarder, now classified as an Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) by some measures and in some instances. Gregory Jantz, PhD, says “hoarding is always accompanied by varying levels of anxiety and sometimes develops alongside other mental illnesses such as dementia and schizophrenia” in the September 2014 edition of Psychology Today.

But beyond the psychological reasons affecting the state of one’s office, the effort to keep a well-organized, efficient, and productive interior environment is real. For some, it seems to be a regular, ongoing, daunting task [*there goes Max, cleaning out his office again*]; while others appear to do very little, while maintaining the perfect desk, nary a paper in sight, and furniture configured and aligned with military precision [*have you ever noticed Mary’s stapler always sits*

12 questions to ask before hiring your professional organizer >

1. What kinds of organizing projects do you do?
2. Who is your typical/usual client?
3. What services do you specialize in?
4. Do you have any training or hold any certifications in organizing or related areas (chronic disorganization, coaching, feng shui, interior design, etc.)?
5. Can you describe your organizing process/approach (consulting, coaching, hands-on, team organizing, seminars/workshops, etc.) and describe a typical working session?
6. How long have you been in the organizing business?
7. Will I work directly with you, or will you assign an employee and/or subcontractor?
8. What is your fee structure?
9. Do you work with a written contract?
10. What is your cancellation policy?
11. Can you provide references?
12. I have tried to get organized before. How will this be different?

(SOURCE: Information from the National Association of Professional Organizers)



there, pointed in the exact same direction?]. Still others have their roller coaster experience, where the office is neat and clean at some times, while messier at others. You notice them cleaning up and throwing out clutter at distinct times, such as end of year, or “Spring Cleaning” time, or not unlike the “nesting” instincts in the animal world, at periodic intervals you can’t even define.

Professional office organizers deal with people who keep their offices in all sorts of states and conditions. The extremes range from truly desperate clients who are about to be buried under the weight of all the “junk” around them, to the person who realizes an immediate need to de-clutter to keep him sane for awhile (until it piles back up again), to the *anal retentive* manager who insists on instilling a system so that not a speck of clutter or unnecessary object appears anywhere within eyesight in his offices.

In our region, professional organizers are not very common. There are only about five businesses claiming to offer the service, and not all of those are dedicated full time to the actual activity of organizing. Additionally, none are solely in the business of serving commercial sites; in fact all of them primarily rely on residential and individual accounts.

Whether your vocation has you in a multi-office institutional facility or yours is a home office in the attic above your garage, our professional organizers are ready to serve. A visit with three of them proved that an organizer has her own unique approach and disposition. Each was very different from the other. Oh, there was one common thing we could identify with all three: a Sharpie pen.

TIP: For physical files and paper you have to retrieve regularly—and add to—create a system that allows space to expand.

TIP: One excellent solution for filing material; accessible, but tucked away from common areas or client (even employee) traffic.



Move along now

Becca is upbeat. Moving quickly from point A to point B, even in a single room, she's the embodiment of energy and kinetic spirit. Owner of Organize It Roanoke, Becca's professional organizing services are often tied to those life changing moments involving real estate. Moving in. Moving out. Downsizing. Transitioning a senior. Or sometimes, just

Lists

cleaning up and reconfiguring your living or working space.

"I love working with people at an important time of their life," Becca says. "It's nice knowing I am helping them and understanding their needs."

Her top tips for getting organized?

"Always make lists. Have a plan. Do a little bit at a time, and knock it out."

Some people admit they keep their space piled up, and it's part of "who they are" and they know where everything is... but a regimented practice of putting material in designated places systematically saves an enormous amount of time.



COVER STORY



Becca says it's important to have a start date and a finish date, with a structure and a goal. Time management is essential.

"When you have a schedule [for organizing] and set a time for it, you're going to feel accomplished as you complete the tasks. A lot of times, people are embarrassed that I might think they're lazy or dirty... but that's not the case. You simply have to make time to stay organized.

"Every job is a custom job," Becca says. No two projects are the same. "This weekend, I was in a dumpster," she says, candidly.

She lights up when talking about various jobs.

"I was in a house where the couple had



TIP: Even creative positions or offices requiring a lot of resources can improve efficiency and productivity by utilizing cabinetry and shelving and racks and storage systems, instead of piling materials all around the work station.

lived there since the 1960s; and you can't help but collect a lot of things when you're in one place for so long—particularly when it's a 6,000-square-foot home."

Since jobs can vary so much, Organize It Roanoke services are priced per project, or for the total job. For shorter gigs or partial services, her hourly rate is \$45.

"One of my favorite comments is from a customer in Kentucky, where we were moving an elderly relative, and of course that alone is a stressful environment. She said, 'if you don't have kids [to help you out], the next best thing is to have a Becca.'"



Organize It Roanoke
540-797-1922
OrganizeItRoanoke.com
Becca Parish

Attention-hut

Carol is attentive. Orderly and focused, at first, you might think you're under the watch of a librarian. To set guidelines and rules and establish systems that are more likely to keep you on track, Carol appears to have the competencies to make that happen. Her approach to the services she provides is as much a mission to accomplish as anything else. She's dedicated to knowing her business as well, and is in fact currently pursuing additional education and professional development, even as she intends to refine her own business model and scope of services.

"I enjoy helping people where they are 'now' in their organizational changes; helping them work toward their goals by developing new systems, routines, habits. It is truly fulfilling for both of us to see how having a clutter-free office

at home or at work helps to lower their stress levels in all areas of their lives.

Carol calls her clients her “folks,” both young and old, and says they need “one-on-one, non-judgmental support in figuring out how to eliminate and maintain clutter in their space.”

“I worked with a beautiful woman for two years before she passed away,” Carol recalls. “With her courage and determination, we got her papers and things under control. She was able to remain in her independent living apartment. I helped her maintain her files when she was no longer physically able to navigate easily in her office. She was proud to admit she had changed her habits, and her family was relieved to know her important papers were in order during the difficult time of their loved one’s passing.”

which professional organizer is right for you? >

Your relationship with a professional organizer will be a very personal one. An experienced professional organizer will ask a lot of questions about you, your work style, what you are looking for, and the issues you believe have thwarted your best attempts to get organized in the past. They want to get to know you, understand your objectives, and determine whether they will be a good fit for you. It is in your best interest to be as candid and clear as possible about your needs and what you want to achieve.

Avoid choosing a professional organizer strictly by price. Instead, **focus on finding an organizer with a personality and skill set that matches your needs.** That person is most likely to deliver the greatest value by achieving the results you desire in the shortest amount of time.

Also keep in mind that your choice of a professional organizer is not irreversible. Professional organizers should be nonjudgmental, encouraging, and supportive. They should be good listeners and recommend a variety of suggestions, alternatives, and solutions to create solutions that work best for you. If you begin working with a professional organizer and decide along the way that you are not comfortable with his or her particular style, be sure to let the organizer know how you feel. You are rarely under obligation to continue the relationship. More than likely, he or she will be happy to recommend a colleague.

Ultimately, the “right choice” for you will be the person who has the expertise, skill set, and personality that best suit you and your goals.

(SOURCE: Information from the National Association of Professional Organizers)

Carol's services are comprehensive, ranging from estate management to relocations to workspace efficiency and time management. She's also a Notary Public and a certified member of National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO).

Carol's top tips?

Routine

"Begin today to de-clutter. No more procrastination! Believe in yourself and the process. Have fun with getting your things in order. Get enough sleep, eat healthy food, stay positive. Never, never give up!"



Jensen Services
540-529-8573
JensenServicesLLC.com
Carol Jane Jensen

Calm over chaos

Ann is passionate. The license plate on her car reads "OGNIZ 4U" and she carries a bag with all her organizing implements with the allegiance of a foot soldier and his field pack. Her website, just like her popping "WOW!" company name, is exuberant with its presentation of all lifestyle conditions and promising services and benefits and situational examples. She's so excited to help people, she even had a separate business card designed for her senior market, with a toned down look and message, to emphasize the fact that she also brings "calmness" to her clients.

Many of her clients are busy people, Ann says. "There's no reason you shouldn't be able to get out the door more efficiently and with less stress," she states.

"I personally relate to all of clients, because I have been in similar situations in the past," Ann continues. "I moved 12 times in 20 years, and it was so stressful. I learned from

COVER STORY



firsthand experience how to setup and then pack up a house quickly. I have been through all the difficulties that come with not being organized; but I know that anyone can get his or her home in order with the customized systems I create.

"It's not an easy thing to invite someone into your home to go through your belongings; so I don't take that lightly. I love to see my clients' reactions when they realize what we have accomplished together. I enjoy teaching them techniques to help them stay organized and simplify their lives."

Ann says an organizing system can be the best in the world, but "it's no good if it doesn't work for the client." She also says an initial organizing project may not be enough. "Sometimes, a follow up is needed to evaluate what is working well and what needs to be changed." She helps her clients create accountability that will transform into lasting habits.

WOW Organizing Service offers a free phone consultation to assess needs. Custom quotes are provided, and Ann offers both hourly and packaged sessions.

"Some of the most rewarding experiences are helping

Technique

adult children help their parents to get organized and settled in so that they can enjoy their retirement; whether that means settling elderly parents in their own home or their child's home. Helping someone with an injury or disability get organized is satisfying as well. I get to help them feel safe and love their home. How wonderful is that?"



WOW Organizing Service
540-420-8225
WOWorganizing.com
Ann Custer



TIP: If you feel you must keep papers that others assure you can discard, at least put them in containers and in a storage area away from your productive area. You'll probably never use them, but at least they're out of the way.

COVER STORY



Don't beat yourself up if you have to pile material up for a special, limited time project; but regularly generating pile after pile like this is sure to create confusion and loss of productivity, regardless how many sticky notes you use.



Jeans with a sports coat – how to make it work >

It has become common in recent years to see men pairing jeans with a sports coat for an evening out and even business-related events. Combining casual and dressy in one outfit can be tricky, though, if not done carefully.

Jeans are very casual. The whole point of pairing a jacket with jeans is to dress up the jeans look, making it sharper and more cutting edge. Too often the jeans are worn out and the jacket and shirt look reminiscent of a law office, making the outfit appear disjointed and inappropriate.

It's important to avoid having the top half of your body looking distinctly dressy - and the bottom half looking very casual. Mixing casual and dressy styles and textures throughout the outfit gives the outfit cohesiveness.

For this reason:

- Wear spotless jeans in a dark wash with no topstitching, no noticeable rivets, no pocket flaps or worn-in spots. Stick with a classic cut, without extreme bagginess or too much cling in the thigh and crotch area.
- Avoid wearing the jacket to your best suit. Purchase a sports jacket to wear with separates so you don't wear out your suit jacket, causing a color difference between the matching suit jacket and trousers.
- Select a jacket with some shaping at the waist, making it attractive worn either open or buttoned. The fabric should be casual in texture, as in twill or tweed, not smooth and dressy, like a pinstriped suit jacket. Solid colors are great, but patterns work too.
- You can choose from a variety of shirt colors. An open-collared white shirt tucked into dark jeans and no necktie dresses up the jeans without going too far. Adding a navy blazer would add just the right touch of sophisticated casualness. A colored or patterned dress shirt – or even collarless – completes this casual outfit as well.
- Shoes and belt style are important, too. Going too casual is a big mistake. A dressy leather lace-up shoe or a moccasin in brown or black is in keeping with the jacket and dress shirt. Too-casual shoes ruin the sophistication of the overall outfit.
- If you feel you need a tie, try a knitted necktie or a wool tie. The nubby texture will balance the casual fabric of the jeans.

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

It's not wrong to wear your jeans with a sports coat; but there's certainly a better way to do it.

Okay – now you look great! 📷

Comments? Email Kathy@peacockimage.com

Wedding guests >

The date is set, the invitations are perfect, the wedding and reception venues are spectacular, the dress is drop dead gorgeous, the bridesmaids are beautiful, the groom and the groomsmen are handsome, the officiator is set, and plans are complete for your special day. What are we missing? Well, maybe the guests.

It has been said that weddings today have become entirely about the bride and groom. This writer, who has attended and/or directed hundreds of weddings, would like to offer some observations to the starry-eyed couple (and their parents!).

Consider this. Your nearest and dearest will be assembled, all at once, to celebrate and support you as you start your life together. Some will have traveled great distances (perhaps at great expense) to share in your special day. Think about ways to make them feel cherished, welcomed, and appreciated. Make it less about you, and more about them, and your wedding will be a beautiful memory for everyone.

I will never forget a wedding and reception to which my husband and I were invited in Istanbul. And it wasn't the lavish wedding, held in an incredible old palace in the ancient city, overlooking the Bosphorus that made the occasion so memorable. What sticks in my memory was the genuine hospitality shown by the bride and groom and their families. In that culture, a guest is always welcomed and shown unfailing courtesy.

The bride and groom visited every table, taking time to talk and pose for photographs with each guest. This replaced the receiving line, which, when there are lots of guests, can really hold up things. What a gift! This young couple showed us how much they appreciated our presence.

Be thoughtful, and anticipate your guests comfort:

- Place a welcome basket in their hotel rooms. Nothing elaborate – maybe water, fruit, nuts, and cookies. It says “welcome, so glad you’re here!”
- Invite all out of town guests to the rehearsal dinner. This is considered mandatory.
- Go over your seating in the church with the ushers. Use a chart.
- Make sure that close relatives are seated properly.
- Try not to hold up the reception with “just one more photograph.”
- A cash bar? Oh my. Very bad form!
- Vary the music at the reception so that all ages can enjoy it.
- Do make sure you send a warm, timely “thank you” note acknowledging wedding presents.

Now relish your day, knowing you have done your best to include everyone in the occasion! 🍷



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
Recognizing the guests in one's celebration enhances the occasion and results in a more memorable experience.



all photos: Anne Sampson

Keith Royston, Senior Project Manager (background) and Jeff Ganthner, Principal Mid-Atlantic Manager

One-stop, systems-approach >

Executive Summary:

From commissioning to the Google cardboard app, Burns & Mac is attracting its prospects and retaining clients as it expands in mid-Atlantic.

By Anne Sampson

Four years ago, Jeff Ganthner wanted to start his own Architect / Engineering firm. He was looking for feedback when he showed his plan to a friend at Burns & McDonnell, an international Architect / Engineering / Construction (AEC) company based in Kansas City, Missouri. What he got was, "Let's do it!"

Now he's in a first floor office in Warehouse Row on Norfolk Avenue in downtown Roanoke. He's been opening offices in the Mid-Atlantic region as the Mid-Atlantic

Manager for "Burns & Mac" and Roanoke is the fifth, opened January 5th.

"I've worked in Roanoke before," says Jeff. "I wanted to be here because I know how much talent there is here." Jeff, a Lynchburg native, worked in the Roanoke office of AECOM, an international engineering design firm headquartered in Los Angeles, CA.

Burns & McDonnell is a rare bird in the AEC world. One hundred percent employee owned (and that's 5000 employees worldwide), it's an S corporation, dividing its profits and losses among its shareholders. In 2014, the company was rated #15 in Fortune's list of the 100 Best Companies to Work For, as well #3 in the Large Employer category in Best Places to Work in Virginia. Jeff describes a company that provides one-stop shopping for its clients.

"If you need a facility to build a widget," he says, "we'll design the building, the complete systems in the building and do the construction. We provide everything to produce the product. It's a great value

and a great solution. We get a lot of repeat business.”

As an example, he shows me a project the company did for Pratt & Whitney, manufacturers of jet engines. The Burns & Mac design team built a full-sized cardboard mock-up of an engine and moved it through the production process to help conceptualize and realize the manufacturing systems.

An important part of Burns & McDonnell’s turnkey service is a process called “commissioning.” Considered a separate discipline, like civil or mechanical engineering, commissioning entails the testing and inspection of each system, process and component, at each phase of construction, to ensure safe and reliable operation. The completed project

is handed over to the owner with the certainty that everything is functional.

In the conference room, Jeff demonstrates a neat bit of technology that Burns and Mac uses to good effect: Google Cardboard. It’s a nice blend of old and new that exemplifies the company’s hands-on, yet cutting-edge, approach to business.

Google Cardboard is a simple stereoscope, a technology now nearly 200 years old. Readers of a certain age will remember the ViewMaster™, a stereoscopic toy which turned two-dimensional slides into wondrous 3D images. The Google Cardboard frame contains a pair of lenses which blend two adjacent, slightly different images into one 3D image. There’s space in front of the lenses for a smartphone,



Jeff Ganthner demonstrates Google Cardboard



Jeff Ganthner and Keith Royston

which takes the place of the ViewMaster™ image wheel, or the paired photos on an old stereoscope card.

What's your number," says Jeff, "I'll text you a link."

With the link opened and the Cardboard raised to my eyes, I am looking into an office suite. If I take a step forward, I get closer to the window. I look up into a glass-roofed atrium. I look down at a tile floor. Each turn of my head brings a new perspective to the room.

"We can get these from Amazon for \$6," says Jeff. "They ship flat, they're easy to put together. I can send this to the client and text them a link, or I can get them on a plane and pay for a hotel room."

Clients love the approach, and it actually

fosters more questions and collaboration than 2D plans and Powerpoint presentations.

"You can show them plans all day long and just get nods. With Google Cardboard, they understand what they're looking at."

Worldwide projects in urban renewal, manufacturing, commercial architecture and government installations kept the company from losing jobs during the recent recession. Projects are cross-pollinated with the right talent for each job, no matter where they're located.

"There are no silos," says, Keith Royston, Senior Project Manager. "I just put together a team from 11 different offices."

"We can export design/build services around the world, right from Roanoke," adds Jeff. "Burns & Mac is a big company, done well." 

Fodor's brings fame to Buchanan >

Executive Summary:

A 20-year focus on building and marketing downtown paid off.

By **Andrea Brunais**

People sometimes call Buchanan the armpit of Botetourt County. The town recently got the last laugh when travel guide Fodor's named it one of the 10 best places in the U.S. to buy antiques.

The designation came by design. Harry Gleason, the town's revitalization manager for 20 years, keeps a relentless focus on downtown, guided by a study the town commissioned from Virginia Tech's Community Design Assistance Center. As a student, Gleason worked on the project, then graduated to fulfill its vision.

The flood of 1985 was a setback even as populations aged and competing malls sprang up, which "resulted in the community losing

confidence in their traditional downtown," Gleason says. "This was compounded with fears of future floods. As a result buildings were abandoned and covered up one by one."

The town bounced back. Perhaps it should be famous for buzz as well as antiques. The town would create events to support downtown merchants, then promote them on social media. 



Virginia Tech student Jessica Snead, the Save Our Towns field reporter, stands at Buchanan's historic footbridge that was washed away in the flood of 1985.

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High payoff activities >

Would you like to improve your effectiveness? Do this quick exercise. Write down five activities that would have a significant positive impact on your personal and professional goals if you spent more time on them. Some examples might be developing your team, meeting with clients, or spending time with your kids.

Now look at your calendar for the next week. How much time have you scheduled for these activities? These are called High Payoff Activities (HPAs), and they are the key to personal and organizational effectiveness success. Unfortunately, if you are like most professionals, you've probably scheduled little or no time for your HPAs. Most of us spend the majority of our time in meetings, putting out fires, handling interruptions, or simply reacting to whatever comes our way.

To improve the effectiveness of you and your organization, these HPAs must be clearly defined, and time must be scheduled for them. In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, by Stephen Covey, the author describes a matrix with four quadrants into which all activities fall. He explains why it is necessary to spend more time on Quadrant II activities (important but not urgent) which includes HPAs. Since these items are not urgent, we tend to put them off until later, or reschedule them when something more urgent interrupts us.

Redirecting more time to HPAs first requires saying NO to unimportant tasks. Here are a few ways to do this:

- Decline meetings. Look at your calendar and decline every meeting that is not important to you or your work responsibilities. In its place, schedule time in your calendar to work on a HPA.
- Shut your door. Many organizations with "open door" policies want their leaders to literally keep an open door. This invites interruptions at any time. Instead, close your door, turn off email notifications, and shut off your cell phone during the HPA time you have scheduled. Deal only with real emergencies during this HPA time.
- Close your email. Email is a huge time-waster in many organizations. Close your email during the portion of the day when you are most productive. It will help you stay focused on important tasks and not get sidetracked by unimportant, but seemingly urgent email correspondence.

The best part is that even a small amount of time redirected to your HPAs can have a huge impact on your success. Redirecting just one hour per day is equivalent to gaining six weeks of productive time each year! By dedicating more time to your HPAs, you and your organization will be more effective and experience greater success. 

Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:
Here are ways you can preserve more of your time for the most important matters.

The wrong way to leave your job >

My friend the CPA sounded happier than she had in years. "It was great seeing you at the Salem Red Sox game," she said. "Well, now I need you to form a new company for me and a couple of my friends who also are CPAs. We don't have non-competes, so we've decided to go out on our own."

"Hey, that's great!" I said. "At the game you said that you really didn't like working at that place. You mentioned how your boss sent you those e-mails asking you to inflate client bills."

"Well, not only that, but now we've been acquired by a New York accounting firm," she said. "Those bastards have told half of us to start looking for other jobs. So several of us are starting a new accounting firm."

"I see," I said. "Have you left your jobs already?"

"Not yet," she said. "We want to make sure that the new firm will hit the ground running. Fortunately we've already got several clients on board. I'm meeting with one of my biggest clients here at the office next week. It would be great if I could tell them that we already had our new company formed."

"Oh, these are clients of your current employer?" I said.

"Yes, we're letting our most important clients know in advance, so that there will be a smooth transition to our new firm," she said. "They've authorized us to make copies of their client files and bring them with us."

"I see," I said.

"But the one I'm meeting next week has operations overseas, so I don't want to tell them until I get our international tax guy on board too," she said. "I've asked him to come with us but he's still not sure."

"OK, let me back up a bit here," I said. "I'd be glad to form a new company for you, that's no problem. You're allowed to make reasonable preparations to leave your job. Although frankly you shouldn't use your employer's resources to do it. So, for example, you shouldn't have called me on your company cell phone."

"Sorry," she said.

"More important, as long as you're working there, you can't compete with your employer," I said. "So you should not be soliciting your employer's clients."



Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

Executive Summary:
It's OK to make reasonable preparations to leave your job, but those preparations should not include trying to take clients, co-workers or confidential information with you to your new job.

“But those bastards from New York told us to look for new jobs,” she said.

“The ‘employee duty of loyalty’ still covers you,” I said. “That means that you can’t act contrary to your employer’s interests. It doesn’t matter if you’ve been told to find a new job. As long as you’re still an employee, you can’t ask your employer’s clients to follow you when you change jobs.”

“How deep does this ‘duty of loyalty’ go?” she said.

“Pretty deep, so long as you’re working there,” I said. “For example, you can’t try to convince other employees to leave, either. So you shouldn’t have had that conversation with the international tax guy. You can tell another employee you’re leaving, but you can’t ask him to join you.”

“How are we supposed to get good staff, then?” she said.

“Oh, if you haven’t signed a non-solicitation agreement, then you can talk to him after you leave, you just can’t do it when you’re an employee,” I said. “Now, I should mention something about those client files you’re copying”

“The clients have given us permission to make copies of their files,” she said.

“The files belong to your current employer, not to the clients,” I said. “Don’t copy them. Don’t bring any employer documents with you when you leave the company. You’d just be opening yourself up to a lawsuit claiming that you illegally used their trade secrets or confidential information.”

“Well, I at least need to bring copies of my e-mails,” she said. “I might need to be able to show that I refused to inflate those client bills.”

“Ah. Yes, if you might need access to those e-mails in order to defend yourself, then you can make copies, but don’t keep them,” I said. “Instead, burn the e-mails onto a disc and then give the disc to your attorney—but don’t use the e-mails for anything else, and don’t keep any copies for yourself. When you leave your job, you should not possess a single shred of information from your previous employer. That way no one can accuse you of stealing confidential information.”

“But you said that I can call clients after I leave my job,” she said. “To do that, I’ll at least need to have a copy of my contact list.”

“No, client lists can be proprietary information,” I said. “Here’s what you can do: immediately after you quit, you sit down with your personal cell phone and look up the main number of each client you want to contact. Dial in through the operator, and then ask for the person you want to speak to by name.”



When you leave your job, you should not possess a single shred of information from your previous employer. That way no one can accuse you of stealing confidential information.

PERSPECTIVES

"People are going to freak out if I don't call them on their direct numbers," she said.

"But a list of those direct numbers could be considered confidential information of your previous employer," I said. "This way you'll have a contemporaneous record showing that you only used publicly-available information. Take screenshots of your call log afterward."

We talked some more about the right way to leave a job, but in the end my friend decided that probably she'd already gone too far to be safe starting her own firm, at least for the time being. It was a shame, because if she'd just done things in the proper order—for example, if she'd waited until after she left to contact her old employer's clients and employees instead of doing it while she was still working there—then she would not have run those risks. Don't let the same thing happen to you. 📱

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 before actually planning your job departure strategy, etc.



It doesn't matter if you've been told to find a new job. As long as you're still an employee, you can't ask your employer's clients to follow you when you change jobs.

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Brian Yohn

It's a wrap >

Executive Summary:

The graphics on municipal bus transit systems in our market seem to be getting more bold and colorful ... it's all part of the courtship of getting noticed.

By Sarah Cox

When Brian Yohn took on the task of designing the bus wrap for the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech, he was challenged, to say the least. Although Creative Services Director for the Center and a trained graphic designer, Yohn has always worked on a slightly smaller scale – print and on-line materials to market the Center. He had never designed anything that would wrap around a Blacksburg Transit bus that was 35 feet long.

Bus wraps, also called rolling billboards, target cars and pedestrians outside the bus. It's a form of outdoor advertising gaining in popularity, explains Tim Brazil, part-time sales manager for Valley Metro as well as sales for Media Transit, Inc., the company that sells bus ads all over Virginia.

Brazil says that his company has a loyal customer base comprised of industries from healthcare and real estate to automobile dealerships and windshield repair businesses – "Anyone who is trying to get their name out there. We have customers who have one ad, but Virginia



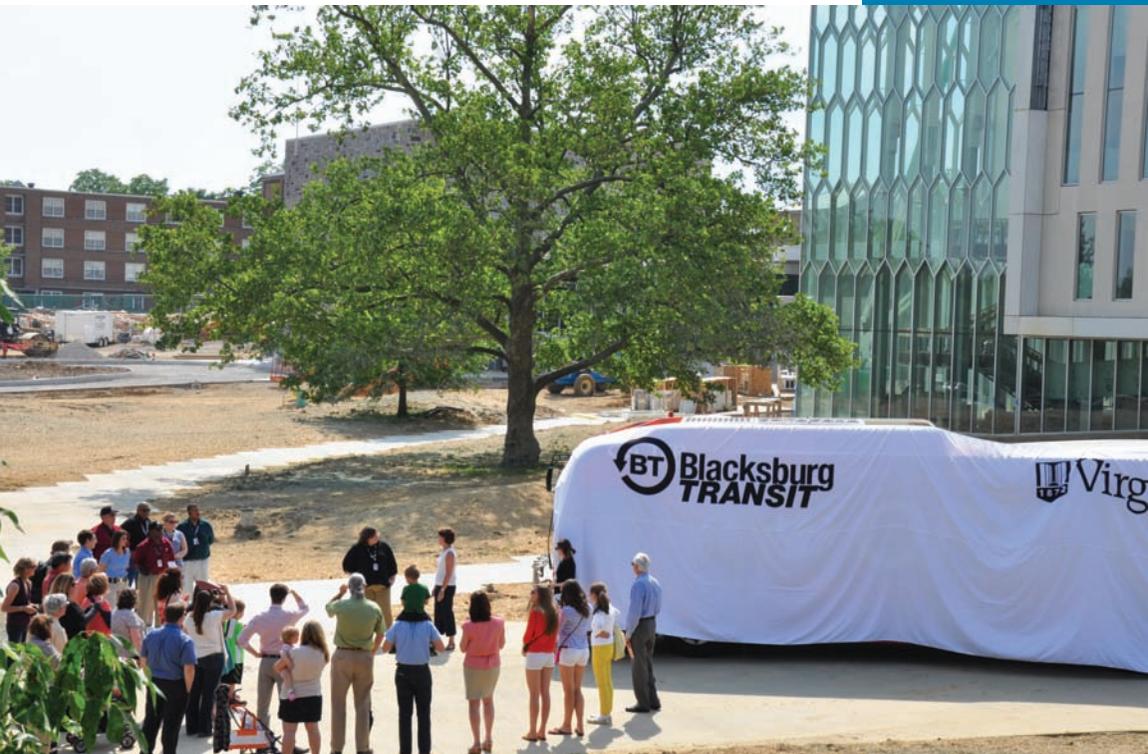


Lottery has eight," he says. For the Lottery, Media Transit's longest standing customer, the jackpot information on the buses is updated four times a week.

All that is much easier now that that the process of creating these huge bus wraps has changed from silk-screening to color digital vinyl printing. Brazil says the cost of the bus wrap includes production, installation and removal, and the wrap is guaranteed for a year – "but some have lasted four or five years," he says.

The cost depends on the frequency of advertising and the size, which can range from smaller side ads to full back ads to complete bus wraps, and variations in between. With a full wrap, he explains, the advertiser is getting "four displays; each side has a message, and some are completely different."

Yohn's end product was a way for the relocated Center for the Arts to "get the word out a little bit more. It gathered attention right away. Our social media







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person was able to track that with mentions on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.” He says the full wrap has been on one Blacksburg Transit bus since May 13, 2013. It was produced by Admark Graphics Systems, Inc., based in Charlotte, NC. Yohn worked with Blacksburg Transit’s Communications & Customer Support Specialist Fiona Rhodes and Admark to schedule the design process, production and installation. All of this took about two months.

“I did research to find out the different

types of wraps. We didn’t want just a pretty picture – we wanted to catch people’s attention, and we came up with the idea of having two giant eyes on the side of the bus; the peepholes are the wheels,” says Yohn

He says designing this made him look at the project from a new viewpoint. “It’s something you get in, and not look at. It’s a vehicle that moves people around. It taught me that you can get people’s attention with bright, flashy colors, but to stay simple with the message.





It was a great learning experience for me, and it's still getting people's attention and driving them to the Center."

Brazil says his company is introducing a new twist on the bus wrap in Richmond — this one on the driver's side will be illuminated when the driver turns on the bus's headlights. "The ad lights up," he says. He reflected Yohn's lesson, that less is better with a bus ad. "If the advertiser tries to have a lot of copy, it's not going to work. Big bold copy and a nice background color that

contrasts with the bus" is better, he says.

He explains that while bus wraps, or exterior bus advertising, has been around since the 1990s, back in the day artists used to have to paint the bus, so each bus would be out of service for a week. Then, in the mid '90s, the painting was on vinyl, which has moved to digital printing. "Our installers can wrap a 35' bus in a day," he says. Getting the wraps off? Not in cold weather — it'd be like trying to take an old bumper sticker off. 



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The comments section >

In the age of online anonymity, the childhood adage, “if you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all” has been all but forgotten. Anyone who has watched a YouTube video or read a popular online publication has seen the proof: the comments. They live below-the-fold and are often off-topic, but, like a train wreck, once I start reading, I’m unable to stop.

These impassioned novellas are typically rife with critique or disgust and are posted without so much as a name. With just a keyboard, complaint and fifteen seconds, a new story is born before reader’s eyes. The author can navigate away unscathed, his bone satisfactorily picked.

I don’t have to be a Public Relations professional to understand the detrimental affect this type of negativity has on small businesses or communities. These comments, once posted, develop a life of their own – garnering likes, sub-comments and shares. Commentary with constructive critique or that which is in support often gets overlooked due to a lack of salaciousness.

There is no typical demographic for the culprit; he or she is every age and can fall into every level of socio-economic status. They are hard to preempt and even more difficult to spin into something positive. These type of posts can be especially damaging when targeted toward innovative, novel ideas.

As the director of the CoLab in Roanoke, I get to see people bare their souls for the sake of sharing their idea. In person, most comments are helpful and polite, even when expressing doubt or disagreement. It is shocking to see how quickly those perfunctory elements of communication get dropped when the Internet gets involved.

As a recent Roanoke transplant, it stings to watch negativity proliferate in our community. At this fragile stage in our growth and Renaissance, libelous speech packs an unexpectedly strong punch. As a young person, I use the skills I grew up with (my understanding of social collaboration platforms and media) to flood Roanoke’s online presence with the constructive, encouraging narrative. The region is watching us, waiting for something juicy to bite into. Let’s make our juiciest stories sweet, not bitter. 

Young Professionals

By Ariel Lev

Executive Summary:
Mudslinging and negative ads are no longer the domain of political pandering at election time; thanks to social media, everybody's a player.



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Competitive intel >

I have often heard that to be successful one should not focus on the competition, but instead focus on his own business. I believed this for a long time, but then I came to realize that if you want to thrive you should keep your competitors on your radar. Of course, you should focus on your own business, but part of that is knowing what your competition is doing, and where they are going.

Take, for example, two ice cream shops in a small town. They are both serving ten flavors and their prices and revenue are equal, but then one decides to lower rates, adds ten more flavors, and incorporates customer service training for their employees. The other ice cream shop is left wondering why their sales have significantly declined.

The now failing ice cream shop could have seen this coming and corrected it. That is what intelligence is; it is collecting information and analyzing it into useful intelligence.

Competitive intelligence should not be confused with industrial espionage. Competitive intelligence is a legal and ethical way to collect and analyze information, and the latter is illegal.

To get started you need to have a plan which includes the information you want to obtain. Not taking this first step is like driving a car without knowing where you are going.

Next, figure out where that information is going to be located. Is it online? Is it in the competitor's store?

After you have done this you can craft a plan to collect the intelligence. Here are a few ways that can be done:

1. The internet –the internet is filled with useful information. Start with your competitor's website, and search Google for any news articles.
2. Social media –a great resource. Many companies have Facebook pages with updates about new things their company is doing. You can also find out about employees with sites like LinkedIn.
3. Job boards –is your competitor hiring? Is your competitor downsizing?
4. Pick up the phone and ask –do you want to know your competitor's prices? Just call and ask. Do you want to know when your competitor is having their next sale? Just call and ask.
5. Court records –court records are open to the public and can have a lot of information. Check out the



Business Strategy

By Christopher Borba

Executive Summary:
Knowing what your competition is up to can be crucial to the success and very survival of your business.

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Not in cold weather – it'd be like trying to take an old bumper sticker off. — Page 35

PERSPECTIVES

county court where your competitor is located to look for bankruptcies, judgments, criminal proceedings, employees' names, etc.

6. Talk to people –stop by a local networking event or dinner and talk to people who work for your competition. People love to tell you all about what they do.
7. Trade shows/expos –These are great places to get information. Businesses are there and ready to tell you all about where they are going.

Ignoring your competition is a great way to lower the life expectancy of your business. You don't have to be a super spy to collect information and turn it into actionable intelligence, and you don't have to be a major corporation with a huge budget. All you have to do is know what you want, and then use your creativity to get it.

It's been said that information costs you money and intelligence makes you money. So, if you are looking for a new way to invest in your business—invest in competitive intelligence. 



Ignoring your competition is a great way to lower the life expectancy of your business. You don't have to be a super spy to collect information and turn it into actionable intelligence.

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A lot going on >

Executive Summary:

Talk about your one-stop inside recreational hangout, Blacksburg's new Cinebowl seems to have it all, including a contemporary and colorful design.

By Jonathan Roberts

It's no surprise that people in Blacksburg aren't sure what to call it. Some are calling the new business in the First and Main shopping center "Frank's"; others "the Cinebowl" and some simply "The iMax". However people are referring to the new Frank Theatre Cinebowl and Grille at 1614 South Main in Blacksburg, most agree that it is a welcome addition to the First and

Main Shopping center and the Town of Blacksburg as a whole.

The development of the property located on the South side of First and Main began in 2012 and was finished last month. Construction took just under a year. The impressive building houses a restaurant, full-service bar, 16 bowling lanes, an arcade, and a theater that boasts an IMAX screen—the first of its kind in the area.

The theater and bowling alley have been long awaited by merchants and residents who frequent the First and Main shopping center. First promised as an anchor business for First and Main and then not completed until recently, many people are happy to see the development finished, even if it is somewhat overdue.

"It's a great space with a lot going on", said



Rich Rio, a Blacksburg resident. Rio was visiting the Cinebowl for the second time, bowling with his wife and grandchildren. He cited the family friendly environment, complete with bowling alley and upstairs arcade, as something Blacksburg has needed for years.

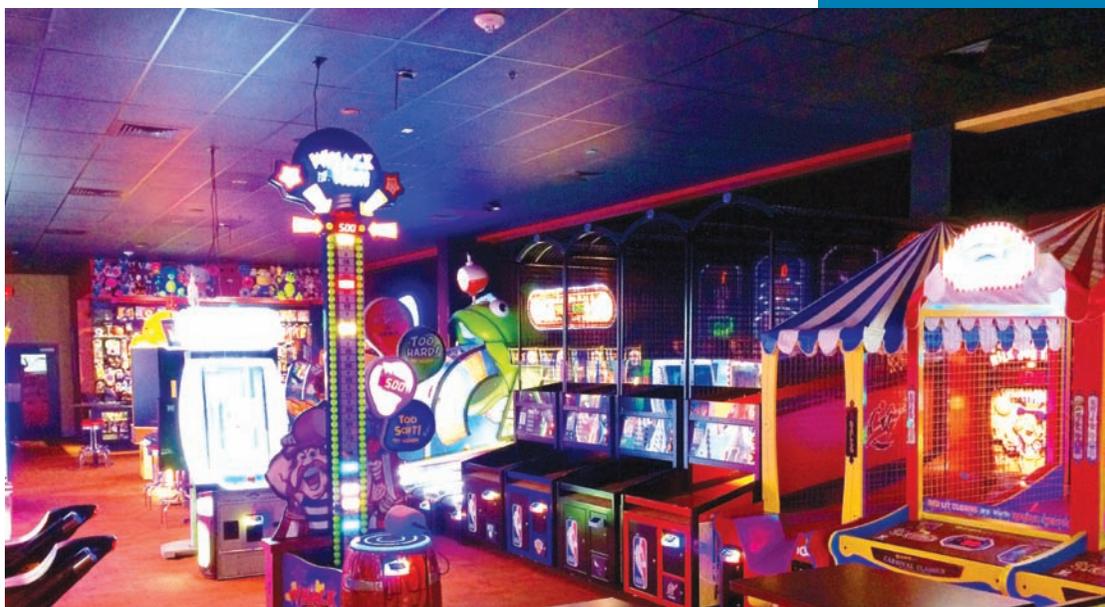
With so much housed under one roof, it's very easy to become quite overwhelmed by the space. Portraits of classic Hollywood celebrities, movie posters, and neon lights spanning the atrium greet guests as they come inside.

From the entrance, patrons are directed to different counters and kiosks for the various amenities that Frank's offers. With the building's small outside footprint, it's

no surprised that the inside is intricate and, at times, confusing.

The restaurant and bar offers the sort of slightly upscale fare and an atmosphere similar to other First and Main restaurants like Bull & Bones and Sal's Italian Restaurant. The menu features American-style favorites such as Sliders and sandwiches, as well as some off-beat offerings like reuben egg rolls.

Each of the 16 bowling lanes offer overstuffed red couches adjacent to a table for appetizers and drinks. Each table comes complete with a candle, which adds an ambiance that isn't typical in most bowling alleys. The space is clean, aesthetically pleasing, but not without a





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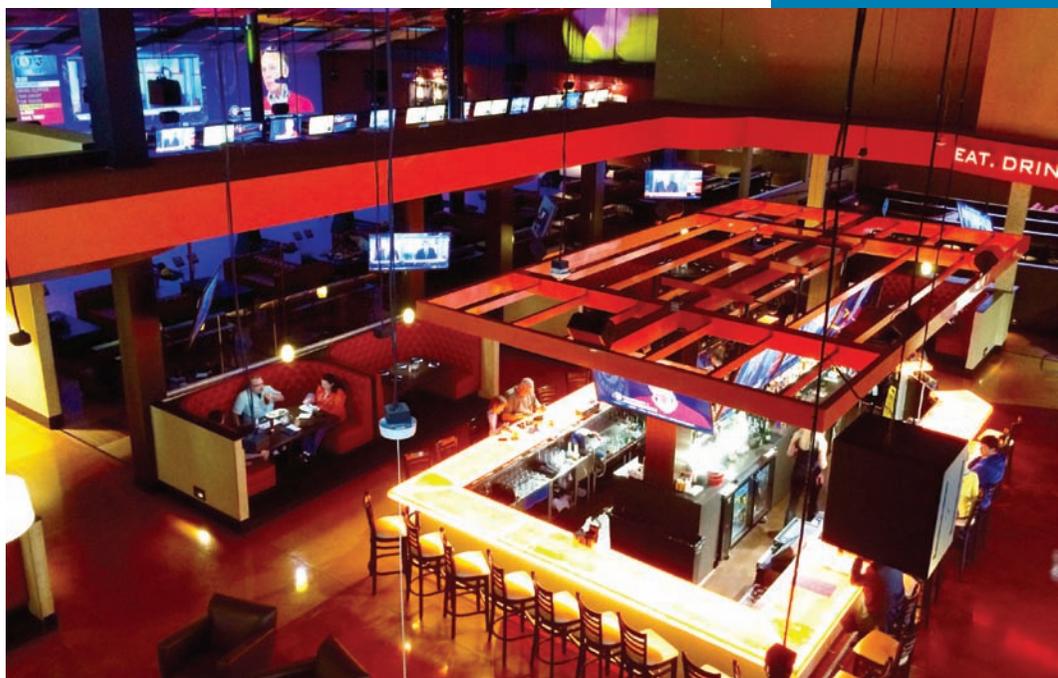
few small issues that are to be expected in a new development.

Projector screens over the bowling lanes fall awkwardly low onto the lanes, almost obscuring the pins. Rio noted, as other patrons did, that the flooring on the bowling lanes is oddly grippy—not ideal for bowling.

Despite a few minor issues that can be easily amended, the Cinebowl, with all its amenities, already seems well put-

together. New staff training is in full swing and the current staff seems well prepared for the crowds that this new venue will surely draw.

With so much to offer, the new business should bring more and more people to First and Main, something the merchants of the shopping center have been wanting for years. Three years in the making and newly opened in March, it is certainly a place worth checking out for family and friends to enjoy in Blacksburg for many years to come. 





On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:

Consumer habits and choices can be very revealing.

\$272.40 an hour >

I thought about setting up a lawn chair in the grocery store produce department to sit and watch this shelf. I wanted to see who's going to pick up the pre-packaged squash and zucchini. First of all, I've never seen a single person pick up such a thing; and the produce manager couldn't tell me how many they sell, other than they wouldn't package them if people didn't buy them.

I just wanted to meet the person who's living on \$242.40 an hour, who doesn't have a minute to spare.

The Styrofoam and plastic wrapped container holds exactly one little green zucchini, nicely tucked between his two sisters, a yellow squash each. Three vegetables. Oh, but they're sliced.

The sticker says it's \$4.49 per pound; so this little treat is \$5.79.

Not five steps down the same bin we run across the same little veggies. I guess these are the free range variety. Their sticker says \$0.99 per pound.

So here's how it all shakes out. You take the same size zucchini and two squash from the "loose" bin, and the scale tells you the grand total is \$1.25. Still a little much, if you ask me. But it's not nearly six dollars.

The difference from our two exhibits is that one is sliced for you.

Okay, so back to the math. \$5.79 minus \$1.25 equals \$4.54. Take this to the kitchen now, and we find that the slowest, clumsiest, non-chef-like person in the world might take a total of one minute at most to wash off and slice three vegetables at this size.

This all means your time is worth \$272.40 an hour if you need to save one minute; comparing apples to... errr, squash and zucchini to squash and zucchini.

Logically speaking, I can't come up with any good reason for our prepackaged friends.

The people whose time is at that value... well, they wouldn't be wasting their time in a grocery store. (Remember the rich politicians who were questioned and found to be clueless on the price of everyday grocery items like bread and milk?) The only rich people who would have no problem slipping this environmentally wasteful little package in their carts would be ones whose wealth wasn't earned income. The rich people who earned such wealth wouldn't choose it; because they never would have arrived at their successful

REVIEWS & OPINION



Exhibit A



Exhibit B

position making such un-economical decisions.

That only leaves one kind of customer. The clueless schmuck who's instructed to pick up a few items on the way home from work. *[But honey, they're already sliced! You said to pick up a few squash and zucchini. No, I didn't see them in the loose produce section.]*

And yet...

People will pay for convenience. Convenience is a premium in this topsy-turvy, ragged-running, muddled-messy, cluttered-confusing, overscheduled-overload of a world we buzz through each day.

I just hope it hasn't really reached the level of a \$272.40 salad. 🍷



So here's how it all shakes out. You take the same size zucchini and two squash from the "loose" bin, and the scale tells you the grand total is \$1.25. Still a little much, if you ask me. But it's not nearly six dollars.

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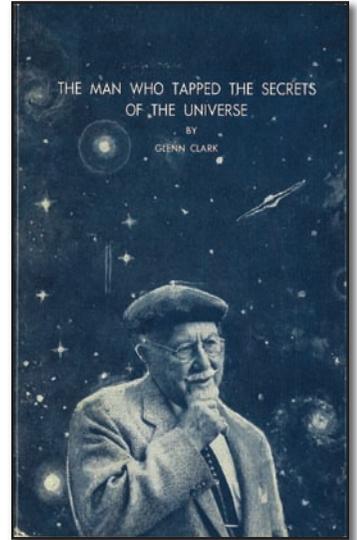
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ENTRÉ

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



Top of list

A biography by Glenn Clark on... get ready for this... Renaissance man, cosmic philosopher, artist, architect, author, ice-skater Walter Russell — a predecessor of sorts for the American New Age Movement — is not-so-subtly entitled *The Man Who Tapped the Secrets of the Universe* (The University of Science and Philosophy; 1946). I had to read this accidental discovery from a yard sale, because The Walter Russell Foundation was shown on the title page as being from Waynesboro. I vaguely recalled the name of this USP founder (and the stunning Swannanoa estate that sits off the Skyline Drive at Augusta and Nelson counties), but not much else.

This biography, not so great; the man, however: fascinating. His "Five Laws of Success" include spiritual and attitudinal conditioning, so don't expect Stephen Covey's "7 Habits." I've often told my children to listen and pay attention most to those individuals who have actually accomplished what you hope to accomplish; whether you agree with them or not, at least you can gain value from proven performance. Russell says the successful and great geniuses possess three traits: they "produces a prodigious amount of work; they never know fatigue; and their minds grow more brilliant as they grow older."

In any event, I suspect he could have served as one of the true advertising models for "the most interesting man in the world" and would certainly be at the top of my invitation list for cocktails.

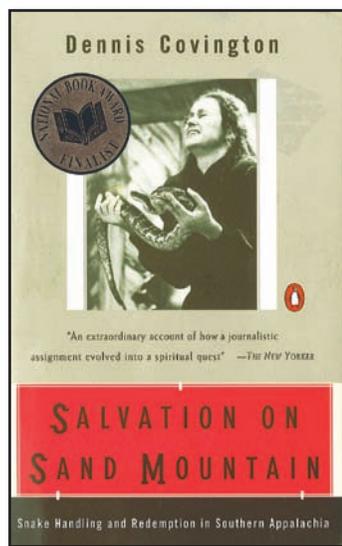
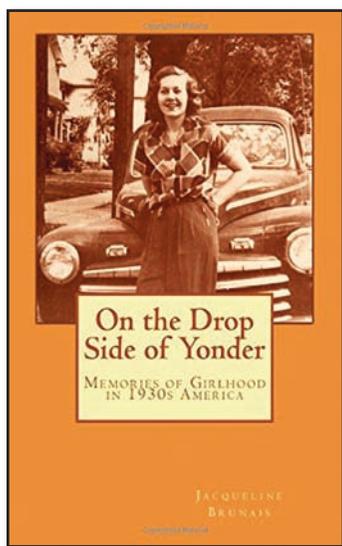
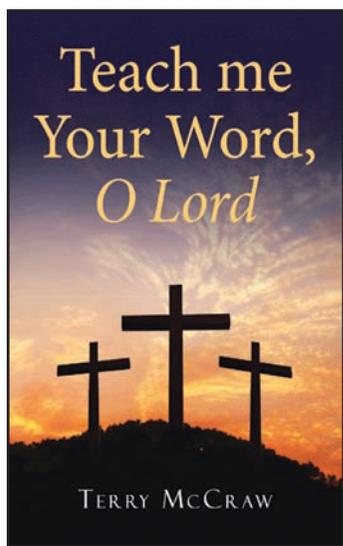
—Tom Field

Simple and hard

Teach me Your Word, O Lord (WestBow Press; 2014) has 16 messages by Terry McCraw, who lives in Radford. The messages range from Mary, Martha, and Lazarus to worship to the message of the cross. This book will help you dig deeper into God's Word. If we would take the faith of a child and apply it to God's word and what He's told us, there would be no doubt as to who God is and wants to be in our lives. Love one another, another simple command in the Bible, but one that is so hard to fulfill. We should lift up and encourage those around us.

The simplicity of these messages will help even the novice reader understand God's word and its application to their own lives. The experienced Christian can also benefit from this book's encouraging and uplifting messages.

—Sally Shupe



Words from Mom

I am among the many people who had a mother who was a born storyteller and I've wished for years that some of her thoughts and writings existed in a bound volume. Andrea Brunais of Virginia Tech, whose *Mercedes Wore Black* was a splendid novel last year, has put together a trove of her mother's essays that must scratch that particular itch for the writing daughter. It is titled *On the Drop Side of Yonder* (self-published), from one of the stories inside about Jacqueline Brunais' interest in unusual words and phrases.

Jacqueline Brunais grew up in the 1930s and 1940s in a small farming town in Michigan and became a teacher. Later in her life, she founded a writing group and began compiling her stories. This delightful book, compiled and edited by Andrea, is the result of much of that work and it gives us a insider's view of a time and place that has gone, and of a curious young woman whose lovely smile brightens the cover.

—Dan Smith

Sssssaved

Journalists can get all kinds of assignments. War zones, crime scenes, frat parties. Imagine this one: pack your bags and go

assimilate yourself deep into the Southern Appalachian mountains and back *hollers*, joining up with the churches and tent revivals and traveling evangelists and prophetesses. But not just any church: gotta be a snake-handlin' one. Oh, and if you can... do a little preachin', testifyin' and snake handlin' yourself if you're so inclined and have enough faith or filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's the story of Dennis Covington's *Salvation on Sand Mountain* (Penguin; 1995). Our reporter "had a need to experience ecstatic worship, an addiction to danger, and a predictable middle-age urge to find out who my people were." He found it. There's a little spit of melancholy in the narrative at times, even amongst the shouting and pointing and healing and talking in tongues. The revelation is a personal one; rather succinctly summed up in the observation that "the bite of a serpent is nothing compared to the bite of your fellow man."

—Tom Field

(**The reviewers:** Sally Shupe lives in Newport, works at Virginia Tech and is a freelance editor; Dan Smith is a local writer and former FRONT editor; Tom Field is a creative director and publisher of FRONT.)



Full color >

The Color Run—a "healthiness, happiness" community event now operating globally—was held in Salem on April 18, with part of the proceeds benefiting Blue Ridge Autism and Achievement Center; officials reported as many as 6,000 entrants in the 5K run/walk.



Biker bash >

The sixth annual **Blue Ridge Bike Fest** was held April 10-12 at Roanoke's Berglund Center (Civic Center) where thousands of motorcyclists and enthusiasts were treated to everything biker-related, from product demonstrations and stunt shows to a rally ride to music, beer gut and bikini contests and other entertainment.

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



Wailin' in Rocky Mount >

The Wailers (Bob Marley reggae Rastafari band) performed at **Harvester Performance Center** in Rocky Mount on April 12 to a packed house; a return show from the previous season.



Newcastle prep >

The **Preppers Festival** was held in Newcastle on April 18; sponsored by the Craig County Business Association; vendors included food preparation and storage, weapons, survival and sustainable systems suppliers.



Designated e-drivers >

The seventh annual **VTKnowledgeWorks Global Entrepreneurship Challenge Semifinals** was held April 8 at The Inn at Virginia Tech, featuring eight finalists who pitched their concepts to a panel and audience. Presenters included Calbico (grand prize winner; gun cleaning tool); Beyond Reality (winner; cloud platform virtual reality content distribution); Flow (people's choice; sanitary product dispenser); and Ryde (designated driver mobile app service for college fraternities; **Neil Hartman** and **Blake Duncan** shown at left).

Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Carolyn Riddleberger has joined as a mortgage consultant at Wells Fargo Home Mortgage.

Gerald Escobar has joined as a producer at Rutherford insurance company.

Roanoke Valley Claims Association announces 2015 positions: **Jason Eagle**, president; **Charlie Matthew**, vice president; **Raynelle Lankford**, secretary; **Pete Lassen**, treasurer; **Randy Layman**, executive secretary and state director; and board of directors: **Gary Feazelle**, **Mike Whelan**, **Carolyn Gearhart**, **Randy Layman**.

Chris Bryant has joined as marketing segmentation specialist at MemberOne Federal Credit Union.

Anita Smallwood and **Paul McClure** have joined as loan officers at SunTrust Mortgage Inc.

Toni Moore has joined as human resources assistant at Rutherford insurance company.

LEGAL FRONT

Josh Johnson, **Brooke Rosen**, and **Jay O'Keefe** have opened the law office



Johnson



Rosen



O'Keefe

of Johnson, Rosen & O'Keefe, LLC in Roanoke.

WELLNESS FRONT



Perry

Keith Perry has joined Carilion Clinic to lead the Technology Services Group.

Michael Parish has joined Carilion Clinic as Vice President of Quality and Patient Safety.

Vicki Clevenger has joined Carilion Clinic as Vice President of Audit and Chief Compliance Officer.



Bradley

Dr. Patrick Bradley has joined Eye Care & Surgery of Roanoke.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Roanoke Botetourt Technology Council (RBTC) announced its nominations for the annual TechNite Awards; individuals for 2015 include: Educator:

Terri Blankenship, **Michael Collver**, **Cary Dunn**, **Holly Ireland**, **Victor Lamas**, **Skip Larrington**, **Sue Magliaro**, **Jessica McClung**, **Anna Pack**, **Darrel Roberts**, **Wendy Routt**, **Rhonda Stegall**, **Jeff Terry**, **Joy Watson**, **Dayna Wells**; Entrepreneur: **Kristopher Dugger**, **Richmond Dugger**, **Jonathan Hagmaier**, **Sky Van Iderstine**, **Amour Kasongo**, **Nathan Latka**, **Adam Linkenauger**, **Brett Malone**, **Kelly Queijo**, **Dan Sable**, **Stephan Sabo**, **Samantha Steidle**, **Bob Summers**, **Zach Williams**; Innovator: **Greg Brock**, **Rafael Davalos**, **Michael Fleming**, **Jonathan**

Hagmaier, **Ben Knapp**, **Dan Larimar**, **Gabriella Jacobsen**, **Alexander Obenauer**; Regional Leader: **Henry Bass**, **David Carter**, **John Cornthwait**, **Ken Ferris**, **Tom Field**, **Jim Flowers**, **Michael Friedlander**, **Steve Grant**, **Charlie Jewell**, **Doug Juanarena**, **Derick Maggard**, **Isabelle Marchand**, **Robert McAden**, **Chris Morrill**, **Marty Muscatello**, **Barbara Rigatti**, **Dan Sable**, **Wayne Strickland**, **David Townsend**, **Donna Wertalik**.

Craig Strong has been named plant manager at General Electric facility in Salem.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Krista Vannoy has been promoted to vice president and chief operating officer at Waldvogel Commercial Properties.

Steve Eller, **Cory Feagin**, **Patricia (Patty) Harper**, **Hana Loschner**, **John Mathis**, **Elizabeth Pagans**, and **Tracy Zeppenfeld** have joined as associates at Long & Foster Roanoke office.

Steve Sloan has joined as an associate at Long & Foster Smith Mountain Lake office.

Jeffrey McInnis has joined as utilities division manager at Draper Aden Associates.

Christine Whittaker has joined as sales associate at The Grandin Agency.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT



Hamilton



Brown

Angela Hamilton has been promoted to executive vice president; **Matt Brown** has been named art director; and **Linda Scarborough** has joined communications



Scarborough

strategist at Anstey Hodge Advertising Group.



Long

Outstanding Scientists for 2015.

Karen Roberto has been named university



Priya



Pitchumani

distinguished professor; **Shashank Priya** has joined the Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science;



Roberto

EDUCATION FRONT

Timothy Long, professor of chemistry in the College of Science at Virginia Tech, has been selected as one of three Virginia

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

Career FRONT



Tranter



Tawney



Ashton

Ranga Pitchumani has been named the George R. Goodson Jr. Professor of Mechanical Engineering; **Elizabeth Tranter** has been named associate vice president for research planning; **Janice Tawney** has been named associate director of development for the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences; **Jill Ashton** has been named

director of development for the College of Liberal Arts at Virginia Tech.



Vari

Richard Vari has been named dean for academic affairs at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

Finalists for the 2015 McGlothlin Award for educators include **Glen Chilcote**, Kipps Elementary School (Montgomery County); **Michelle Lionberger**, Herman L. Horn Elementary (Roanoke County); **Jalenda Settles**, Huddleston Elementary School (Bedford County); **Tina Tapp**, Radford High School (Radford City).



Pittman

Jennifer Pittman has been named associate vice president of human resources at Virginia Western Community College.



Jones

Edwin Jones, director of Virginia Cooperative Extension has been recognized by Virginia Agribusiness Council for outstanding service to the agribusiness industry.

CULTURE FRONT

Roanoke Valley Society for Human Resource Management announced its 2015 positions: **Lauren Siegel**, president; **Barbara Phelps**, president-elect; **Tina Ragland**, president emeritus; **Sylvia Moore**, vice president programs; **Tracy Hale**, vice president arrangements; **Shendy Farber**, secretary; **Debbie Honaker**, treasurer;

Lindsey Coley, roster; **Donna Tatum**, marketing; **Gidget Woodward**, professional certification; **Michael Gardner**, legislative affairs; **Charlotte Mason**, sponsorship/exhibitors; **Joyce Kessinger**, student chapter; **Jennifer Pittman**, workforce development; **Dawn Board**, historian/web/newsletter; **Kim Braswell**, foundation.

Kevin Burke is the new radio broadcast voice for the Salem Red Sox.

OTHER FRONTS

Michael Leigh, president of OpX Solutions (and FRONT columnist) has been awarded the 2014 Virginia Small Business Veteran of the Year, presented by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Tulane Patterson, CEO of Generation Solutions Holdings, has been named 2015 Virginia Small Business Person of the Year by SBA Richmond District Office.

Compiled by Tom Field

“ ”
The ‘employee duty of loyalty’
still covers you — Page 28

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courtesy of VMT

N&W Class J 611 locomotive

Patent track

Roanoke's **Virginia Museum of Transportation** has filed a trademark registration application with the U.S. Trademark and Patent Office for the Norfolk & Western Class J 611 steam locomotive; including rights to use the trademark in connection with registered products, services, and media produced by the museum.

A shot in the economy

Teva Pharmaceuticals has secured a \$170 million federal contract to supply the U.S. military vaccines manufactured at its facility in Forest.

VT/CRC gigs

Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (VTCRC) has begun its latest network infrastructure upgrade that will deliver an unparalleled 40 gigabit

network backbone and 1 gigabit Internet connectivity to the 160 companies and research centers who currently operate within the park.

Produce growth

Shenandoah Growers Inc is investing \$8.7 million to expand production, greenhouse, and finishing systems to supply grocery stores its Living Organic Herbs products from its facility in Rockingham County.

Virginia LEEDs

Virginia ranked number 4 in the U.S. Green Building Council's annual list of Top 10 States for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).

Pass the hose

Rotana Café, hookah lounge, has opened in downtown Roanoke;

owned by the same operator who runs Double Apple Mediterranean restaurant and lounge on Brambleton Ave.

Paper buys

The Martinsville Bulletin and **Franklin News-Post** newspapers have been acquired by BH Media Group, bringing the Warren Buffet Berkshire Hathaway Company subsidiary's Virginia owned newspapers to nine daily publications and about 20 weeklies and tabloids.

Shirt shop

Big Lick Screen Printing, a graphics production shop for t-shirts and more, has opened in Roanoke.

Switch off

American Electric Power is closing the Glen Lyn coal-fired plant

at the Virginia-West Virginia state line, part of six shutdowns from the company plants in Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana.

Order down

Old Southwest Grille, the restaurant that took over the previous Fork in the City in Roanoke last year, has closed.

Nursing designation

Jefferson College of Health Sciences in Roanoke was ranked by Best Master of Science in Nursing Degrees website as one of the "30 Great Small Colleges for an RN-BSN Degree."

If you build it...

Bricks 4 Kidz, a children's enrichment program and LEGO model building franchise at Towers Mall and mobile

sites has been purchased by Shelly Whitaker and will host a grand re-opening [www.Bricks4Kidz/Roanoke.com].

Corn rolling

A team of **Virginia Tech** researchers have discovered a way to create hydrogen fuel that reduces the time and money it takes to produce zero-emissions fuel; the method uses corn stalks, cobs, and husks.

All aboard

New River Valley Rail 2020, a new group promoting the expansion of AMTRAK passenger rail service in the New River Valley, has formed; comprised of leaders and organizations from area municipalities, universities, chambers

and planning commissions, and political offices. Various studies have begun and information is at www.nrvpassenger.rail.org.

Regulated job loss

In its March survey, the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) reported 77 percent of companies faced higher health care costs compared to the previous year; 14 percent of businesses reduced part-time hours; another six percent plan to do so; and another five percent already or plan to reduce the total number of employees due to the Affordable Care Act employee mandate requiring companies to provide health insurance to employees working 30 or more hours per week. The law is an incremental regulation,

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

affecting organizations based on 100 or more full time employees in 2015, then 50-99 in 2016.

Transforming

Virginia Transformer in Roanoke reached a new five year labor agreement with Local 82167 of the International Union of Electronic/Communications Workers of America union.

RU no more

Radford University has announced it will be dropping its RU logo and

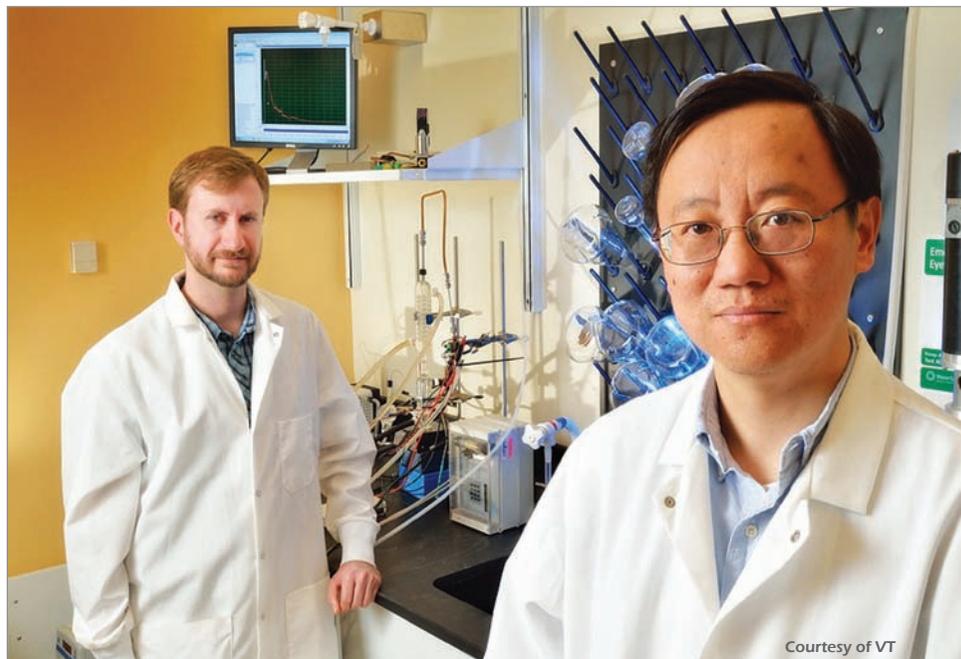
naming designation and rebranding the Radford University name in conjunction with new operational directives and market focus.

Star near star

Valley Star Credit Union, based in Martinsville, is expected to open a new branch on Buck Mountain Road in the Clearbrook area of Roanoke.

Vinton incubates

A business incubator is opening in downtown



Courtesy of VT

Alternative energy production from Virginia Tech Professor Percival Zhang, at right, and recent doctoral graduate Joe Rollin

FRONT Notes

Vinton at the town's previous health department building on Pollard Street; directed by the **Advancement Foundation**, with a goal of launching at least five new businesses in the first year.

Play ball

Students from Virginia Tech's **College of Architecture and Urban Studies** are designing and building a sports complex for the Little League in Clifton Forge at Col. Tom Dotson Park; two baseball fields, dugouts, and press box.

Secure living

The former Lorton Reformatory prison in the Spring Hill subdivision of Lorton is being redeveloped by Community Housing

Partners to **Lindsay Hills Apartments**, a rental housing complex for seniors.

Shellbreaker

The shellfish aquaculture extension office at Virginia Institute of Marine Science reports a record 243 million hard clams and 40 million oysters sold from Virginia in 2014; a 33 percent increase in oysters and 14 percent increase in clams, totaling \$56 million.

Book 10 weeks out

One byproduct of the U.S. Postal service distribution center closing in the Roanoke market is a delay in **passport** application processing; other post offices and municipal court offices are experiencing backlogs, recommending as much as two months or more

planning time for fulfillment.

Hi ho, hi ho

Roanoke-based **Southern Coal Corporation** is hiring more than 100 positions at its mining operations in Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky.

Heady route

Virginia's Blue Ridge Beerway has been formed, a collaboration of local craft breweries; also launching the "Explore-a-Pour" self-guided loop tour of breweries (currently eight) in the area.

Airport upgrades

Roanoke Regional Airport Commission has proposed the purchase of the BB&T

call center that is closing this summer, paving, and technology improvements for a \$6 million capital investment project for the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport.

Brokering residential

The Grandin Agency real estate office has opened at 306 Market Street in Roanoke downtown market.

Bye, Abbott

Abbotts restaurant in Roanoke's Garden City community has closed after more than two decades; owner Gary Abbott citing health reasons.

Coal-less

Xinergy, a coal company based in Knoxville, has



Courtesy of VT

VT architecture professor Marie Zawistoski (center) and students Mary Covert (left) and Hunter Stephenson work on Little League sports complex in Alleghany County

filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy; the business produces steam and metallurgical coal at mining operations in Virginia and West Virginia.

Joyful show

The Joy Sutton Show, a locally produced talk show, has begun its new season on Sundays at WDBJ 7 (11:30am) and MY19 (6:30pm); topics geared to “the modern day woman.”

Sox re-sign

The **Salem Red Sox** minor league baseball team has renewed its lease to play at Salem Memorial Ballpark; a longer term than usual (expected up to ten years).

Coffer up

Virginia’s annual revenue is nearly 12 percent higher (March 2015 v. March 2014) and over seven percent higher at this point in the fiscal year, according to Department of Taxation and the governor’s report.

Jeff’s campaign

Jefferson Center, the arts and education facility in Roanoke, has announced its “Performance Beyond” campaign, to raise \$4

The Joy Sutton Show announcement

million for long term viability; more than \$2 million has been contributed to the goal, including gifts from The Horace G. Fralin Charitable Trust, Norfolk Southern Foundation, and The Roanoke Women’s Foundation.

4th Amendment held

Both Republican and Democratic legislators rejected Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe’s proposed amendments to allow evidence collection by drones without a warrant.

Turning 40

Community Housing Partners (CHP) has deployed a “40 for 40” employee service campaign, an initiative

calling for at least one of 40 acts of service by CHP’s 400 staff members across Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Florida; in conjunction with the organization’s 40th anniversary.

10-2-4

Roanoke’s new event venue at **The Bridges** has secured a sponsor; the concert stage will be named Dr Pepper Park.

Carry me forward

“Oh Great Virginia” (the traditional “Oh Shenandoah” with revised lyrics) and “Sweet Virginia Breeze” (1977 pop song from The Robbin Thompson Band) have both been inducted as state songs for Virginia

by this year’s General Assembly; an official declaration years after citizens took issue with lyrics considered outdated in “Carry Me Back to Old Virginny,” written by James Bland, a free black American, in 1878.

Less farms, more money

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports the number of **farms in Virginia** has dropped by 100 (45,900 farms) in 2014 versus 2013; and the average size is down by 1 acre per farm (179 acres); however the number of farms with more than \$100,000 in sales increased by 100.

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, also available by link at vbFRONT.com.



Karen and Tony Kessler of Kessler Design

All by design >

Executive Summary:

Kessler Design studio in Roanoke keeps up with changing technology even as the proprietors stay true to their disciplines and don't try to be an all inclusive agency.

By Cara Cooper

Have you seen the design on the side of the pediatric ambulance with Roanoke Memorial Hospital? Have you looked at the menus at Pop's Ice Cream in Grandin, or the Great 611 Steakhouse? What about the website for Historic Grandin Village. There's a really good chance if you've seen these, or many other designs in the Roanoke Valley you've been looking at a design done by Tony and Karen Kessler of Kessler Design and not even known it.

The Kesslers have been working as illustrators, designers and graphic artists in the Roanoke area for over 35 years. The couple met in high school at Lord Botetourt and attended Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio. After college they returned to Roanoke to open their own design studio. They are now in their fifth location in the Grandin Village area, as they've recently returned the business

to their home, the place where it all started.

Karen Kessler admits that it's very hard to pigeonhole their studio, because they do so many different things. They design print campaigns and posters, as well as newsletters and magazines. They do hand drawn and computer generated illustrations for graphics. They do photo retouching and even dabble in web design.

"We're not an agency," Karen Kessler said. "We do take on design jobs for businesses. We also do design work for agencies. We don't have a marketing department, or public relations department and all of that stuff but we like to be a source. A source for an agency to go to, or a small business to go to who maybe can't afford the budget of a big agency."

"We just call ourselves a studio. Graphic art and design studio," Karen Kessler added.

Karen Kessler said that as a studio the duo has had to reinvent themselves about every ten years because of changing technology. Tony Kessler said they've seen the transition from everything being hand drawn, to typesetters to computers, and they've had to learn every new technology along the way as the landscape for design changes.

One thing that the Kesslers said has helped them stay current is their sons. They say that

having three boys, all of which are grown now and living on their own, has helped them to stay young themselves and stay on top of technology.

"We really pride ourselves with keeping up with changes in the field and we've been able to change with it," Karen Kessler said.

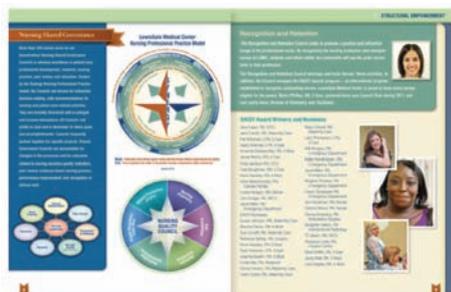
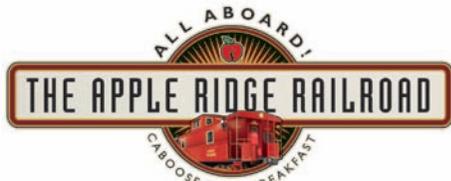
"A lot of the art directors and illustrators we know didn't want to make that transition. For whatever reason they just got out of the business quickly. There's probably only a couple still around that we knew back in the day that are still doing it. So we kind of pride ourselves that we're so adaptable," Tony Kessler added.

The Kesslers have done design work for places as far away as Florida, and others in Richmond and Virginia Beach. As much as they would like to do more of those jobs across the country, they realize how difficult it can be to market your business while also doing all the actual design work yourself, which is why they've mostly just done work in the local area.

"It's a full time job to do Facebook and LinkedIn and all the social things you need to do to market yourself," Karen Kessler said. "We'd love to have somebody be out there to market for us and sell us all over the country and everything, we just don't have time for that. So that's still our struggle. It's our struggle to let everyone know we're still here and luckily we've built up enough of a base over the years to keep busy but it's a little tough trying to get the word out that we're out there."

Kessler Design doesn't show any signs of slowing anytime soon. They're doing work with Lewis Gale, Carillion and Advanced Auto. They also recently finished designing a website for Virginia Tech. Many of their clients are repeat clients, and that is the biggest point of pride for the Kesslers.

"What we pride ourselves on over the years is that we're reliable. No matter what, we do the best job we can. Clients know when they call us we're going to do as much research as it takes to do a good job. And they know we've built up a report over time they know they can trust us," Karen Kessler said. 



Examples of work by Kessler Design

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Keep your competitors on
your radar — Page 37

“”
Decline meetings. Shut your
door. Close your email. — Page 37

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