

Valley Business

FRONT

*What
Now?*

THE SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEUR
CHAMPION IN VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE
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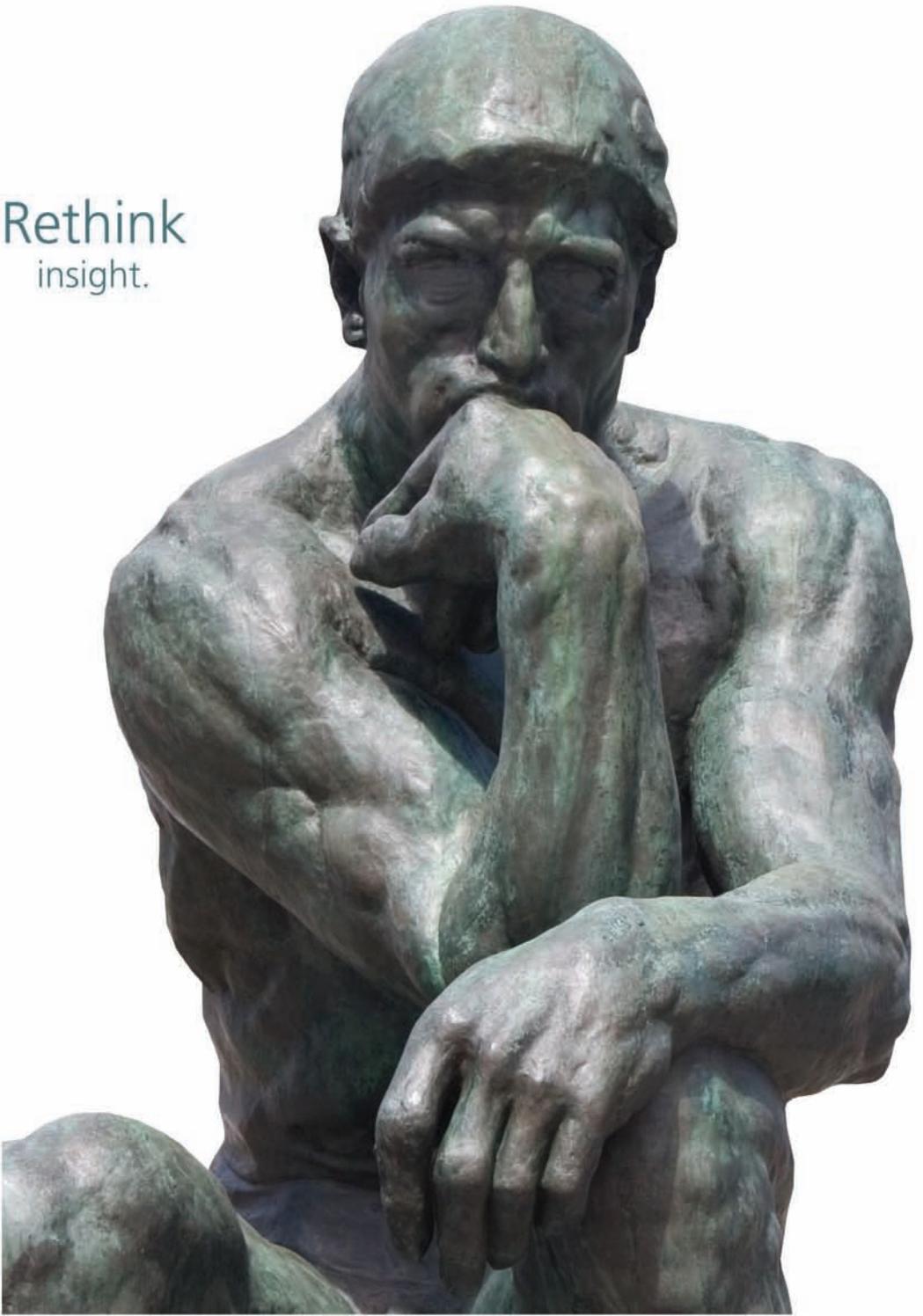
Renewing our Old Coal Towns

Save Our Towns
Summit—
September 9-10
Abingdon, VA
Page 19

Sandy Ratliff,
Virginia Department of Small
Business & Supplier Diversity



Rethink
insight.



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I'm not an expert on coal.

I do have a tiny piece of coal with a little bag and certificate and everything, claiming that it was retrieved from the Titanic (as a novelty gift for my wife, who loves that whole story and movie). But I suspect it may not be authentic. You can't prove it's not, though.

I can't help but think many of the people who are the most vocal opponents and proponents of the coal industry may not be experts either. I've heard some utterances I'm fairly certain aren't that factual or scientific or objective.

Whether it's a resource we should be developing or exiting to one degree or another is a subject I can leave for all the people who are all too willing to place signs in your yard or slap a sticker on your bumper. But I do know this: our dependency of coal as a primary source for energy is declining—even though it remains an essential element for both energy and production throughout the developing world.

Southwest Virginia, along with West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania are the prime mining operations for coal extraction. They're all suffering economically from the reduction. Jobs are leaving and entire towns are drying up. At least for the ones that only relied on coal as their principal industry. The old coal towns of Southwest Virginia face a choice. Reinvent and seek other opportunities. Or grab one of those old chunks of coal and write your name and population on something solid, for nostalgia's sake. So we can remember you.

Like the Titanic.

Tom Field

““”

Judge results rather
than methods

— Page 28

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SEPTEMBER



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Editorial Advisory Board

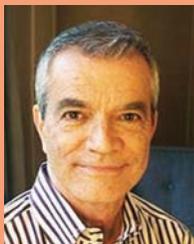
Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of 16 diverse business professionals, who will serve as a sounding board throughout the 18 month rotational term that will turn over every year and a half.

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 40.

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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.

“

In many cases, employers feel more comfortable when their employee is working in a coworking space, rather than at a home office.

— Page 27

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From LEGACY to

BRAND NEW

Surviving the Post-Coal Economy

Coal Towns >

Executive Summary:

When it comes to repurposing the old coal towns of Southwest Virginia, there is no cookie-cutter solution; each works out its own identity.

By Anne Piedmont

The times, they are a-changing in Virginia's coal region. The same mountains that sustained the coal industry for generations are now leading the way to a new economy as an outdoor amenity.

Spend any time talking with the area's government, economic and tourism officials and you'll hear about advanced manufacturing, cultural heritage, outdoor recreation and economic diversity. Websites show photos of mountains and streams, bluegrass musicians and traditional crafts. The coal industry still is a large part of the economy, but those same officials acknowledge it is on a downward slide. "Coal has always had a boom and bust cycle," says Susan Copeland, marketing coordinator for the Virginia Coalfields Economic Development Authority. "But the mines aren't coming back." She noted that foreign markets and new regulations are taking their toll on coal and its supporting industries.

Her organization was created in 1988 by the Virginia General Assembly to help diversify the economy of the coal region, which includes Lee, Wise, Buchanan, Russell, Tazewell and Dickenson counties, as well as the City of Norton. It is the marketing and funding organization for Virginia's e-Region. The e-Region is so called because it is an emerging center for electronic information technology, energy, education and emerging technologies.

VCEDA's website touts the quality of the broadband and



Virginia Tech

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There is a high amount of compatibility with high-tech manufacturing

— Scott Tate

Scott Tate, senior economic development specialist at Virginia Tech

4G wireless access in its corner of rural Virginia, and its “low costs of doing business, the workforce, tailored training, available buildings up to 285,000 sq. ft., sites up to 800 acres in new technology and business parks, and a way of life that makes employers and their employee families very happy.” Its financing programs are funded by taxes paid by the coal and natural gas industries in the region. By VCEDA’s 25th anniversary in 2013, the organization had helped bring more than 20,000 jobs and \$157 million in approved funding to the region.

“Coal has driven everything,” Copeland said, noting that the high salaries will be hard to replace. Her group markets existing workforce skills to companies that use processes involving welding and mechatronics. They’re also focusing on tourism as an economic model, drawing on the region’s cultural heritage and outdoor assets.

Highlighting the need for economic diversification, research by the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development shows that in the past 18 months there have been about 1,000 workers displaced in the coal industry, according to Scott Tate, senior economic development specialist. But, his office did an analysis for the Southwest Virginia Workforce Investment Board that showed considerable crossover in knowledge, skills and abilities between coal and manufacturing occupations. “There is a high amount of compatibility with high-tech manufacturing,” he said.

““”

The mines aren’t coming back

— Susan Copeland



Bristol's Chamber of Commerce and capitalizing on music heritage

Virginia Tech has a contract with the Workforce Board to provide ongoing data analysis. Tech also is assisting with economic strategic planning in the region, federal funding applications and other ways to enhance rural competitiveness. A current project with the Crooked Road, Virginia's Musical Heritage Trail, is studying the impact of the tourism industry. Tate acknowledges that tourism is a "piece of the puzzle," but says that manufacturing also is important to the region, along with the ability to develop and attract new firms and nurture entrepreneurs and the creative economy. "It just makes sense."

Galax offers small town charm, quality of life, low cost-of-living for employers.

Appalachian Voices, a non-profit grass roots organization, also is working to support the transition of the coal economy. Adam Wells, economic diversification program coordinator, is based in Norton and is spending much of his time on getting the Appalachian Stimulus Plan included in the 2016 Federal Budget. That plan includes job training, infrastructure development and maintaining the solvency of the United Mine Workers pension and health plan. It will free up \$1 billion to clean up abandoned mine land for potential economic development projects. The AML





Virginia Tech

Mayor Kyle Fletcher of St. Paul, VA

St. Paul bounces back >

Summary: Virginia Tech's yearlong Save Our Towns series followed Mayor Kyle Fletcher's efforts to make his town flourish.

By Hannah Samlall

One year ago, Kyle Fletcher, mayor of the tiny town of St. Paul since 2008, started several projects. On a scale of one to 10, he rates them all a 10 except one.

The town's bid to attract a company to a large industrial building, empty since 2003, flopped. A biofuels company trumpeted that it would bring in 40 jobs, and the governor echoed the announcement. However, with the drop in gas prices, the project sputtered and the building is still shuttered, Fletcher says.

He's happier about the sewer plant, with its 500,000-gallon capacity, coming online this month [September]. Only half of the sewer plant's customers will be St. Paul residents; the other half will come from areas nearby. Fletcher estimates it will take 20 years for the town to recoup its investment.

Restaurant meals tax receipts have gone up 10 percent over two years, the town's treasurer reports, adding that first-ever lodging tax revenues, which have more than tripled over two years, show that the town's tourist-attracting tactics are working.

As for indoor entertainment, the mayor succeeded in landing a proposal from Creative Boutique Hotels to renovate a downtown property to include first-floor shops and a restaurant. A private-public partnership has garnered \$1.1 million in grants toward the renovation. And the town has raised \$30,000 toward its \$250,000 goal to renovate the Lyric Theater.

St. Paul Tomorrow, a longtime group of volunteers, is central to the town's success. A milestone in 2014 was winning the Virginia Municipal League's Achievement Award for the category of towns of less than 5,000.

In the context of economic development in Southwest Virginia, Fletcher is aware of the uphill battle. But he stays upbeat: "You have to want to be successful. The goal is for the town to, once again, enjoy a diversified economy."

Sandy Ratliff, a training and information services provider for the state of Virginia, plays our exiting coal miner on the FRONTcover. A true “coal miner’s daughter” (her father was killed in a mine explosion when she was 4) she has a vested interest in seeing Southwest Virginia revitalized.



FRONT



There is no greater example of a transformed town than Grundy

program currently focuses on hazards, under the proposed legislation it also would go toward proactive projects such as industrial parks, public recreation areas or agriculture, explains Wells.

Virginia’s portion of funds would be \$6.3 million a year for five years. Wells is working on developing a “wish list” for when (or if) the legislation is passed to change the way the money can be spent. He says the City of Norton has endorsed it and there is land within the city limits that is eligible and would be developed as a public park. He’s going through an inventory of all abandoned mine sites to identify those that local governments might find feasible for projects.

Diversification is important to the work done by Sandy Ratliff, business services manager for the Southwest Office at Virginia Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity. She sees it as the key to keeping future generations in the region. In addition to manufacturing, she points to tourism and education, such as the Appalachian School of Law in Grundy and the Appalachian College of Pharmacy in Oakwood.

There is no greater example of a transformed town than Grundy. The commercial heart of the Buchanan County town has been moved to higher ground thanks to a joint project of the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Virginia Department of Transportation. It started in 1998, according



Virginia Tech

to Town Manager James Keen, when a flood proofing plan met the plan to make US 460 a four-lane highway. "It was a win for the federal, state and local governments," he said.

The project established a redevelopment site for 55 structures that were located in the flood plain, and couldn't be rehabilitated, said Keen. The downtown area grew up at the junction of the Levisa Fork River and Slate Creek and has been subject to numerous floods. The old downtown was demolished and rebuilt on higher ground across the river, at a cost of \$135 million in federal, state and local funds.

Keen said there is much more commercial activity than before. And the anchor of that is a Walmart store which sits atop two levels of covered parking. Sharing the Town Center with Walmart are other retailers, restaurants and

With scenic and story possibilities like this film crew found on location at Big Stone Gap, will the movie / entertainment industry provide a viable and sustainable opportunity?



Town of Grundy

““

We still have a lot to do

— James Keen

Grundy Town Manager James Keen addresses Army Corps of Engineers; regarding a construction project that essentially "moved the town" to higher ground, away from the flood plain.



Virginia Tech

The "tourism attraction" serves Bristol, VA and its home to the Birthplace of Country Music Museum.

professional offices, such as a dentist and law firm. Next up, he says is a convenience center, which will include a fuel station.

The other part of Grundy's story is the Appalachian School of Law, which admitted its first class in 1997. Keen said it attracts students from all over the United States. They live, shop and spend in the area. Also in Buchanan County is the Appalachian College of Pharmacy. ACP was founded in 2003 and offers a three-year doctor of pharmacy program. It brings a healthcare higher education component to the region.

"Coal is still a major player," Keen says, but acknowledges the changes. "It's tough when you lose your backbone industry." He is retired from the coal industry, but stayed in the region to help. "We still have a lot to do."

While Grundy looks to education and a renewed town center, the Town of Haysi is seeking a "more sustainable asset-based economy," says Mayor Larry Yates. The assets upon which they're building include clean water; cultural heritage; the outdoors, and Haysi's role as the gateway to Breaks Interstate Park. A Haysi native, Yates admits that Breaks is "very dear to me," and called the park which Virginia shares with Kentucky "the Grand Canyon of the South."

Working with Virginia Tech's Outreach and Economic Development departments, Whitney Bonham (shown below in Glade Spring; now a deputy county administrator in Washington County) and Jessica Snead (shown on the iconic bridge in Buchanan) reported from the field to produce content for the "Save-Our-Towns" program—an initiative on the redevelopment of old coal towns in Southwest Virginia into newer, sustainable economies.



Virginia Tech



Virginia Tech



Norfolk Southern

Norfolk Southern coal train passes through Southwest Virginia, though coal is no longer its principal haul.

In Bluefield, West Virginia, squabbles entertain >

Summary: Despite its storied past, the marketing never quite clicks.

By Andrea Brunais



Andrea Brunais

In pre-midcentury Bluefield, West Virginia, the town was a proud place. It flourished as a railroad center because of the fine-grade coal mined in nearby Pocahontas, Virginia.

Downtown buildings sprang up, some Art Deco, all designed by famous architects. City Hall came complete with staircase-flanked rotunda. The skyline exceeded the height of New York City's as Bluefield became a mercantile hub.

"There were 1,200 men working out of just this downtown railroad yard at one time," says radio talk-show host Craig Hammond, a former mayor. Large supply companies dotted the mountainsides.

The devastating collapse of a historic downtown building in 2007 – the oldest brownstone south of Charleston, a landmark – is just one of many symbols of Bluefield's modern stagnation. In short order, downtown's historic theater collapsed, along with a hotel.

Several prominent family dynasties hold wealth, and they blocked change at key points, say townspeople whose roots go back farther than Hammond's, whose parents came to town in the 1970s. Guarding the status quo didn't work, either.

Despite being named All-American City in 1965, Bluefield never got its mojo back. In the late 1970s, a shopping mall killed mom-and-pops, and passenger rail died. Politicians deserted their magnificent digs and moved City Hall "to its current locale that looks like a fertilizer factory," Hammond says.

Visioning exercises and revolving-door city managers marked recent years. Economic-development schemes fizzled, such as a California actor (a noted Abe Lincoln impersonator) imported to promote the arts.

"The problem with Bluefield is intertribal warfare," says Hammond, who runs the Union Mission charity. "We don't seem to get on the same page." Arts, antiques, railroad history, tourism – what'll it be?

Yet Hammond, optimistic, touts the 87,000 square feet of boutique and antique-shop space open downtown. He and others hope the town's relatively new city manager, the former garrison commander at West Point, will put Bluefield back on the map.



**Pulaski's downtown
Second Street; 1940s.**

The town's – and region's – heritage is highlighted by the Crooked Road and 'Round the Mountain trails. The Crooked Road begins at Breaks and winds its way through 19 counties, four cities, and more than 50 towns and communities to Franklin County, celebrating heritage music year round. The town's Russell Fork Autumn Fest, held the first weekend in October, is one example of a heritage music event. Yates says it includes traditional music, crafts and festival food. Yates serves on the Crooked Road's executive board.

What The Crooked Road does for music, 'Round the Mountain does for local artisans. Created as Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network, it's a non-profit organization dedicated to helping artisans with marketing, educational, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

In 2008, Haysi launched a downtown revitalization initiative. Yates said that the town's service area extends beyond its borders to include Northwest Dickenson County. A series of community meetings led to a master plan, which has been helpful to them in applying for grants. In 2011, they received a Community Development Block Grant that will be used to convert the old theater into a multi-use facility. The town is also working to connect the downtown to the Russell Fork Riverfront. Yates says they're cleaning it up, removing non-native plants and making it "more presentable. It's an amazing asset."

Yates gives a lot of credit to the people of Haysi. "They work hard," he said. "We've got a good group." Proof of that is Haysi Partners, a nonprofit group that came out of the master plan process in 2008 and works to promote community pride and involvement.

Haysi's focus on tourism is part of the larger picture in Dickenson County. Rita Surratt, Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce CEO and Tourism Director, says the community is focusing on outdoor adventure tourism and the connection to Breaks and other natural amenities.

COVER STORY

In 2014, the Cranes Nest River was designated a Virginia Historic River, she said, and the Cranes Nest River Trail was developed, using VDOT funds. Currently, it's just a few miles, but there are plans to connect it to a Haysi Breaks Trail. The trail, Surratt said, was developed for hiking, biking and horseback riding. It begins in Clintwood and runs to the river's confluence with John W. Flanagan Reservoir. She notes with pride that she's "seeing the parking lot pretty much full."

Another asset Surratt's office promotes is the Birch Knob Observation Tower, which was completed in December of 2003. From its observation deck 3,144 feet above sea level (and up 183 steps) visitors can see into Virginia, Kentucky, West Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee and sometimes Ohio.

On the cultural heritage side, Dickenson County is home to the Ralph Stanley Museum and Traditional Mountain Music Center, which opened in 2004. It celebrates the life and legendary career of Dr. Ralph Stanley, as well as the history of the region's traditional mountain music. It's one of the largest museums in Southwest Virginia and is a major venue along the Crooked Road.

Surratt said the focus on both outdoor and heritage tourism is bringing visitors to Dickenson County from all over the world. The visitors' book in her office shows many international addresses. Another result is more lodging and restaurants to meet their needs. She, herself, rents out a cottage and has seen visitors from around the country and the state.

View of St. Paul from Town Hall.





Virginia Tech

Carmine's restaurant has been called the "perfect spot" for Big Stone Gap movie scenes.



Another part of the coal region transformation is the influx of new business from all sectors

Another part of the coal region transformation is the influx of new business from all sectors. The VCEDA website boasts an impressive list of success stories. From Northrop Grumman and CGI on the data side to manufacturers such as Tempur-Sealy, VFP, Inc. and Mullican Flooring (and many more) the employment landscape is changing. Nowhere is that more apparent than in Russell County, which is home to a Northrup Grumman tier 3 data center and CGI facility that does programming and testing for the federal government. Harry Rutherford, chair of the Russell County Industrial Development Authority says that the Northrup Grumman has been adding to the facility "from day one," noting that it began as a helpdesk for the company and has grown into its role as a data center.

Other economic development successes for the county include:

- Steel Fab, a division of Samuel Pressure Vessel Group, which makes tanks for air compressors and ships them worldwide;
- Tri-State Energy, which converts vehicles to natural gas, and is installing in Russell County the first natural gas filling station between Richmond and Asheville, NC;
- and 3B Consulting, a consulting and engineering firm that announced in July that it is establishing its corporate headquarters in Russell County.

Rutherford credits the success to the ability of all parties to work together, from the IDA to the Board of Supervisors to the Town of Lebanon. "We're all volunteers that do this."

Not content to rest on past glories, the county (and Gov. Terry McAuliffe) in July cut the ribbon on a 76,000-square-foot shell building in the Cumberland Regional Industrial Park. Said Rutherford: "We always want more." 

SAVE OUR TOWNS SUMMIT

Save Our Towns goes live! Mayors, town managers, business and government leaders, and subject matter experts converge on Abingdon, Virginia for the Save Our Towns Summit to exchange ideas and explore ways to improve Southwest Virginia towns.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2015
Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center-Abingdon, VA

*Optional pre-conference event Wednesday, September 9th
visit saveourtowns.outreach.vt.edu for details*

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

8:00 – 9:30 a.m.	Registration
9:00 a.m.	Opening/Set the stage: Keith Pierce, Moderator Welcome: Greg Kelly, Abingdon Town Manager Keynote Presentation: Basil Gooden , <i>State Director, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, Commonwealth of Virginia</i>
10:00 – 10:45 a.m.	CONCURRENT SESSION I: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing for All• Main Street Initiatives• Infrastructure: Planning and Funding• Meet the Towns from SOT Internet Series
10:45 – 11:15 a.m.	Networking Break with resource providers and poster showcase
11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	CONCURRENT SESSION II: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asset Mapping Maintaining Technology/Broadband• Infrastructure: Maintenance and Funding• Being Proactive in the New Economy: Tourism, Internet Biz, Incubator• Meet the Towns from SOT Internet Series
12:15 – 1:30 p.m.	Lunch & General Session Keynote Presentation: Saundra Kelley , <i>Storyteller</i>
1:30 – 2:15 p.m.	Action Planning/Town Hall Meeting – How will we use what we have learned today? (Keith Pierce, facilitator)
2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.	Closing Session: “As you go out perspectives – realistic next steps” Speaker: Suzanne Morse Moomaw – <i>Director, Community Design Research Center/Academic lead, Appalachian Prosperity Project, University of Virginia</i>
3:15 p.m.	Networking & Refreshment Break in Exhibit Hall (Resource/Poster Showcase)
4:00 p.m.	Adjournment

*For last minute registration or to learn more about
Save Our Towns visit: saveourtowns.outreach.vt.edu*



The Greek image >

Recently key Greek Parliament leaders met with world leaders to negotiate better terms for their debt repayment. You had to be hiding under a rock to miss it.

I was amazed at the appearance of the Greek contingent at the meetings: open collared shirts, no tie, an open suit jacket flapping in the breeze and a generally ruffled appearance.

On the other hand, the other world leaders – France, England, Spain, Sweden Denmark, Finland, etc. – were all dressed in crisp white shirts, silk ties and freshly pressed suits. The contrast between the two groups was drastic and notable. It conveyed more than they ever imagined.

What did their appearance tell the world? The world leaders sent a message that they were all business, ready to make decisions, serious, and that they care about regaining stability for all. They take their job and the crisis very seriously.

Whether they meant to or not, the Greek leaders conveyed the impression that they don't care about others' opinions, they're not serious and business-like, and they have given up on their situation and themselves.

I don't pretend to understand the complexities surrounding the Greek financial crisis. What I do understand is the body and wardrobe language the players on both sides are using.

In effect the world leaders are saying, "We are serious and in charge – you are not. We play by the rules."

On the other hand the Greeks are saying. "We don't have to play by the rules. We are the exception to the rule."

Some say that appearance shouldn't matter. After all, they are in dire straits. Well, history is full of hard-luck stories about people who pulled up their bootstraps, put on their best suit and a positive face. It's a necessity.

We can learn a lot from this drama as it unfolds. We can examine the image we project each day in our business and personal lives. We can observe when standing our ground can cost us what we seek. We can understand when to bend—until we can regain our strength.

The Greeks must consider their ultimate goal—the preservation of the Greek nation and economy for the current and future generations. I wonder if they can achieve that goal based on the image they're currently projecting. I wish them all the luck, because I want Greece to survive. 

Comments? Email Kathy@peacockimage.com

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Appearance matters; in any language or culture how you look conveys more than you might ever suspect.

Children and restaurants >

"No Strollers, no high chairs, no booster chairs. Children crying or making loud noises are a distraction to other diners, and as such are not allowed in the dining room"

Thus said a sign in a fine restaurant in California. From LA to New York, higher end restaurants are setting age limits for children in their establishments, or even banning them outright! A little harsh? Perhaps, but nice for the grownups out for an enjoyable dining experience.

Here's my view on screaming babies and out of control children running around the restaurant or playing (ugh!) under tables. A nice restaurant is an adult environment. It has been my experience that parents do a disservice to young children by placing them in an adult situation where they are expected to behave as adults. As Miss Manners says "...you are being unfair, not only to other restaurant patrons, but to your own children...do not mislead yourself into thinking these outings are a treat for the children." I agree with her: it is misery for small children to be expected to sit, be quiet, talk softly, and use proper table manners. Most children under six or seven are simply not up to coping with that kind of stress.

Some parents of young children think that taking their children to nice restaurants helps them learn table manners. I suggest that the table manners should be learned at home, or in one of my classes! Dr. Richard Bromfield, a psychologist at Harvard Medical School and author of *How to Unspoil Your Child Fast: A Speedy Complete Guide to Contented Children and Happy Parents* has a different take from mine. He says "Yes, restaurants can be a learning experience for children, but no, other diners do not have to suffer through the lesson."

Here are some of his suggestions:

- Plan and share excitement about going out to dinner for several days beforehand.
- Clearly state the kind of behavior that is expected.
- If your child acts up or disrupts, calmly leave the restaurant without finishing dinner or taking food home.
- Leave without explanation, excuses or anger.
- On the way home, or later, do not yell at the child or punish for what happened. You will only undercut the power of your strong parenting deed.

Confident, courteous, respectful children are what we're after here. It does take strong parenting to do any or all of the actions suggested above. But then, who said parenting was a walk in the park? 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
Whether children should be at fine dining establishments depends on how they behave and what to do when they don't; and the answer could be as simple as: no.



The good feeling farm >

Executive Summary:

Alpacas bring more than just wool to the Fuller family in Blacksburg.

By Becky Hepler

It started at the circus. Patty Fuller saw her first alpaca and was entranced by the gentle, fuzzy animal that looked like a giant stuffed toy. Eighteen years and two additional random events later, Patty and her family have built Poplar Hill Alpaca Farm into the premiere facility of its kind in Virginia.

Les and Patty Fuller grew up as military children, moving often and living in close quarters, so when it came time to build



all photos: Becky Hepler

their life together, they wanted plenty of space and a place to put down deep roots. They settled on 20 acres outside of Blacksburg, where they raised horses. The addition of daughters Kelsey and Megan left them with little time, and Kelsey's allergies led to the selling of the horses. But they were committed to using the land, and raising meat products didn't appeal to them. After the circus, Patty threw herself into learning all she could about alpacas. Then came the next

random event. Les came down with Guillain-Barre' syndrome which left him depleted and facing a long recovery. As Patty related in an email,

We took an afternoon drive to an alpaca farm so that he could see what this "thing" was that his wife wanted to have in the backyard. Les sat at a table watching me and the girls interact with the alpacas for nearly two hours, and as crazy as this sound she started to feel



The family at Poplar Hills

better. A lot better. On the drive home Les said, "If I live through this illness we are having alpacas, anything that makes people feel better needs to be shared."

The final random event was a visit by a Bolivian missionary who was trying to raise funds for a health clinic in his village. He was staying with the Fuller family during his trip and offered a blessing for the family and farm that included a version of "Amazing Grace" as played on a leaf. As Patty said, "It was one of those teary eye moments in your life that made you realize God just stepped in and made a change, and for the better. "

From the first three alpacas purchased in 1999, the farm has grown to a herd of 65 alpacas and two llamas. The Fullers once sold their wool to fiber co-ops or to companies such as Pendleton Wool, but now they keep most to use for Patty's felting projects that are sold on their website and at the Blacksburg Farmer's Market or craft fairs. The farm also serves as a regional collection site for other farmers looking to work with fiber co-ops to process and/or sell the wool.

To get the best fleece, though, requires genetically improving the herd, so the farm is always putting its herdsires to



Patty and Les processing the wool



Some of the boys at PHAF



Llarry and El Corazon

work, breeding alpacas to get the different colors and textures in the fleece. This leads to the other two markets for the farm, selling alpacas and selling stud services from their champion winner, El Corazon, everything from “drive bys” to boarding, then sending home with sonograms, or sometimes with the newborn cria.

While the farm is a full time endeavor for Patty, the rest of the family split their time. Megan is in college studying business, Kelsey is a vet tech at the Large Animal Clinic at Tech and Les works in IT for the College of Natural Resources and Environment.

Patty is a firm believer in community service, so she tries to give back in many ways, such as opening the farm to visitors from schools, retirement homes or community groups. She freely consults with others thinking of going her route. The Large Animal class at Tech usually conducts several labs on site, giving students hands-on experience. Llarry the llama provides blood transfusions to the vet school for other camelids. “I couldn’t do this job if I didn’t have the community resources that I do,” she said. 

For more information, see the website www.poplarhillalpacos.alpacanation.com



Patty and Cria



The isolation of innovation >

Innovation drives our creative culture. It is the magic ingredient that creates the new, the exciting and the unique. It is what feeds our society's inherent need to progress and what keeps us from boring ourselves into obsolescence.

Innovation can also be isolating. Rather, those individuals behind the innovations, they can feel isolated. Whether tinkering with a motherboard in her garage or cancelling out the world via headphones in a crowded coffee shop, the archetypal entrepreneur is pictured alone. In her mind, there might be a flurry of questions and doubts, but who is she to unburden herself to her unprepared and likely unwilling espresso-sipping neighbor?

The road to innovation is long and bumpy, and without adequate support, the entrepreneur can stray or stall out completely. Coworking, for many innovators, is the missing piece to the puzzle. Coworking spaces provide two different services: physical structure, like office amenities and wi-fi, as well as intangible structure, like an engaged community and a network of support.

Coworking is not a new concept; it has evolved throughout the last few decades as many large, corporate offices started introducing open-office floorplans. These forward-thinking executives watched as their disparate departments began working together, finding solutions to problems because they saw them differently. This discovery, combined with rise in technology that has allowed individuals to work from anywhere, contributed to the need for coworking spaces.

Every coworking space is slightly different, each targeting a segment of their region's innovators. Some, like Toolry in Lynchburg, are suited for the makers and creatives. Toolry offers traditional coworking space—desks and plugs—while also offering studio space for visual artists. Just up the road in Staunton, another type of coworking space exists: the makerspace. This variety of coworking, found at the Staunton Makerspace, accommodates computers and humans alike, but also provides its members with tools like a 3-D printer and woodworking equipment.

Roanoke's CoLab is a more traditional coworking space, providing offices and workspace to entrepreneurs, with a focus on technology startups. CoLab is also quite large and fills its floorspace with events and programming that bring the community together to share knowledge, ask questions and explore ideas.

Their common denominators, however, are the members. Each space charges a fee for use, which is different depending on their amenity packages, their proximity to parking and town centers and so on. When asked why they spend hard-earned dollars to join coworking spaces, members will cite various life

Young Professionals

By Ariel Lev

Executive Summary:

Even the fiercely independent business owner doesn't have to go at it alone: coworking environs might be the perfect solution.

and business value-adds, depending on their current situation.

Many members find that utilizing an address and physical location separate from the home office not only helps them sleep at night, it also adds legitimacy to their startup. Though many are able to see the table in the dining room as a conference space by day and a family hub at night, there are just as many who find it easier to travel to a more conducive space to host meetings. Some members utilize the space to work remotely from another town or state; in many cases, employers feel more comfortable when their employee is working in a coworking space, rather than a home office.

These members not only use the space, they contribute to it. Their knowledge, their experience, their enthusiasm: all of these intangible, unpredictable intricacies of human nature compile to create an electric atmosphere, one that motivates and supports innovators inherently.

Though different in business model and clientele, coworking spaces provide something many innovators find necessary: a community of like-minded people who are all working on something unique. 



The road to innovation is long and bumpy, and without adequate support, the entrepreneur can stray or stall out completely. Coworking, for many innovators, is the missing piece to the puzzle.

FROM THE Grapevine

The Source for Roanoke's Commercial Real Estate Buzz
By Richard Wellford & Bryan Musselwhite



The Demand for Apartments Continues.

Investors purchase income producing real estate to make money from cash flows, and that is exactly what a properly managed and maintained apartment building will bring. The manageable risk of multiple tenants is one of the things that makes multifamily properties a favorite vehicle for many investors.

Another advantage is that multifamily property typically offers a higher ratio of building to land value which means more of the capital investment can be depreciated. Additionally, the depreciation life of residential income property (27.5 years) is shorter than other commercial property types (39 years). Combined, these two factors can result in higher annual depreciation write-offs.

Industry projections show apartment demand and multifamily property values rising over the next 5-10 years. In Roanoke, apartment building values have held steady or increased even in the face of the increased supply. That's a result of increased tenant demand and the low cost of money.

So, let's review; cash flow, low risk, tax advantages and increasing values. Sounds like a good time to buy.



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Techniques for effective delegation >

In last month's article, I described how effective delegation can help boost organizational performance. Not only does delegation help leaders become more productive, it also develops employees and increases their engagement. But effective delegation is not simply giving an employee an unpleasant task. It requires thoughtful planning and training. It also requires an environment conducive to empowered delegation.

Attitude and Culture

Organizational attitudes and culture can sometimes prevent effective delegation. If a leader fears being replaced by a subordinate employee, or a senior manager expects everyone on his or her leadership team to know every small detail of every process, then delegation can be difficult. To help create a more positive attitude and culture towards delegation, try these actions:

- Think and talk in terms of "we" instead of "me."
- Replace the word "failure" with other words such as "mistake" or "learning experience."
- Rotate leadership responsibilities for meetings and projects.
- Develop team trust using frequent and transparent communications.
- Encourage resourcefulness and creativity. Judge results rather than methods.
- Develop the self-confidence to delegate without fear or worry of being replaced or unneeded.

Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:

Having a real strategy for delegation will increase your likelihood for productive results.

Planning and Training

Delegation is not simply transferring the responsibility for performing a task to someone else on the team. A leader must also transfer the authority, resources, rewards, and knowledge necessary to perform it. Once you've identified a task to delegate, and a team member to delegate to, consider the following:

Level of Delegation – Depending on the difficulty of the task and the experience of the team member, you must determine the amount of training and freedom to provide. At the lowest delegation level, you will need to provide very specific direction on how to do a task, and only allow action when directed. At the highest delegation level, you will be able to fully empower your team member with the responsibility of the task, and only require routine reports. As you move from the lowest to the highest delegation level, less training and

PERSPECTIVES

coaching are required, and more authority can be given.

Careful Introduction – Effective delegation always requires adequate communication. Before turning over responsibility, have a conversation with the team member about your plan. You might say, “I’m considering handing-off these responsibilities to someone on our team, perhaps even you, to help us reach our long-term goals. How would you feel about that?” In this non-threatening manner, it allows your team member to express concerns or enthusiasm about the idea, and you will receive their insight and ideas on how to do it.

Action Plan – How do you plan to delegate the task? Without a plan of action that provides time for training and coaching, the team member may struggle. Write down the specific steps that are needed for a successful transition, and schedule time in your calendar for them.

Follow these ideas for effective delegation and your team will become more empowered, more engaged, and more productive! 



Delegation is not simply transferring the responsibility for performing a task to someone else on the team. A leader must also transfer the authority, resources, rewards, and knowledge necessary to perform it.

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Susan Brown

Ready for chip card? >

Executive Summary:

If you're a small business accepting credit cards, here's what you need to know about the October EMV liability shift.

By Susan D. Brown

Have you heard about the impending EMV chip card conversion? If not, you're not alone. In fact, a recent Wells Fargo/ Gallup survey revealed that less than half (49 percent) of business owners who accept point-of-sale card payments are aware of the impending liability shift coming this October. Awareness of the

EMV shift is higher among those business owners who accept credit cards compared to 23 percent who do not accept such payments.

While the main objective of the liability shift is to reduce credit and debit card related fraud, business owners were split on whether they felt this was true – 42 percent said they felt it would improve protection from fraud, and 42 percent said that it would not.

These findings point to the importance of our industry making business owners aware of the benefits of chip card technology. To put things into perspective, according to Visa and EMVCo studies, card-present fraud in other countries was reduced by 84 percent with EMV chip and PIN implementation. Since converting to EMV chip technology, there has been a 69 percent decrease in card-present fraud in the U.K., 80 percent decrease in Brazil and 84 percent in Malaysia.

What is EMV chip card technology and why is it more secure?

EMV chip card technology helps protect consumers and merchants against counterfeit fraud by encoding cardholder information within an encrypted microchip that changes with every transaction. This makes EMV chip-enabled cards more difficult to counterfeit than traditional magnetic swipe cards. Most issuers also may require either a PIN or a signature for additional cardholder authorization, making card-present transactions even more secure.

What changes on October 1?

Today, credit card companies are liable for credit and debit card fraud on card-present transactions. On October 1, the liability for fraud will shift. Beginning then, the party, either the card issuer or merchant, who does not support EMV, will assume liability for counterfeit card transactions that occur.

What are the benefits of switching to EMV?

There are many upsides to EMV and if you own a business that offers card payments to customers, transitioning to EMV technology could hold numerous benefits for your business including:

- **Reduced risk of fraud.** Upgrading to an EMV-enabled payment system may prevent your business from becoming a target, as card fraudsters likely will concentrate on merchants that have not upgraded to EMV.
- **Fewer financial risks.** Merchants who do not accept an EMV chip card when presented may be liable for any resulting fraud and related costs.
- **More methods of payment.** Most EMV equipment can accept NFC (near field communication) contactless payments, enabling you to accept mobile payments from your customers with smartphones.

What do small businesses need to know?

In short, now is the time for business owners who offer point-of-sale (POS)

card payments to assess the payment options and make sure they are prepared for the liability shift. If you don't have EMV-enabled payment equipment, talk with your payment provider about upgrade options. Your business may require a simple software update or additional peripheral, such as an EMV-compatible PIN pad, or you may need a new terminal or POS system. In addition to upgrading, it's also important to stay up-to-date on the latest developments, laws and programs surrounding payment card fraud.

While the liability shift may mean new technology, different processing, and additional costs for many businesses, card fraud is expensive. If your business is liable for card fraud, it could make a significant impact to your bottom line and reputation, and lead to lost time and money disputing fraudulent claims. So even though switching to EMV technology may seem cumbersome, continued reliance on less secure, magnetic stripe technology isn't worth the risk. 

For more information about EMV and for assistance with preparing for the October liability shift, check out: WellsFargoWorks.com for tips on the process and benefits of accepting EMV chip card payments and the importance of EMV chip cards and reducing fraud.

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Screening time >

Marilee Jones didn't think she had a chance at a job at MIT when she first applied in her mid-twenties. To make herself more marketable Marilee said she had three different degrees from three different colleges when she actually had none. Marilee rose through the ranks at MIT and eventually became the Dean of Admissions. But after it was exposed that she did not have a degree at all, she was let go from MIT. This resulted in a clear disruption to the workplace and an embarrassment to MIT.

Marilee is not the only one who has lied to get a job. In fact, the Society for Human Resources Management reported that 53% of all job applications have false information, and The Wall Street Journal reported that 34% of all resumes have outright lies. If you are not currently conducting employee screening background checks, take a look around your workplace, because roughly half the people there have false information on their resumes.

You may be thinking that you only have a few employees, and that you don't need employee screening background checks — but consider this — a bad hire at a company with a lot of employees will not do as much damage as a bad hire at a business with only a couple employees.

Human Resources

By Christopher Borba

Executive Summary:

Pre-employment background checks are an essential component to protecting your business and its internal and external stakeholder; this is the starting line for risk management.

Failing to conduct background checks can hurt your bottom line

DisInsights.com reported that an estimated 30% of small businesses fail due to employee theft. There is no guarantee that a background check will show you who is going to steal from your company, but it may shed some light. Someone with a history — especially a recent history — of theft or fraud isn't necessarily someone you want handling your merchandise. If your company is having an issue with inventory shrinkage, and you are not conducting background checks, your company is partially to blame for the loss.

Every business wants to hire and retain the best employees, and it is not cheap to operate a revolving door in your HR department. Business Insider reported that it costs an average of \$3,500 to replace one \$8 per hour employee due to recruiting, interviewing, hiring, training, and the initial lower production of the new employee. The costs goes higher the more the employee makes. CBS reported that an employee making between \$30k and \$50k per year costs a business 20% of their salary to replace—that's \$6k to \$10k per employee.

It's not just theft and hiring costs that are affected by failing to conduct background checks. A company can be liable for who they hire, and one wrong hire can destroy a business.

Negligent hiring

The world is not getting any safer, and your company is responsible for the actions of your employees. If an employee assaults, stalks or in any way intentionally harms another employee, customer, or vendor your company can be held liable if:

1. The offending employee had a history of violence or stalking.
2. You failed to conduct a pre-employment background check.
3. A background check would have revealed the offender's history of violence.

According to CrimeScreen.com, the largest settlement ever paid out in a wrongful hiring lawsuit was \$26.5 million from Trusted Health — a home health care agency. The employer was found liable after one of their workers robbed and murdered a patient. The employee had a criminal history that would have been discovered if Trusted Health would have conducted a background check.

How do you conduct pre-employment background checks?

Background checks can be done in house if you have the qualified personnel, but most business do not. There are many great background checking companies that can be found with a quick internet search. When selecting a company to conduct background checks on your applicants, this is what we suggest:

- Make sure the company is compliant with the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). This is the act that governs employee related background checks.
- Never go with the cheapest company. They use databases that are not up-to-date and may be passing off three-year-old information as current (I actually ran one on myself and this is what happened).



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- Use discretion with companies that offer immediate results. It's not that they are bad, but the information is not analyzed before it reaches you. Immediate results are great, but that leaves more room for error. Inaccurate information can haunt you later down the line. Is that John Smith you're thinking about hiring the same John Smith with an armed robbery record?
- "Assembly line" companies or companies that outsource can have a breakdown in quality and/or customer service.
- Try to find a company using investigators or background analysts who put together your reports utilizing various sources. This leaves less room for error and ensures quality. There are several out there.



A quality background check for employment purposes usually costs a business between \$30 and \$100 — depending on how much information is searched. The price may exceed that if you require more than the average background check.

How much does it cost?

This depends on the quality of background check you want, and your needs for the position. An entry level employee working a part-time job may not need their education verified. However, an engineer does. As a general rule, the price of a background check should not be more than what the employee will make the first day of work.

A quality background check for employment purposes usually costs a business between \$30 and \$100 — depending on how much information is searched. The price may exceed that if you require more than the average background check. For example, hiring an executive might call for interviewing former co-workers, business partners, neighbors, etc.

I recently had someone tell me she is paying \$5 per person for background checks. If that is true, I can assure you she is throwing her money in the trash. Stay away from the cheap searches as their information tends to be outdated, inaccurate, and can lead you into legal trouble. Would you pay \$5 for a background check on someone to watch your children? Of

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course not, so why do it with your business? When you really think about it, \$30 to \$100 is a nominal fee for what you stand to lose from a bad hire. Think of it like insurance. You pay a little up front to save you a lot in the future.

Not all criminal record checks are created equal

Background check firms conduct criminal record checks by utilizing databases to improve efficiency and reduce the costs to the consumer.

National criminal record searches are not what they seem. There is no single system available to the public that has access to all court and police records across the country. However, that is not to say you shouldn't run one. They do have an extensive reach, and might turn up something that may have otherwise been overlooked.

County criminal record searched are the best way to ensure accuracy. These should be done in person, but to keep costs low some firms can utilize court databases or use a third party database. Searching the county where the applicant lives, and the counties they have lived in the last seven years will produce the best results. Make sure whatever firm you use conducts county level checks.

It's time to start checking

The world is a lot different than it was thirty years ago, and we seem to be facing new threats all the time. The United States is the only developed nation that waits until something bad happens to start taking precautionary measures. Don't be the next small business that closes due to inventory shrinkage, and don't be the next business in the news for negligent hiring. Make background checks a part of your hiring process. 



National criminal record searches are not what they seem. There is no single system available to the public that has access to all court and police records across the country.



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The accidental franchise >

My friend the martial arts teacher got sued. He was the founder of a popular new discipline of martial arts that he had named “Dekoboko-ryū,” and he had been running himself ragged visiting the several schools around the country that had adopted his system, all while operating the three dōjōs that he owned in our area. So he was exhausted when he brought the lawsuit documents to our office.

“All right, who is this guy who’s suing you?” I said.

“He owns a Dekoboko-ryū location in Chesapeake,” he said, “and he is an extremely annoying guy. I finally couldn’t put up with him anymore. So I terminated his contract.”

“Do you have a copy of the contract?” I said.

The contract, called a “Licensing Agreement,” was two pages long and gave the other guy the exclusive right to run a dōjō in Chesapeake called “Dekoboko-ryū Martial Arts.” It included a sentence saying, “Either party can terminate this contract at any time and for any reason.”

“So this lawsuit is ridiculous, isn’t it?” said my friend. “My contract clearly says that I can cancel it whenever I want to. But his crazy lawyer says that I wasn’t allowed to cancel the contract because he is supposedly my ‘franchisee.’ Obviously I’m not selling franchises.”

“I see,” I said. “Does he pay you any sort of fee?”

“No,” he said.

“Does he pay you any money at all?” I said.

“Only for the training,” he said. “Every six months all of the instructors in my discipline are required to come to my main dōjō here for a week-long class. They learn about refinements in the discipline and I pass out updated manuals. It’s in the contract there. I charge them each about six hundred dollars.”

“OK, thanks,” I said. “Unfortunately, I’m afraid that you are in fact selling franchises.”

“That’s not possible!” he said. “I’m not selling burgers! I’m just giving my highest-level instructors permission to open their own schools!”

So I explained to him how the law defines a “franchise.” Our streets are so stuffed with franchises like McDonald’s, 7-Eleven, Hampton Inn and SportClips that most of us feel like we understand the concept of franchising. Unfortunately,

Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

Executive Summary:

If you allow someone to use your business name and concept and receive money from that person, you may have stepped into the complex world of franchise law without even knowing it.

a lot of us are wrong. In general, if you:

- give someone else the right to use your trademark in his or her business,
- exercise significant control over that person's operation of his or her business, and
- get money from that person,

then you are a franchisor, and the other person is your franchisee. These three tests are pretty easy to satisfy. So, often people who only want to "license a business concept" wind up creating accidental franchises. In the case of my friend, he:

- allowed instructors to use his trademark, "Dekoboko-ryū,"
- controlled the instructors' business by requiring that they adhere to his teachings (he was, after all, the founder of the discipline) and also by giving each of them their own exclusive territories, and
- required the instructors to pay him \$600 for training every six months.

So my friend was in fact a franchisor. This was a problem because franchises are highly regulated. Following the success of early franchises like McDonald's, by the late 1950s franchises were viewed kind of like today's tech start-ups — as the new way to make a bundle of money very fast. Inevitably, some sharp characters took advantage of this gold-rush mentality by selling worthless franchises. Following some big frauds in the 1960s several states, followed by the federal government, passed laws in the 1970s to protect purchasers of franchises.

As a result, anyone who wants to offer or sell a franchise in the United States is required by federal law to prepare a monster document containing twenty-three lengthy disclosures, called a "Franchise Disclosure Document" or FDD, and to give each potential franchisee fourteen days to review it. In addition, many states (including Virginia) require most franchisors to register their franchises. Failure to do these things can expose the franchisor to criminal prosecution and to tens of thousands of dollars in fines.

More to the point as far as my friend was concerned, Virginia law also prevents the franchisor from terminating a franchise "without reasonable cause." This was why his instructor sued him. The instructor hadn't known that his dōjō was a franchise, but when his contract got cancelled



Our streets are so stuffed with franchises like McDonald's, 7-Eleven, Hampton Inn and SportClips that most of us feel like we understand the concept of franchising. Unfortunately, a lot of us are wrong.



Often people who only want to 'license a business concept' wind up creating accidental franchises.

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Hannah Samlall is a student intern with Virginia Tech's Outreach and International Affairs.

Anne Sampson is a photographer and writer who has been active in local arts and events for 15 years. Her work highlights the sights of people of the Roanoke Valley. She specializes in fresh looks at familiar subjects. [sampsona7@gmail.com]

Kathy Surace is FRONT Business Dress columnist, an image consultant and owner of Peacock Image in Roanoke. She was a fashion consultant for a major clothing chain for a number of years. [kssurace@aol.com]

Nicholas Vaassen is a graphic designer with 13 years experience, specializing in publications. His design projects include FRONT, lifestyle, real estate, municipal, classified sales and cultural organization magazines in Roanoke and southwestern Virginia markets. [nvaassen@berryfield.com]



53% of all job applications have false information — Page 34

P E R S P E C T I V E S

he talked to a clever lawyer. That lawyer realized that the instructor actually was a franchisee, and so he sued my friend on the grounds that an annoying personality was not “reasonable cause” for cancellation.

My friend quickly agreed not to cancel the contract. (Fortunately the instructor had not yet reported him to the Virginia State Corporation Commission.) It also turned out that my friend had about fifty licensed Dekoboko-ryū instructors all over the country, and every single one of them was legally a franchisee. He’d violated federal franchise law and the franchise laws of about nine states. It took a very long time and a lot of money to clean up the mess. 

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 trying to set up a franchise, to license your business name, to license your business concept, etc.*



By the late 1950s franchises were viewed kind of like today’s tech start-ups

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James Jennings Jr.

Defective products cause a multitude of injuries in the U.S. every year. In product liability law, a "product" or a good is anything or any tangible item that has value. These products are categorized further as consumer goods or equipment used in business and the responsibility is different for each one. We have all bought products that come with express warranties and have seen disclaimers of warranties. This article discusses new product warranties specifically and does not cover used goods.

What kinds of warranties cover new products and who is the responsible party when it comes to defective products? Under Virginia law, there are implied warranties, warranties of fitness for a particular purpose, and express warranties. Here are the details for each one:

The product liability question >

Executive Summary:

If you are a business owner, distributor or retailer, you need to familiarize yourself with your inventory and its warranties; and understand who holds responsibilities for defective products.

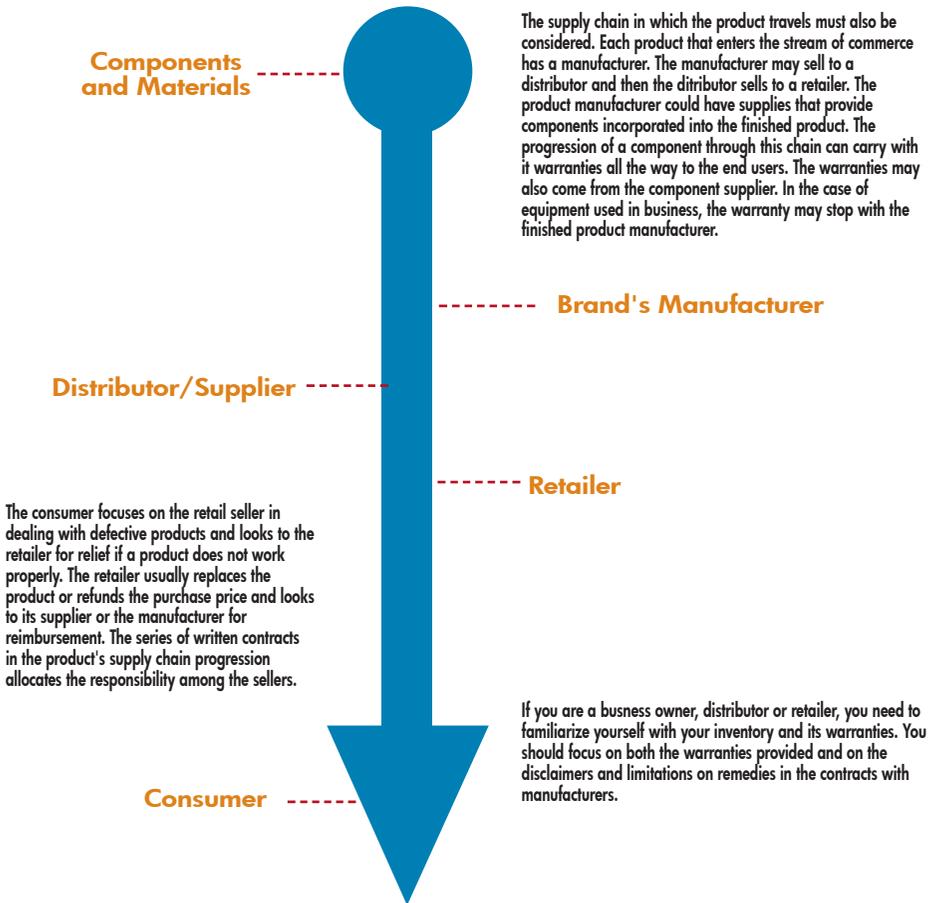
By James W. Jennings Jr.

- An **implied warranty** means that the goods are suitable for the their intended uses or any reasonably expected use. In consumer goods, this warranty cannot be disclaimed for personal injuries but it can be disclaimed for equipment used in business. A dishwasher that guarantees to clean dishes thoroughly and operate without causing a fire is an example of a product that carries an implied warranty.
- A **warranty of fitness** applies and is used when the seller knows the buyer

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Path of Production



intends to use the goods being sold for a specific—or particular—purpose. Here, the buyer/purchaser relies on the expertise of the seller in purchasing a product for a particular use. A product a consumer buys from a hardware store that promises to seal leaks in his basement walls is an example of a product with a warranty of fitness.

- **Express warranties** are guarantees written by the seller that set out what the specific warranties are and often come with disclaimers that all implied warranties are disclaimed and only those warranties set out apply to the product. A ladder guaranteed to last five years without breaking is an example of a product that comes with an express warranty.

The supply chain in which the product travels must also be considered. Each product that enters the stream of commerce has a manufacturer. The manufacturer may sell to a distributor and then the distributor sells to a retailer. The product manufacturer could have suppliers that provide components incorporated into the finished product. The progression of a component through this chain can carry with it warranties all the way to the end users. The warranties may also come from the component supplier. In the case of equipment used in business, the warranty may stop with the finished product manufacturer.

The consumer focuses on the retail seller in dealing with defective products and looks to the retailer for relief if a product

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does not work properly. The retailer usually replaces the product or refunds the purchase price and looks to its supplier or the manufacturer for reimbursement. The series of written contracts in the product's supply chain progression allocates the responsibility among the sellers.

What happens when someone is injured by a defective product or suffers property damage such as a fire starting from a defective appliance? This is where the sequence of participation in the manufacture, distribution, and sale to the retail purchaser with the warranties that flow throughout the chain comes into play.

Most people are aware of automobile recalls and the process of fixing defective components. The known end users get notices from the automobile manufacturer of the defect and are directed to take their vehicles to dealers for replacement of the defective part. The dealer replaces the part at the manufacturer's expense.

If a person is injured by a defective product, liability can lie with the manufacturer for breach of warranty or negligence. In Virginia, the focus is on whether the product is defective and the theory of liability, whether breach of warranty or negligence is not a significant difference. Others in the supply chain may also be liable but may look back up the chain for

indemnity for their liability to the end user or the next entity in the chain.

Disclaimers of warranties may apply when a worker is injured by a piece of equipment being used to perform a task—such as a forklift operator. But the disclaimers do not excuse negligence of the manufacturer or others in the sales chain. The focus is on whether the product is defective. If the worker was also negligent or misused the equipment in causing the injury, there will be no recovery from the manufacturer or others in the sales chain.

If you are a business owner, distributor or retailer, you need to familiarize yourself with your inventory and its warranties. You should focus on both the warranties provided and on the disclaimers and limitations on remedies in the contracts with manufacturers. There may be distribution agreements that carry terms and conditions of contract that limit warranties, who gets the warranties, their duration, and the remedies available for breach of warranties. Also, dealership and distributor agreements usually deal with responsibility for defective goods. People who suffer injury, property damage, or product failure usually start looking for relief initially from where they bought the product. The chain of contracts ultimately allocates the responsibility among the product providers. 

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People and places >

There were some sparks in the room.

Despite the meeting being the very type to produce one of those “preaching to the crowd” scenarios, where everyone was already passionate about the subject, the RBTC’s (Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council) Tech & Toast session in Blacksburg on this August morning resulted in more than a few heads nodding in agreement.

The subject: Talent Development and Recruitment.
The panel: Recruiters and Human Resources pros.

The consensus was expected. We have a great place. No one pointed a finger at deficiencies in our region. From cost of living to quality of life to recreational amenities and overall environment, our region kicks it.

Also expected, was the consensus on the great need to get people here and keep them here.

So far, the panel of five and everyone else in the room remains on the same page.

With that much solidarity, this room at the Inn at Virginia Tech looked and felt like a Hokie Cheerleading Squad practice session.

Then the “how” question was asked. Suddenly, each of our cheerleaders wanted to work on a new routine.

Karen Edmonds with Montgomery County cited the advantages of Employee Assistance Plans, and how much she values working with our community colleges and STEM programs at universities. Practically speaking, we should be more flexible with pay plans, she said; the old pay grades and similar models are outdated.

Rob Wray of Carilion said we can’t ignore the impact of spouses and children when recruiting. When asked about types of jobs with the most promise for growth, he couldn’t have been more specific: health analytics.

Kathy Clayton of Corvesta reminded us that the average life span of a singular position is 4.4 years. She said employers need to be extra attentive to the career pathways of their people, and simply offering more money is only a bandaid.

Virginia Tech’s Stuart Mease said we do a great job educating, but then we end up giving that talent to another place (like Charlotte, if you must know). He also said one practical way to keep people here is to “recycle” or share job applications between companies when one doesn’t hire that person.

On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
Everybody seems to love where we live; now we need to prove it to everybody else.

Letters

Old and new

Re: the latest issue [August 2015] – great story on seniors on one end and hipsters taking Uber on the other. Keep up the good work!

Thomas Becher, APR
Roanoke



“ ”
It started at
the circus

— Page 22

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



RBTC moderator Jonathan Whitt facilitates questions with Recruitment panelists: Karen Edmonds, Rob Wray, Kathy Clayton, Stuart Mease, Alec Siegel.

Alec Siegel of Siegel Link described the difference between people who are already familiar with the region (who are more than willing to move back here if they had gone somewhere else) and candidates who would be new to the area (who don't necessarily realize the advantages).

Where will the solutions come from for attracting talent and keeping it here?

More than one panelist cited the RBTC organization itself. The networking is invaluable. This includes the job board and the Council's promotion of our technology sector.

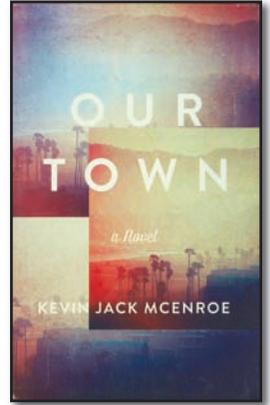
Training was also cited as a necessity, and employee development initiatives that foster engagement and an environment that would make an individual more likely to be embedded in the company's long term mission.

Not a single panelist said organizations here need to offer higher salaries or compensation plans.

We have the place.
We have some of the people.
But we have to move beyond the cheerleading now
and get to playing the game. 

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



Pointless honorarium

Kevin Jack McEnroe's *OurTown* (Counterpoint; 2015) is about a disappointing Hollywood family. One book jacket reviewer described it as Hollywood by *Revolutionary Road*, which was all I needed to give it a whirl. Unfortunately, it's no match at all, and that reviewer really stretched.

Our characters here are just pathetic; we are given no real motive for empathy, other than our own "God, save the American family" mantra we may happen to possess. One gets the notion our book here was supposed to plant a very real sense of time and place; but losers can show up anywhere, so the setting doesn't make a difference. The closest thing we get to knowing our Dorothy here is that she's not from Oz. You can get whatever else this book offers by dropping in any two-bit dive before happy hour ends or any place that gets its regular share of hopeless patrons, listening to them mumble about pointless things that don't matter.

—Tom Field

Judicial restraint

If you have lived in Southwest Virginia for any significant period of time, you have met many of the characters in Judge Martin Clark's fourth novel, *The Jezebel Remedy*. In this legal thriller, you'll encounter the eccentric and litigious Lettie Vansandt, the brilliant but neurotic Dr. Steven Downs, the rich and amorous M.J. Gold, and of course, Lisa and Joe Stone, a husband and wife

tag-team who practice law in Martinsville, VA.

Lettie has died in a fiery explosion in her mobile home (or has she?), and one of her mysterious elixirs has caught the attention of the wealthy and scheming Seth Garrison, the principal owner of Benecorps, a multinational pharmaceutical firm.

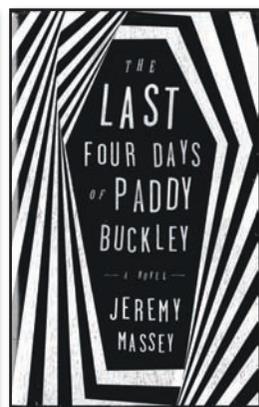
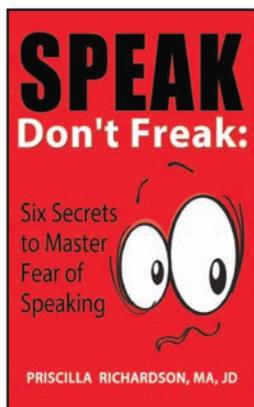
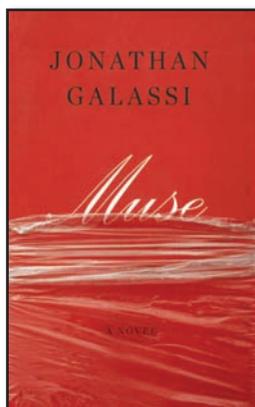
In a good tale that takes the reader from Henry County, to Roanoke, to the Bahamas and beyond, Judge Clark paints a humorous and compelling story filled with intrigue, compassion, and love – a solid story with amazing characters set forth here in our backyard.

—Robert Habermann

Proper nouns

Muse (Knopf; 2015) by Jonathan Galassi misinformed with its teasing jacket copy: "a novel about writers' secrets, publishers' obsessions, manuscripts, love, loyalty and betrayal, and the most gifted, glamorous, and elusive writer of her generation." Who could resist that? I couldn't. Had to pick it up.

Too bad the entire book is not much more than a compilation of proper nouns. There must be a thousand names of popular artists and their works. Proper noun name dropping that leads essentially, nowhere. It shouldn't be called a novel, but *Muse* reminds me exactly of those gossipy hosted celebrity television shows, where not much more is shared other than a flamboyant guy or gal sitting crossed legged in a artsy leather chair,



sharing who all he knows. And how! One gets a bit of a skewed look at the old world of publishing, with its *MadMen*-ish nostalgia (that part is drawn nicely), but nothing beyond that. Move along folks; there's nothing to see here.

—Tom Field

Speaking out

Public speaking seldom comes naturally to most people. However, Priscilla Richardson's *Speak Don't Freak: Six Secrets to Master Fear of Speaking* (Motivational Press; 2014), a little handbook on how to master the fears and anxieties of speaking, is a gem. It succinctly provides a checklist for anyone to confront the anxieties of communicating with an audience of any size. At some point in life everyone will be called upon to address a group. This can be daunting if you fear speaking.

Priscilla delineates her own story of progressing from childhood fears of speaking to success as a lawyer and mentor for many clients whom she helped to become successful public speakers. In short, concise chapters, she provides coaching and easy to follow instructions which any beginning speaker should follow.

As a retired United States Administrative Law Judge and U.S. Air Force Reserve JAG Colonel, I have many years of public speaking experience. I was fortunate to have a fine drama teacher in high school who developed my skills to the point of winning the Virginia

boys poetry reading championship as well as earning recognition as the top Civil Air Patrol cadet in the Virginia Wing. I strongly recommend this book.

—Glenn B. Hammond, Sr.

Impending obit

A lot can happen in four days. Especially if you're an Irish undertaker dealing with the unexpected deaths of an impromptu lover and a notorious mobster on the first day. Jeremy Massey's *The Last Four Days of Paddy Buckley* (Riverhead; 2015) has all the elements to make quite the fast-paced story you'll read like watching a surprisingly intriguing mini-mini series you happen to run across on the telly. You can argue whether what happens to our protagonist here is fate or misfortune, but he does indeed face it head on, not unlike the inevitable coffin or urn most of us ultimately meet at the end of the road. Our characters don't go too deep (within six feet at least) but we shan't interpret that as shallow development; after all we only have 96 hours and 285 pages to tell the story. Have a Guinness and enjoy. One's death sentence never seemed so fun.

—Tom Field

The reviewers: Robert Habermann is a retired judge who lives in Roanoke, and is the author of *Music in the Key of Time*; Glenn Hammond is a retired USAF colonel and judge from Roanoke; Tom Field is a creative director and publisher of FRONT



Bridal party >

Newfangled Bride and Flower Shoppe on Main celebrated an open house on Aug. 6, as the store moved into its new location at the former Radio Shack on Salem's Main Street.



Lotta love >

Hunting Hills County Club / Tennis Center in Roanoke County served as the setting for the "World's Largest Tennis Tournament" on Aug. 15; including 284 participants who set the Guinness World Record.



Yappin it up >

Local Eyes, a youth art show and community engagement initiative, held its public opening on Aug. 4 at the O. Winston Link Museum in Roanoke; **Monique Ingram**, **Shaneka Bynum**, and **Shawn Spencer**, founders of **Project Real Talk**, in collaboration with **Youth Advocate Programs (YAP)** attended the event, which launches a 6-week photography workshop for local youth.



Missing link >

The final two-mile stretch of the **Roanoke River Greenway**—connecting Bridge Street (at left) and the newest constructed segment at Aerial Way Drive at the Salem City line—awaits a private business property right-of-way acquisition; thus far, no eminent domain or condemnation issuances have been made for the multi-year, multi-million dollar grant funded civic project.

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



Kiser

Jason Kiser has been named president of Chas. Lunsford Sons & Associates.

Elizabeth Lynn Atkinson, sales representative for Humana Roanoke office has been qualified to receive the Leading Producers Round Table of the National Association of Health Underwriters Soaring Eagle Award.



Pospichal

Jason Pospichal has been promoted to senior vice president / loans at National Bank in Blacksburg.



Garrison

Mike Garrison has joined as mortgage loan originator at Integrity Home Mortgage Corp.



Mangus

Rob Mangus has been named vice president, private banker with HomeTown Private Wealth.



Conner

John Conner has been named a member of the 2015 Executive Council of New York Life Insurance Co. Credit Union.

LEGAL FRONT

William Lemon has been recognized by the Roanoke Bar Association with the 2015 Frank W. "Bo" Rogers Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award.

WELLNESS FRONT

Brad Dalton has been promoted to vice president of strategic initiatives at American HealthCare and its 17 Heritage Hall Healthcare and Rehabilitation Centers throughout Virginia.



Dalton

Jim Barker has been promoted to vice president of finance at Corvesta.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



McGee

John McGee, Virginia Tech professor and geospatial specialist for Virginia Cooperative Extension, received the 2015 Distinguished Geospatial Education Partner Award from the National Geospatial Technology Center of Excellence.



Lawhorn

Ben Lawhorn has joined as vice president at Global Metal Finishing.

Mark Blanks has been named associate director of the Mid-Atlantic Aviation



Blanks

Partnership at Virginia Tech.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Willis



Perkins



Eades

Mary Kaye Willis has been promoted to director, property services, overseeing western Virginia; **Jenny Perkins** has been promoted to portfolio manager; and **Brian Eades** has joined as assistant portfolio manager at Cushman & Wakefield |

Thalhimer's Property Services Group.



Ray

Michaela Ray of CMG Leasing has earned the National Apartment Leasing Professional designation.

Jerome Bonds, Jr. has joined as executive chef at Warm Hearth Village.

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.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT



Lawton

Kelley Lawton has joined as project manager at SiteVision, Inc.

EDUCATION FRONT

Van Crowder has been named executive director of the Office



Crowder

of International Research, Education, and Development

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Roanoke MSA = Roanoke City & County, Salem City + Botetourt, Craig, & Franklin Counties

Career FRONT

at Virginia Tech.

Ed Lynch, political science professor at Hollins University, has been named an Oman Alwaleed Fellow for 2015-16 by the National Council on U.S. Arab Relations.



Sitterley

professor at Virginia Tech, received the Society of Automotive Engineer's International Lloyd D. Withrow Distinguished Speaker Award at its 2015 World Congress.

CULTURE FRONT

Rachel Hopkins has been appointed vice president of development at Roanoke's Center in the Square.



Clubb

David Clubb has been named director of Virginia Tech's Cranwell International Center.

Shannon Taylor has been named head coach of the North Cross School Girls' Varsity Basketball team.

Dr. Carling Sitterley has joined as assistant director of admissions and student services at Virginia Tech's veterinary college.



Fricker

Ron Fricker has joined as professor and head of the department of statistics in the College of Science at Virginia Tech.



Parker

Robert Parker, mechanical engineering professor at Virginia Tech, received the 2015 American Society of Mechanical Engineers' N.O. Myklestad Award.

B. Keith Faulkner has been appointed law school dean at Liberty University.

Cliff Ragsdale has been appointed academic director for Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business Center for Business Intelligence and Analytics.

Blue Ridge Land Conservancy has announced its 2015-2016 officers and new trustees: **Linda Pharis**, president; **Betty Lesko**, president-elect; **F. Fulton Galer**, treasurer; **Whitney Feldman**, secretary; and trustees: **Frank Carter**, **Diana Christopoulos**, **Josh Gibson**, **Nelson Lafon**.

Habitat for Humanity Roanoke Valley has announced its officers for 2015-2016: **Mike Dame**, president; **Rev. Paul Henrickson**, vice president; **Stephanie Leiser**, treasurer; **Dinah Ferrance**, secretary; and new board members **Jeremy Carroll**, **Stephanie Leiser**, **Karen McNew**



Ahmadian

Mehdi Ahmadian, mechanical engineering

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McGuire, Dave Prosser,
Dr. Bertram Spetzler.

MUNICIPAL FRONTS

Charlie Jewell, from Montgomery County economic development, has been appointed executive director of the New River Valley Economic Development Alliance.

Stephen Simon has been appointed fire and rescue chief for Roanoke County.

H. Odell "Fuzzy" Minnix has been named chairman of



Simon



Minnix

the Roanoke Regional Airport Commission for the 2015-2016 term.

Compiled by Tom Field

“ Merchants who do not accept an EMV chip card when presented may be liable for any resulting fraud and related costs — Page 31

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Virginia Tech Carilion Court

VTC goes to court

Virginia Tech's Cassell Coliseum floor has been named **Virginia Tech Carilion Court**.

Sport well

Memorial Hospital of Martinsville and Henry County has launched a new sports medicine program, partnering with local schools to encourage prevention and provide treatment for sports injuries, including concussion testing.

Peanut gallery

Federal officials have recommended a sentence of life imprisonment for Stewart Parnell, former owner of **Peanut Corporation of America**, related to the charges against him and the

2008-2009 salmonella outbreak from food products attributed to nine deaths. Roanoke Gentry Locke attorney team defending Parnell states the government "failed to substantiate \$144 million in losses... [and] a sentence... so heavily influenced by monetary damages derived from [Parnell's] own decision to implement voluntary nationwide recalls will be counterproductive in the food industry."

Major acquisition

Anthem health insurance is buying its competitor Cigna in a deal valued at more than \$54 billion.

New chapter

Givens Books in Salem has reopened after the

retirement of Chip and Susan Givens and is now under the new management of Scott and Courtney Cavendish.

Bid on lake living

Lake Watch Plantation properties at the 480-acre mixed-use development site on Smith Mountain Lake in Franklin County will go to auction in mid-September; including 29 waterfront lots and about 50 building sites, house lots and commercial tracts.

Wind at Eagle Rock

Apex Clean Energy has applied for its building permit for three temporary test towers for potential windmills on the ridgeline of North Mountain in Botetourt County; the development also tests

the County's recently adopted industrial compliance ordinances.

LU law online

Liberty University will begin offering online law degrees this fall, including juris master's degrees in American legal studies and international legal studies and a master's of law in international legal studies.

International schooling

North Cross school in Roanoke County has signed a three-year agreement with the Xinhe Middle School in Shanghai, China to provide an "American-style" education to 50 tenth grade students this fall; the partnership allows graduates to earn a diploma from North

Cross-Xinhe School, with extended opportunities for entrance into U.S. colleges and universities.

W&L's high marks

Washington & Lee University was ranked 29th in American Top Colleges and 2nd in Top 25 Southern Schools by Forbes in its annual listing.

Big D flights

Roanoke Blacksburg Regional Airport has applied for a federal grant of \$600,000 for pitching airlines to service a new direct flight to either Dallas or Denver; two destinations in the top ten of passenger schedules out of the Roanoke market.

Hark, what yonder breaks

Virginia Shakespeare Initiative (VSI), a statewide commemoration of the upcoming 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death

on April 23, 2016, has launched a website [www.VAShakespeare.org] to promote Shakespeare programming in Virginia through December 2016.

Royal flush

IT Federal, a high tech firm serving government and institutional markets, is building its office complex on a former Superfund site in Front Royal; 600 jobs are expected with the \$40 million development.

Digitize legacy

Salem Museum seeks awareness and support to preserve its collection of old and rare photographs, as part of the "Virginia's Top Ten Endangered Artifact" program of the Virginia Association of Museums.

VCEN + VTKW

Virginia Community Economic Network and **VT KnowledgeWorks** have entered a strategic partnership to improve

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

competitiveness and expand the visibility and availability of community and economic development across the state.

Strummin' along

The world renown fiddlers convention in **Galax** now gets another distinction as 492 mandolin players strummed together on August 4 to enter the Guinness Book of World Records for the largest mandolin assembly in history.

Well connected

Virginia ranks third in the U.S. and 5th in the world for internet connection speeds, according to a Washington Post report by Akamai Technologies; an average peak of 79

megabits per second, just behind Washington DC (79.2) and Delaware (85.6).

Eat, drink, and be driven

Blue Ridge Wine Tour has been launched by Larry Landolt, expanding the group touring operation from Roanoke Food Tour and Roanoke Craft Beer Tour.

Energy watch

On August 3, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released its final rule on the **Clean Power Plan (CPP)**, a regulation calling for a 32 percent reduction "below 2005 levels by 2030" or greenhouse gas emissions from power plants; states



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are allowed to develop their own compliance plans.

Recreational upgrade

Claytor Lake State Park is in the process of reviewing an updated master plan to include construction of new cabins, shelters, boat dock, amphitheater, welcome center and other restorations.

Vet nurse

Jefferson College of Health Sciences received a \$1 million grant from Health Resources and Services Administration

Bureau of Health Professions for the development of a nursing degree program for veterans.

Theatrical upgrade

Historic **Grandin Theatre** in Roanoke is applying its \$50,000 grant from Roanoke Economic Development Authority to renovate the façade, marquee, box office and entrance.

Coal struggle

Alpha Natural Resources, with coal mine operations in Virginia, has filed for

Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

Repeal on mining ban sought

Virginia Uranium, owner of a large uranium site in Pittsylvania County, has filed a federal lawsuit against the state's ban on uranium mining.

Beware the path

A bicyclist who crashed and was injured in June 2012 when avoiding a jogger who "turned around suddenly without determining that it was safe to do so" on the **Roanoke River**

Greenway was awarded \$300,000 in a negligence suit in Roanoke Circuit Court.

Toys for two valleys

Toys and Furniture in Blacksburg is opening a new **Imagination Station** store in Roanoke.

Retail wagging

PetCo, a global pet supply store, has filed permit to build a second store in Roanoke at Towne Square Shopping Center.

Burritos at base of Mill Mt

Moe's Southwest Grill, with restaurants in Blacksburg and Lynchburg, is opening at The Bridges complex in Roanoke.

Electrical outlet

Williams Supply in Roanoke has been acquired by Raleigh NC-based Electrical Equipment Co.

Pig out

Piggly Wiggly grocery store in southeast Roanoke has closed; owners citing lack of business.

Carilion life

Carilion Clinic has purchased the Shenandoah Life headquarters building and 27 acre campus on



Jefferson College of Health Science

Brambleton Avenue for \$4.6 million; the life insurance company will relocate.

IA contract

Roanoke-based **Interactive Achievement**, an educational software developer, intends to add approximately 35 jobs upon its award of a contract with Virginia Department of Education.

Co-op—co-op

Southern States Roanoke Cooperative has merged with **Rockingham Cooperative Farm Bureau**.

Cuts in Advance

Advance Auto Parts is eliminating 50 positions at its corporate location in Roanoke (and another 50 jobs in Raleigh).

Chip check

October 1 is the deadline set by credit card issuers to mitigate liability for fraud by requesting businesses and merchants to transition to the more secure computer **chip-embedded credit cards** versus magnetic strips; despite reports that less than half of U.S. small businesses are ready to adopt the technology or are even



Interactive Achievement

aware of the deadline.

Coal-related business export

Go Global with Coal & Energy Technology (GCCET) has launched in Virginia, an economic development program for companies in the coalfield region to market their products and services overseas.

Bye, bye, BEV

Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV), a technology network

organization that made an historic milestone out of the town of Blacksburg with its mission to connect a whole community to the internet in 1993, is closing its email and website hosting service at the end of this year.

Wireless acquired

Shenandoah Telecommunications (Shentel) is purchasing Waynesboro-based wireless provider **nTelos** for a reported \$640 million; the nTelos name will drop (the company has an agreement with Sprint),

and the newly expanded company will operate from Shentel's headquarters in Edinburg.

Forestry equipment supplier shines

Jewell Machinery, a forestry and heavy equipment service and maintenance shop in Rocky Mount, has been named to the 2015 Inc. 5000 list ranking of the nation's fastest-growing private companies.

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.



A clear mission >

Executive Summary:

With a bicycle, some cleaning supplies, a little elbow grease, and a lot of gumption—you're in business.

By Anne Sampson

Sam Waller does windows.

He is the Glass Monkey, cleaner of residential and commercial glass. You may have seen his dapper figure wielding a squeegee on the city market, or pedaling a bicycle outfitted with buckets, poles and cleaners.

"I've ridden my bike all over the country," he says. "I thought it would be great to have a job where I could ride my bike around the city. And I'm good at this."

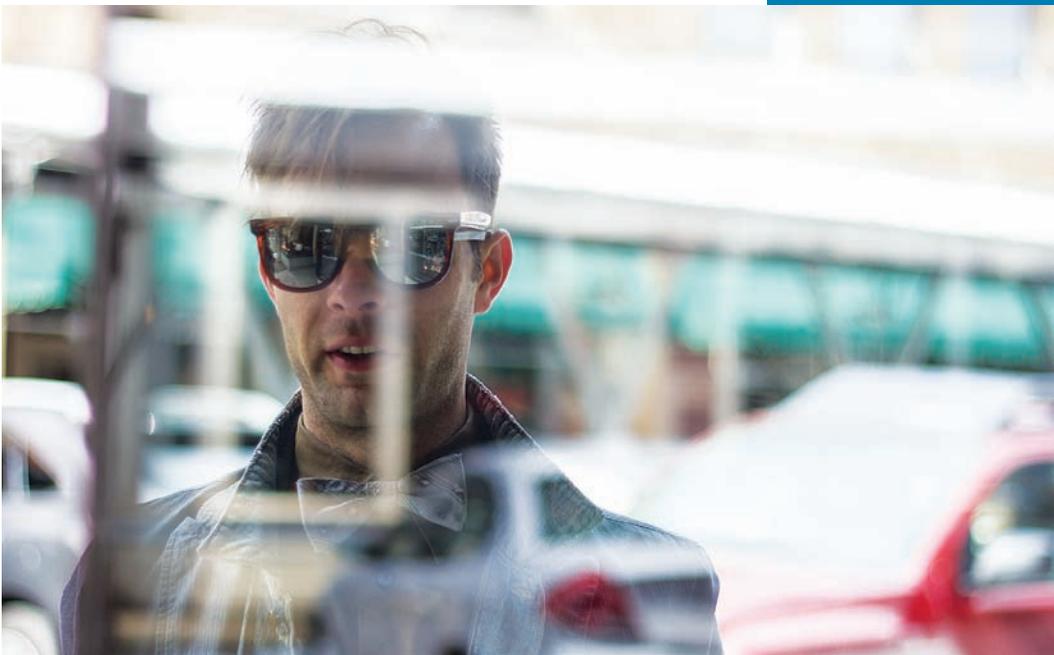
"He does a great job," agrees Carole Hughes, owner of La De Da on Church Avenue and one of Sam's clients. "You can't help but like Sam. And he dresses so smartly."

Sam's distinctive look — nice jackets, bow ties — is part natural, part intentional. "I've always liked looking sharp," he says, "and I realized that, every time I walked to into a business, I was looking for a job." He decided to dress the part. "The job is straightforward, but I want to look classy out there doing it."

Fluid, graceful movements and flourishes distinguish Sam's working style. "I love your choreography!" exclaims one client. The work itself is a meditative practice, punctuated by the twirl of a tool as it's returned to its holster.

"I think the bike, the clothes and the way I wash windows came to together to take me to a new level," says Sam. Heading toward the end of his second year in October, he's considering the future possibility of more window washers and an office assistant.

Sam just completed his largest job to date, working 19 hours to clean 1000 windows. With a new bike from Starlight Bicycles and plans for expansion, the Glass Monkey is moving forward. "I have a motto, 'Stagnation is a helluva drug,'" he says. "I try to keep evolving, changing." 



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