

# Valley Business FRONT

**VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE  
BUSINESS JOURNAL**  
ROANOKE/NEW RIVER VALLEYS & REGION  
FREE • ISSUE 102 • MARCH 2017

[vbFRONT.com](http://vbFRONT.com)

## Pet-Friendly Workplaces

Winnie,  
Berryfield

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**Term Loan**

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Shameless, I know.

I put our own cat on the FRONTcover.

Sometimes, in the rush of production, we go with what's convenient and practical. In our story on pet-friendly businesses, we were out and about at so many places, snatching up photos and on-the-spot snapshots of this dog here, this cat here, this guinea pig there, and everything in a knick-knack-paddy-wack-give-a-dog-a-bone fashion, that when it came time for the cover model selection, we found our treat pocket rather empty. This dog wasn't available on the day we needed, this business wasn't open the hour we needed, this animal... well, she doesn't really like men.

So at crunch time, rather than trek back out to one of our most worthy subjects, someone made the suggestion to use our own pet-friendly business. Thus, Winnie and Klaus stepped up to sign the model releases with their furry little paws. Both felines "work" at the Berryfield administrative office (our publisher). Klaus was not all too happy that Winnie got top billing; but then again that's what he gets for his antics as the younger "employee" who constantly attacks and ambushes his work-mate as she merely walks by the water cooler as she used to do in peace, for years, before that fateful day when he arrived. I fear a discrimination or sexual harassment lawsuit any day.

In any case, please forgive me for putting my own cat on the cover. Sometimes, I think animals rule the world.



**Tom Field**

“What about bringing extra people? Oh, no, no, no, that's not your call! — Page 23

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“Contact me...  
But I might say no.

— Page 28



# Valley Business FRONT

P.O. Box 1041  
Salem, VA 24153  
(540) 389-9945  
www.vbFRONT.com

## Staff

Publisher / Creative Director	Tom Field tfield@vbFRONT.com (540) 389-9945
Interim New Editor	Christine Liana news@vbFRONT.com
Advertising	Dan Dowdy ddowdy@vbFRONT.com (540) 797-7943  ads@vbFRONT.com (540) 389-9945
Graphic Designer	Nicholas Vaassen nvaassen@berryfield.com
Production	Berryfield, Inc. PO Box 1041 Salem, VA 24153 (540) 389-9945

## Departmental Contacts

Advertising	ads@vbFRONT.com
Subscriptions	info@vbFRONT.com
News / Releases	news@vbFRONT.com
Admin / Ops	info@vbFRONT.com

**(540) 389-9945**  
**vbFRONT.com**  
**morefront.blogspot.com**

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# MARCH



Ashlyn Davidson



Pete Deaver



Kathleen Harshberger



Bobbi Hoffman



Nicholas Vaassen



Alison Weaver

## Editorial Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of 14 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



Dan Dowdy



Kay Dunkley



Tom Field



Keith Finch



Mike Leigh



Ariel Lev



Christine Liana



Kathy Surace

“Well, kiddo, it's up to you. You need to drive us home. — Page 41

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 46.

## 2017 Members

**Nancy Agee** Carilion (Wellness)  
**Laura Bradford** Claire V (Retail)  
**Nicholas C. Conte** Carilion (Legal)  
**Warner Dalhouse** Retired (Seniors)  
**John Garland** Garland Properties (Development)  
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**Nanci Hardwick** Aeroprobe (Tech/Industry)  
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**Nancy May** LewisGale Regional Health System (Wellness)  
**Stuart Mease** Virginia Tech (Education)  
**Mary Miller** ACI (Tech/Industry)  
**Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners (Development)

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

“Filbert once ate a meeting agenda. — Page 21

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# "Who Let The Dogs In?"

## *Pets @ Work*

### Pets in the workplace >

**Executive Summary:**  
*FRONT visits workplaces that allow pets; we found a lot of happy, wagging tails.*

**By Bobbi A. Hoffman**

At Rackspace in Blacksburg, the rule is BYOB: bring your own bed. Dog bed, that is. More companies than ever before are animal-friendly, whether those animals live at the office, come in with customers or accompany employees to work.

Shop dogs ... and cats ... and guinea pigs? Quite a few local businesses have "shop dogs" — dogs that come to work with business owners or employees and go home at the end of the day.

In Roanoke's Grandin Village, shoppers might be greeted by Jackie, a black standard poodle who comes to work at Too Many Books with part-time employee JoAnn Lampros. Customers are also welcome to bring their dogs into the bookstore while they shop.

In the next block, Reid's Fine Furniture has Lucy, a yellow Lab who accompanies Bill and Andrea Waide, owners of the furniture store on Grandin Road.

And less than a mile away on Memorial Avenue, one of the nation's best-known shop dogs — a black Lab named Sally — is often onsite to greet visitors at Black Dog Salvage, the upscale salvage business featured on the DIY network television show "Salvage Dawgs." Sally is the second black dog to work at the store. She follows in the footsteps of the original black dog, Molly, who provided Sally with eight months of on-the-job training

# COVER STORY

before she died at age 13. In addition to being company mascot, Sally's job duties include greeter and overall morale booster.

According to Christa Stephens, branding and promotions director, Sally is a fan favorite and is likely the most photographed subject at Black Dog Salvage. "We often joke that we know who the star of the show is. Sally!"

Sally lives with Black Dog co-owner Mike Whiteside. Whiteside's son Tay, also a Black Dog employee, brings his two black dogs to work too: Stella, adopted from the Roanoke Valley SPCA, and Molly May, adopted from rescue group Save a Lab.

Stephens says the dogs serve as icebreakers and conversation starters for the customers, and employees love having the dogs on-site.

A closer look reveals that it's not just dogs that are working.

Roanoke Electric Supply, a distributor of electrical and industrial supplies, was ahead of the animals-at-work trend. Way ahead. Lynn Zimmerman, vice president, says the Salem Avenue business has had resident cats for at least 18 years. Cats have come in as rescues and strays, and their assignment is to keep mice out of the warehouse. REZ currently employs Stinky, an 8-year-old tripod pictured on the company's website, and Syd Vicious, a 6-month-old kitten rescued by REZ president Robert "Zeke" Zimmerman. To show her appreciation for being scooped up from an intersection,



**Black Dog Salvage**



Anna Bowser Photography



Affinity Consulting Group

she promptly bit Zeke, earning her name. Syd enjoys playing with the dogs that work the day shift, whereas Stinky prefers to keep his distance.

Until recently, Affinity Consulting Group (formerly Automated Horizons) in Roanoke's Old Southwest neighborhood had two office cats, Tux and Onyx, who shared the office with ten employees. Britt Lorish, a partner in the legal technology and law firm management consulting company, rescued the cats in 2006, and the brothers lived in the Affinity office until it closed its doors in 2016 because the employees were working remotely and a local office wasn't needed. Tux and Onyx now live with Lorish and her other cats.

Not many of Affinity's customers were local, so there were few outside visitors. "If someone was coming in, we would let them know we have cats and ask if they were allergic," says Lorish. "If so, we would put the cats in an area of the office away from the conference room, but I only recall that happening once or twice. Most clients thought it was cool."

Lorish thinks the cats helped to reduce stress and bring a little joy to the office. "They are very loving lap cats, and it put a smile on people's faces to see them. Of course, they could be mischievous and distracting sometimes, but that's a cat for you!"

One of the more unusual examples of workplace animals is the two guinea pigs who live at A Little Bit Hippy, a retail store at Towers Mall in Roanoke. Sadie was formerly a classroom pet who got plenty of attention but lived in a small cage.

Storeowner Heidi Bundy says, "Sadie is very much like a shop dog." To prove her point, Bundy wrinkles a plastic produce bag, and Sadie starts squealing for the fresh kale she knows is inside.

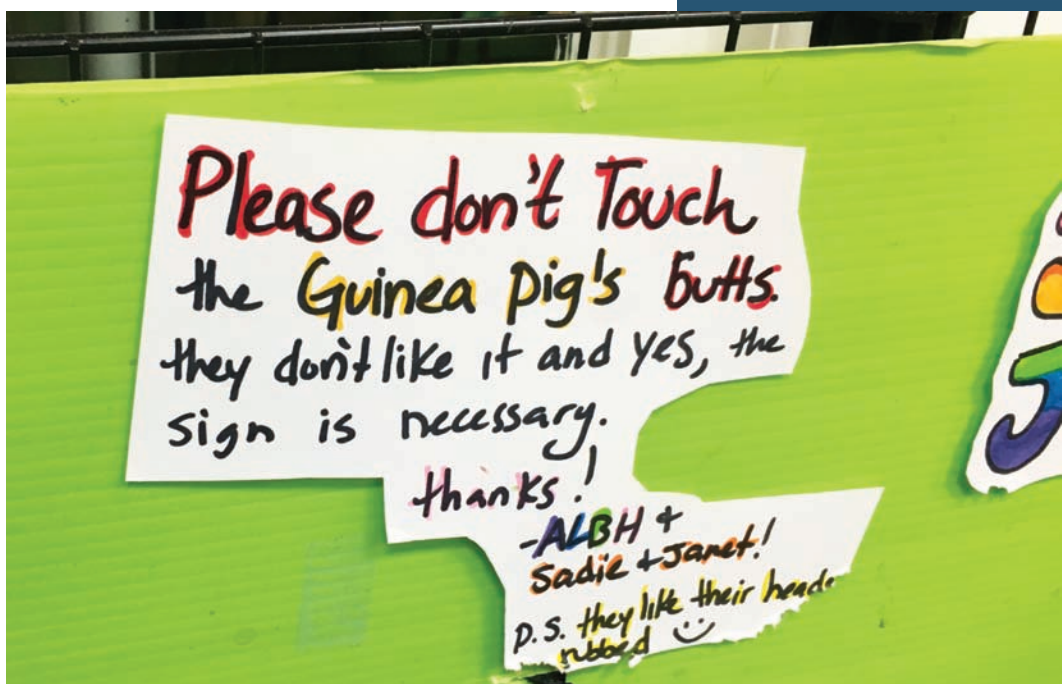




The store recently added a second guinea pig, Janet, to keep Sadie company.

Bundy says that many people stop by the shop to visit with the guinea pigs, which is good for business. Sadie and Janet enjoy being petted, but a sign above their enclosure warns visitors, "Please don't touch the guinea pig's [sic] butts." It seems that guinea pigs have an innate fear of being scooped up from behind by a bird of prey, so it's best to pet their heads.

**A Little Bit Hippy**  
storeowner Heidi  
Bundy and Janet (left)  
Sadie (right)





## Dogs as an employee benefit

Glassdoor.com — the online job search and employer rating website — now includes "pet-friendly workplace" in its list of employee benefits, along with the usual health insurance and paid sick leave.

On the Glassdoor.com Best Places to Work: 2017 Employees' Choice list, at least seven of the top 30 companies — 23 percent — are pet-friendly, including Google, Facebook, Nestle Purina PetCare, Intuit and NVIDIA. That's nearly three times the eight percent of U.S. companies that reported being pet-friendly in a survey by the Society for Human Resource Management, up from five percent in 2013.

Pets in the office might be expected at companies like Amazon and West Coast tech startups known for providing a casual, flexible atmosphere. And finding dogs under desks might not be surprising at animal-related companies like the Humane Society of the U.S., Purina PetCare and Petco. But the trend toward pet-friendly workplaces can also be found in some less-obvious companies such as Time, Etsy, Ben & Jerry's, Bissell and Replacements — a Greensboro, North Carolina, retailer of new and antique china and crystal, where 20 to 30 dogs come to work daily.

At Amazon's 30-building campus in Seattle, 2,000 dogs regularly come to work with 25,000 employees. Amazon provides treats at reception desks and exercise areas at each building.

Forty-five percent of Petco's 650 employees at its San Diego headquarters regularly bring animals. In addition to dogs, cats, reptiles, birds and fish can be found in offices and cubicles.

One reason for the increased focus on pets at work is that in 2016, Millennials passed Baby Boomers as the country's largest living population segment. The research firm Mintel found that pet ownership among Millennials is significantly higher than for the rest of the population, perhaps because this group is delaying marriage and parenthood and adopting pets instead. In the workplace, Millennials demand a flexible schedule and more work-life balance, which includes bringing their pets to work. Human resources professionals see a pet-friendly workplace as a cheap employee benefit to help recruit and retain the employees they seek.

The pet-friendly benefits don't stop at the ability to bring a pooch to work. According to Fortune magazine, some companies are now providing pet insurance, boarding or in-home feeding for the pets of employees who travel, bereavement leave, vet "house calls" at the office and free training. On-site amenities can include dog parks and play areas, water bowls, pet gates, poop bags and treats.



Klaus, at Berryfield

## Implementing a pet-friendly policy >

For employees interested in establishing a pet-friendly policy in their workplace, the Internet offers plenty of guidelines and tips, including checklists to get started, ideas for getting co-workers and management on board, sample policies and requirements, things to consider, such as leases and employees with allergies, pet etiquette rules and templates to copy and adapt.

### Suggestions include:

- Read up on the benefits of pet-friendly workplaces.
- Check the company's lease. For companies that lease their office space, it can be a challenge to find commercial real estate space that allows pets.
- Get buy-in from management and staff.
- Set up a committee of employees to establish guidelines, such as pet-free zones, walking/play areas, and owner responsibilities.
- Start with a trial run, perhaps Take Your Dog to Work Day, which is Friday, June 23. Of course, it's best to give it more than one day; just like employees, it takes animals a few weeks to get in the swing of a new work culture and expectations.

Animal behaviorist Megan Maxwell recommends that workplaces trying out a pet-friendly policy make sure that the first dogs that come to work are calm and friendly — ambassadogs, so to speak — rather than dogs that jump, bark or are fearful. That good first impression will go a long way toward winning the hearts of management and non-dog-loving employees and opening up a wider dog policy.

Some of the best online resources are available from Purina's Pets at Work program ([Purina.com/PetsAtWork](http://Purina.com/PetsAtWork)), the Humane Society of the U.S. ([hsus.org](http://hsus.org)), Trupanion pet insurance (<http://trupanion.com/pets-in-the-workplace>) and Pet Sitters International, which founded Take Your Dog to Work Day 19 years ago (<https://www.petsit.com/takeyourdog>).

HSUS also offers a book on the subject, "Dogs at Work: A Practical Guide to Creating Dog-Friendly Workplaces," by Liz Palika and Jennifer Fearing.



**Pet Sitters International**  
[ [www.petsit.com](http://www.petsit.com) ] says  
this year's Take Your Dog  
To Work Day is Friday,  
June 23rd.

## Local pet-friendly workplaces

Rackspace, located in Blacksburg's Corporate Research Center, is one of those hip firms that provides free snacks and cool benefits for its employees. Step inside and you'll find swinging pod chairs, a Ping-Pong table and dogs of all sizes. About 15 of the office's 95 employees, called "Rackers," bring their dogs to work one or more days per month, though there are usually five dogs or fewer on any given day.

Office manager Jarret Rhyner usually has his rescued greyhound on a bed by his desk. Rhyner adopted Filbert, a retired racer, from Star City Greyhounds. Filbert follows Rhyner around the building, occasionally walking into

## Dining and drinking al fresco >

When you're out with your dog and find yourself in need of a meal or a beverage, there are plenty of options for al fresco dining, weather permitting.

Grab a table on the large deck of The Green Goat restaurant near the Greenway in the Wasena neighborhood of Roanoke, and you'll find water bowls and dog treats for your four-legged dinner companion.

Just about every eatery and coffee shop with outdoor dining is dog-friendly, including Nopales Restaurant, Rockfish Food & Wine, CUPS Coffee & Tea and Village Grill in Grandin Village; Chipotle at Towers Mall and Moe's on Jefferson Street; Firefly Fare in the City Market Building; Wildflower Restaurant in Old Southwest and Buffalo Wild Wings near Tanglewood Mall.

Until recently, dog lovers could also bring their BFFs inside local microbreweries and wineries, but that privilege was revoked by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. VDACS clarified a state law that previously applied to venues that manufactured and served food. When craft brewers and wineries were given permission to sell alcohol without having to sell a certain amount of food to maintain an ABC license, they assumed it was OK for customers to bring their dogs inside. So did the Virginia Tourism Corporation, which touted a list of pet-friendly breweries on its website.

Soaring Ridge Craft Brewers, located in a large, open building on Shenandoah Avenue in Roanoke, had been dog-friendly since it opened in 2014. Dogs laid under tables or sat by their people at the bar, and dogs with "Adopt Me" vests from local shelters were there as well. Customers asked about the dogs looking for homes, took their photos and shared their information on social media. It made for a family-friendly atmosphere.

"Beer and dogs just seem to go hand in hand," says Claire Ainsworth, general manager. "Everyone loved having the dogs in." Sometimes Soaring Ridge even had a cat that sat on a stool while visiting.

The good times came to a stop last October when a customer complained to VDACS that a dog had peed inside. Ainsworth says that even though the accident was cleaned up within three minutes and no one complained to Soaring Ridge's management, the brewery was contacted by VDACS and told that they weren't supposed to have dogs in the building.

glass walls — a common issue for a breed that rarely grows up in a home.

Rhyner sees many benefits to bringing dogs to work. For one, "Being able to bring Filbert in allows me to be closer to my co-workers," says Rhyner. "It helps foster friendships."

Being allowed to bring their dogs to work is considered an employee benefit to Rackers, who believe the policy improves morale, builds camaraderie, improves communication and helps manage stress. Employees don't tend to watch the clock or run out at 5 p.m., in a hurry to get to pets that have been home alone all day.

Another benefit to employees is increased exercise. They get up and take their dogs outside to walk and take care of business — and it's not just the dog owners. Walking



The deck of The Green Goat, just off the Greenway at Roanoke River, is particularly pet-friendly

Despite the confusion about the regulation, Soaring Ridge decided to enforce the no-animals rule immediately to avoid incurring a penalty.

According to Ainsworth, some customers were very upset. Dogs are still welcome to sit at the outdoor tables, but that option is less appealing during winter temperatures.

Whether the no-dogs-inside rule has hurt business is tough to tell, says Ainsworth. The months since it was implemented are typically the slowest, yet business grew over the same months last year.

Some other breweries, including Parkway Brewery in Salem, continued to allow dogs. However, Parkway announced on Feb. 1 that dogs would no longer be allowed inside, per notice from VDACS. Like most other restaurants, coffee shops, bars, breweries, and wineries, dogs are welcome at tables outside.

meetings on the Innovation Drive "loop" are common.

Employees who want to bring their dogs must sign an agreement to follow rules established by an employee committee. For example, dogs are required to stay on leash and with their person. What happens if someone breaks the rules? If there is a complaint — which is usually about barking or causing a distraction — the employee must go to Puppy Court, where five randomly chosen co-workers hear the complaint and discuss the situation. To date, no dog (or owner) has been sanctioned in Puppy Court; the worst case was an employee was told to take a break from bringing the dog to work.

Systems engineer Michael Snow brings Sandler, a medium-sized mixed breed, to work at Rackspace to give him the opportunity to socialize with people and



**Rackspace's  
Michael Snow &  
Sandler**

other dogs. Sandler likes to visit the Rackspace employees he knows will give him extra attention before settling down to hang out with Snow for the rest of the day. Snow considers it an employee benefit to be able to bring Sandler to work. "I don't have to worry about him home alone all day."

Even employees without dogs are fans of the pet-friendly policy. At the workspace behind Snow's, Racker Kelly O'Brien thinks the dogs bring a calming presence to the workplace. "I love it," she says. "On a stressful day, there's nothing more calming than being able to pet a dog."

Steve Swenson, a software developer, brings his 13-year-old dachshund, Oscar, to work two to three days per week. "There's a certain peace of mind when you have a dog this old," he explains. "She's not home alone eight to ten hours per day. I can take her out at lunchtime to walk and get her exercise." [Note: Oscar is female.]

**Rackspace's Oscar**



Swenson, who likes walking around and petting dogs, thinks Rackspace's dog-friendly policy shows that "the company understands that this is more than a job. Knowing the company supports it just makes it a better place to work."

Whether having dogs in the office helps with employee recruitment and retention at Rackspace isn't known, but Rhyner thinks the policy is an important piece of the company's supportive culture that encourages employees to stay. "We do things to make people more comfortable working here. When they're relaxed, they're able to focus better, which translates into a better work product," Rhyner says.

Seven dogs work and play at Roanoke Electrical Supply,

## Animal allowances >

If you're confused about where dogs (and other animals) are allowed and where they aren't, you're not alone. Anyone can go online and purchase a vest embroidered with "Service Dog" for their family canine if they want to try to bypass laws, policies or leases that forbid animals. To make things even more confusing, service dogs aren't required to wear a vest or specific ID, nor do they have to go through any particular training or be listed on a registry.



**There are three primary categories of animals that help people:**

**Service animals** are dogs that have been trained to perform one or more tasks for a person with a disability. These tasks must be directly related to the disability and could include guiding a visually impaired person, retrieving items for someone in a wheelchair or alerting a person with epilepsy to the onset of a seizure. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that businesses, government agencies and nonprofits that provide goods and services to the public allow service dogs in areas where the public is allowed to go. For example, a service dog would be allowed in a restaurant or a hospital room, but not in the restaurant's kitchen or an operating room where the public is not permitted.

**Emotional support animals**, also called assistance animals, provide therapeutic benefit to individuals diagnosed with emotional or psychiatric disabilities. These animals provide comfort, but they do not perform specific tasks, so the ADA does not apply. Emotional support animals are usually dogs but can be cats or other species.

**Therapy animals** are pets and can be any species — dogs, cats, birds, rodents, horses and others. They are not allowed in places that prohibit animals except by prior agreement. Therapy animals accompany their owners to facilities such as schools, camps, hospitals, nursing homes and rehabilitation centers, where they spend time with students, children, patients and residents.

The Fair Housing Act applies to service animals and emotional support animals and requires that they be accommodated in almost all types of housing — including college dorms and properties with "no pet" rules. The owners of rental properties cannot charge a pet deposit or extra rent for service or support animals.

though six is the maximum at any one time due to employee schedules. When added to the two resident cats (and occasional "freeloaders"), the unusual spelling of the business's name might more appropriately be pronounced "Zoo-ply," jokes Lynn Zimmerman, REZ vice president. Company president Zeke Zimmerman, brings his two dogs — a redbone coonhound named Bunny, and Harvey, a miniature pinscher. Lynn Zimmerman also brings her dogs to work. Max is a boxer-pit mix rescued as a puppy from a homeless man who couldn't care for him, and Ivy, a Great Dane-pit mix, was adopted from Forever Home Animal Rescue — a Roanoke foster-based rescue group. Employee Andie Atkins brings her golden doodle, Maggie, and mixed breed, Penny, in the mornings and takes them home at lunchtime. Another employee brings her boxer one day a week.



Berryfield's Winnie



The dogs have the run of the warehouse along with a fenced-in area when they want to play outside. If a customer is afraid of dogs, they are temporarily confined to an office, but Lynn Zimmerman says for the most part, "the customers like the dogs. The regulars bring them biscuits." She thinks the dog-friendly policy is beneficial to employees who can bring their dogs, and having dogs in the workplace reduces employee stress.

At HyperGen Inc., a small IT consulting business in the Hollins area of Roanoke County, boxes of dog toys are located at both ends of the second floor, and treats are available on employee desks. Gabriel, a 1-year-old German shepherd belonging to company CEO Sherry Dyer, roams the upper floor, hoping to find an employee to take him outside to play fetch. An employee brings Buddy, a 7-year-old mixed breed who also has the run of the upstairs.

Dyer says the 27 employees like having the dogs in the office, although "the potty training stage may have been frustrating to some." As at Roanoke Electrical Supply, determining whether potential employees are dog-friendly is part of the interview process. Dyer sees a benefit to having the dogs break up the monotony of the workday.

## Benefits to employees and businesses

The Centers for Disease Control website states that pets can decrease blood pressure, cholesterol, triglycerides and loneliness while increasing exercise and outdoor activities and opportunities for socialization.

Virginia Commonwealth University business professor Randolph Barker decided to see if the positive effects of pets also applied to dogs in the workplace. Barker and his colleagues conducted research at Replacements — the North Carolina china and crystal retailer — to determine the effect that dogs have on employee stress and organizational perceptions.

The study, published in the International Journal of Workplace Health Management in 2012, compared a group of employees that brought their dogs to work with a group of dog owners whose dogs stayed home and a third group that didn't have dogs. The researchers found that stress levels of employees who brought their dogs to work decreased over the workday, whereas stress levels for the other two groups increased. Interestingly, the group that left their dogs at home had significantly higher stress than the group with no dogs, and stress levels rose consistently over the course of the day. Researchers speculated that this groups' rising stress levels might be due to a growing concern about dogs left at home.

The group whose dogs came to work also reported more favorable job satisfaction with regard to benefits, promotion, procedures, pay and communication.

## Shopping with your dog >

Grandin Village in southwest Roanoke city is one of the most dog-friendly areas in the region. The eclectic neighborhood is home to many canines that can be seen out walking, jogging and biking with their people. It helps that many of the local businesses are pet-friendly.

Walk down Grandin Road on a warm day and you'll see water bowls in front of Too Many Books, CUPS Coffee & Tea, Urban Gypsy boutique, and Viva La Cupcake. Go around the corner onto Memorial Avenue, and there's also fresh water at Pop's Ice Cream & Soda Bar.

If you want to shop or take care of banking, there's no need to leave your dog at home. Dogs are welcome at Urban Gypsy, Too Many Books, Starlight Bikes, and the Bank of North Carolina branch. Urban Gypsy and BNC stock treats for canine visitors, which makes them favorites with neighborhood dogs and their human companions. And nearby on Memorial Avenue, leashed dogs are welcome to join the crew of black dogs at Black Dog Salvage.

Of course, there are plenty of pet-friendly stores in other parts of the region. In downtown Roanoke, Gypsy Palooza too, Tink's Place, Ripple, Walkabout Outfitters, Ladles and Linens, Valleys of Africa, Shabby Love, The Candy Store and Orvis welcome dogs. The owner and employees of Gypsy Palooza too love dogs and have been known to post photos of visiting dogs who need homes on the store's Facebook page. Tink's Place and Orvis keep a supply of dog treats for visitors. Walkabout Outfitters and Orvis also provide water bowls.

The Walkabout Outfitters stores in Blacksburg and at Valley View Mall in Roanoke are also pet-friendly, as is Plow & Hearth at Valley View. In Franklin County, those shopping for flowers can feel free to bring their dog to visit Diane Arrington at Arrington Flowers & Gifts in Rocky Mount.

Other good bets for dog-friendly businesses are local hardware stores, Lowe's, Tractor Supply and some Home Depot stores.



Dogs are welcome at Starlight Bicycles

Barker concluded that a pet-friendly policy can be a positive move for businesses. Reduced stress levels can translate to increased employee productivity, improved morale and decreased absenteeism and turnover, he says.

Another benefit emerged from a recent study at Central Michigan University. Researchers found that when dogs are present with a group of employees, workers are more likely to trust each other and collaborate more effectively.

Animals in the workplace might also reduce health care costs for employees and businesses. Research conducted

by the Human-Animal Bond Research Institute estimated \$11 billion in health care cost savings associated with pet ownership in the U.S. The great majority of the savings was attributed to fewer doctor visits and a lower rate of obesity among dog owners.

## Customer engagement

Urban Gypsy, a funky boutique and gift shop on Grandin Road, has been pet-friendly since opening its doors in 2010. In fact, owner Ashley Shaffner's 110-pound Tibetan mastiff, Pabu, was a part of her business plan and could often be seen supervising from his spot in the front window while Shaffner was setting up the store.

Shaffner describes herself as an "animal enthusiast." She always keeps dog treats behind the sales counter and a water bowl at the front door.

"We train the neighborhood dogs to come in, which brings their owners in. It's smart business," she says. "It's also a good conversation starter to get to know the customers that come in."

In addition to dogs, Urban Gypsy has been visited by cats, a hedgehog, a pot-bellied pig, a ferret, and a rabbit. Shaffner says she has never had a complaint about her four-legged visitors, and the only problem has been an occasional "accident," which is no big deal.

## The animals benefit too

In addition to benefitting the employees and the business, coming to work has a tremendous upside for the animals. Megan Maxwell, a certified applied animal behaviorist in Blacksburg, sees many advantages for the dogs, especially for younger or recently adopted dogs that need enrichment and socialization. Going to work can also be a boon for senior dogs that need to go out more frequently and would likely spend the day sleeping at home anyway.

Being able to take a dog to work could also be the solution to the common behavioral problem of separation anxiety, Maxwell says. Left alone at home, these dogs often become destructive, chew on inappropriate objects and whine or bark.

"For dogs who are friendly, relaxed and easygoing, or for dogs with a touch of separation anxiety, it can be a huge benefit," says Maxwell. "They get to spend the day with their owners."

The ultimate benefit for some animals is that they get a home at all. With the huge overpopulation of dogs in rescues and shelters, an employee who can bring a dog to work is more likely to adopt knowing the dog won't

Rackspace Filbert





**Rackspace Jarret  
Rhyner & Filbert**

be stuck at home alone all day where they might be bored, unhappy and destructive.

## The downside


A Racker who is allergic to dogs says that having the dogs in the office is not a problem. He simply avoids touching them. Some companies set up pet-free zones to accommodate employees with more severe allergies. Of course, potential employees know about the animal policy when they apply, and some companies make it part of the interview process.

A Little Bit Hippy had one customer who was allergic to the timothy hay the guinea pigs eat, but it wasn't a serious allergy, and the customer was happy to keep to other areas of the store.

Another issue is when an animal dies.

At Affinity Consulting, the first office cat, Java, had FIP (feline infectious peritonitis) and died after only a year. "When Java died, everyone in the office was devastated," Britt Lorish says. "They loved having an office kitty." That's when she rescued brothers Tux and Onyx.

A similar situation occurred at HyperGen when original corporate mascot, Angel, died. "It was very difficult for the employees," recalls Sherry Dyer.

Other problems? Occasional accidents inside, dogs that don't love all the other dogs and too much socializing. Jarret Rhyner at Rackspace admits that Filbert once ate a meeting agenda — a small price to pay for the many benefits animals can bring to the workplace. 





## Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

**Executive Summary:**  
*The word "casual" is often taken out of context; dress codes still require attention.*

## Business casual dress code for men >

Recently I reported on JP Morgan's updated dress code. I slanted that column toward womenswear, but one of my male readers asked for clarification of business casual dress codes for men.

Rules for appropriate work attire for men in an office environment used to be simple. In the last two decades it has become quite confusing. Jeans and hoodies, jeans and blazers, and "athleisure apparel" often are touted as "business-appropriate" in the media.

Regardless of that message, for a business casual dress code men must still avoid: jeans, t-shirts, sneakers, shorts, sandals, hoodies, work boots, sweatshirts, running gear, hats, white athletic socks, untucked shirts, windbreakers, puffer jackets, ski jackets, slippers, and pajama pants.

The point of business casual is not to dress up a casual outfit. Business casual is dressing down a business suit. Some companies prefer their business casual style to be a suit jacket and matching trousers, open-collar dress shirt, no tie, leather shoes and belt – sharp looking, but relaxed sans the tie.


Alternatively, at a minimum, for a business casual dress code choose collared dress shirts in white, blue, pastels like light green, lavender or pink, as well as small-patterned conservative fabrics like gingham and pinstripes.

Trousers for business casual can be dress pants or khakis, in neutral colors like gray, tan, black, taupe, etc., hemmed so the crease breaks at the instep of the shoe. Never let the pants sag or allow the hem to drag.

A blazer of lightweight, finely woven wool is perfect for business casual. Choose dressier fabrics and avoid fabrics like denim, which appear very casual, even when well-tailored. Choose leather shoes in a loafer, oxford or other traditional style and a leather belt that coordinates with the shoe color.

Business casual can include sweaters, too. Choose solid colors and fine-gauge knits, pullovers or cardigans - no crazy patterns.

Remember:

- Khakis, a collared dress shirt and leather dress shoes are acceptable anywhere. A sport coat can dress this up, looking even more professional quickly. Adding a tie dresses it up a notch - a simple recipe and you'll look great.
- Although no longer required, a tie can still add polish to an outfit for unexpected meetings.
- Tuck in your shirttail – business casual doesn't mean sloppy.
- If your instincts say the outfit is too casual, trust your instincts. 

Comments? Email [Kathy@peacockimage.com](mailto:Kathy@peacockimage.com)

## A guide to good manners for the host and guest: Part I >

For the next few columns we are going to explore the duties and responsibilities of both the host(ess) and the guest. Let's face it, a social event, whether for business or pleasure, is a two-way street. Both parties have a responsibility for its success – or failure.

### The Invitation

We'll start with the invitation. There are several options here: a more formal printed invitation (not many can afford engraving these days); an email, e-vite or social media invitation (yes, these have become acceptable today); an invitation by phone or in person. The printed invitation, apart from giving the pertinent information – what, where, and what time – can also set the tone for the party. It will often give the recipient information on how to dress. This harkens back, by the way, to the court of Louis XIV, who had little etiquets (you'll note the word which was a precursor to etiquette) sent out to his court, telling people what to wear, where to stand, and how to behave.


### The Response

The guest now has the responsibility to RSVP. This, again from the French, means *répondez s'il vous plait*, and that translates as "please reply" – whether or not you plan to attend. Note the word "not." A good guest will reply quickly to let the host(ess) know if he or she will attend or not.

Now what about bringing extra people? Oh, no, no, no, that is not your call! Assume that anyone not invited is... not invited. So, no children, pets, or houseguests. Now if you have houseguests, and relay that as the reason you can't attend, most hosts will welcome them. Be careful though, and listen to the language used. If the host says something like, "I have a full table, but maybe we could squeeze them in..." best decline the invitation.

### Dress Code

What about dress for the event? We all pretty much know what to wear for a formal occasion, such as a wedding, a black tie event, or even a business dinner. What about other events? When in doubt, just ask your host(ess). In my experience (and I think my colleague Kathy Surace would agree), it's better to overdress than underdress. After sizing up the other guest's attire, a man can always remove his tie, and roll up his sleeves. A woman can always remove excess jewelry.

So now the invitations have been issued and answered, and dress code is settled. Next month we'll talk about how both the host and guest contribute to the event for maximum enjoyment for all. 



## Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey  
Harshberger

**Executive Summary:**  
*Proper etiquette for a social event begins with managing the invitation and deciding what to wear.*



## When language connects >

### **Executive Summary:**

*Based in Roanoke, Arara Language Solutions offers translations services in over 60 languages.*

### **By Ashlyn Davidson**

What does it really mean to be connected to another person? Some may say a similar passion, worldviews, sports teams, or just a good cup of coffee. But let's take it one step further. Connecting with another person is difficult when one thing is lacking, and that thing is language. Imagine trying to relay your thoughts and feelings to a person who does not understand what you are saying. Unfortunately that is a reality for people around the world. However, people like Joslaine Austin,

founder and principal of Arara Language Solutions, LLC. in Roanoke, are helping people in all facets of life who have limited English proficiency.

Joslaine is from São Paulo, Brazil, and studied at Pontifícia Universidade Católica and Fundação Armando Alvares Penteado. She has over 20 years of experience as a professional interpreter, and is fluent in her native language, Portuguese; as well as English, French, and Spanish. She learned to speak English and Spanish while in Brazil, and learned French in New York City. Her team at Arara Language Solutions, LLC. is made up of contractors, certified interpreters and translators who work in numerous cities and states across the United States, offering services in over 60 languages. The team serves a global clientele base for depositions, examinations, business events, school meetings, and more.

Joslaine was inspired to become an interpreter 25 years ago during her first

assignment at Godiva Chocolate in Sao Paulo, Brazil. However, her love for language began in grade school. "My kindergarten teacher brought a real puppy to the classroom to teach us how to differentiate the term 'puppy' from the term 'dog,' more commonly found in the dictionary," Joslaine shared. "From then on, I continued to evolve in my language learning, and at 13 I took conversational English courses at the college level."

Arara Language Solutions, LLC. was founded on October 1, 2015; and like all jobs, Joslaine has experienced rewards and challenges when it comes to her work. When asked what the most rewarding feature of being a translator is she expressed the joy she feels "when the person for whom you are interpreting for suddenly lights up with the understanding of what is being said." On the other hand, a challenge she faces is when she has to relay a difficult diagnosis

about a child's health to a loving parent. However, through the joys and hardships of her job, it is evident Joslaine finds immense happiness from the people she works with.

No one-day at the office looks the same for Joslaine. Her team generally starts mornings by checking emails and deadlines as well as covering client requests. "We have had team members respond to a person in as little as ten minutes from client call to interpreting services being rendered," Joslaine shared.

You may be wondering what language someone as unique as Joslaine thinks in, and although she spoke solely Portuguese in her childhood home, that posed to be a complicated question. "I really don't know," she explained. "It is amazing what the human mind is capable of. However, my mom told me one morning when I was 14 that I was dreaming out loud in English."



## HOLLINS UNIVERSITY EARNS ACCOLADES FROM *Major National College Guides*

*USA Today* and *College Factual* 2017 have named Hollins as the **number one** college in the nation in the category, "English Language and Literature, General–Most Focused." Hollins also ranks among the **top five percent** of the "Most Focused" colleges and universities nationwide in biology and history.

Hollins is one of just four Virginia colleges to be featured in *Peterson's Cool Colleges 101*.

The 2017 edition of *U.S. News Best Colleges* lists Hollins at **number 11** in the category "Best Colleges for Veterans" and the **number 27** "Best Value School" among National Liberal Arts Colleges.

Hollins' financial health has received an **"A" rating** from *Forbes* magazine.

*Niche.com* has named Hollins one of the 100 Best Liberal Arts Colleges in the country, and listed it among the **five Best Liberal Arts Colleges in Virginia**.


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In order to keep up with the ever-shifting dynamics of language, Joslaine reads something in a different language every day. Throughout her time as an interpreter, she has learned the importance of taking into consideration the variety of backgrounds, beliefs, dialects, and cultures of the individuals she works with.

Joslaine continues to look forward to the

future and how she can learn more about language and serve her clients. She expressed her desire to learn a language in its native country one day. While Joslaine's story paints a beautiful picture of connectivity, it says much more than that: her will to teach and learn from others shows the importance of passionate people like Joslaine and her team, who make the world a more unified place. 

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# Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

## Executive Summary:

*Achieving success means knowing what not to do as much as it does knowing what to do.*

## The most powerful two-letter word >

If you are a parent, you already know that one of the first words children learn to say is “no”. It’s easy for children to say, and it provides an easy way for them to be defiant. If you raised your kids like I did, you probably next said something like, “Don’t ever say no to me again!” Over time (hopefully) that disobedience ends and your children become more helpful and cooperative.

If you’re like me, you may have been conditioned that it’s rude or impolite to say no to someone. In fact, most people have a hard time saying no to others. With friends and family, that’s not a bad thing. But in business, having the ability to say no is critical to your success.


Steve Jobs once said, “People think focus means saying yes to the thing you’ve got to focus on. But that’s not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully. I’m actually as proud of the things we haven’t done as the things I have done. Innovations is saying no to 1,000 things.”

In my business, I help leaders achieve greater success in their personal and professional lives. Greater success ultimately comes from spending more time on those goals and activities that are most important to you. The first step is to identify those important goals and activities. What do you want to focus on?

The second step is to spend more of your time and resources on those important items. Productivity and success does not happen from working hard all day. It happens from working hard on your goals and important tasks. And that’s where the power of saying no comes in.

You must say no to those things that do not contribute to your important goals and activities. Most of us are bombarded each day with requests for our time and money. In business, we spend hours each day answering emails and attending meetings that do not help us be more successful. It’s ok to say no. In fact, it’s imperative that you do so. Saying no to unimportant tasks allows you to say yes to those things that matter most.

I’m not suggesting you shouldn’t be a team player, or help others achieve their goals. But you don’t have to attend every meeting, or answer every phone call, or let yourself be interrupted at any time of day. What will you say no to today?

Contact me if you would like to discuss this. But I might say no. 

*Send your questions or comments to [Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com](mailto:Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com)*


## The do's and don'ts of "faking it 'til you make it" >

As an early career professional, it is easy to feel undervalued. There is often someone who knows more, who has done it before, who could do it better. To get ahead, there is pressure to confidently tackle situations outside of one's knowledge or comfort zone — without screwing up. Though most of this pressure is self-imposed, it shapes a work persona that is boastful and too proud before the substance exists to back up the bravado.

Many of my friends joke about "faking it 'til you make it." When handed a project that is unfamiliar, a client that has advanced needs or a new employee with no training, young professionals are more inclined to start searching for guidance on Google than to ask their superior, especially if no council is offered. It depends on the specific work environment, but this can and often does lead to work poorly done, mistakes and dissatisfied coworkers.

When asked how they avoid such missteps, successful young professionals recount stories of superiors with whom they formed a relationship: not just when they needed them, but from the start. They used their genuine interest in the work as a tool to get closer to their coworkers and they were humble enough to ask questions.

Here is a quick list of ways to start this process:

- Offer to do a favor for someone you don't know very well. Sometimes all it takes is a simple online search, but it might save someone a ton of time and heartache.
- Let other people do favors for you. When someone does a favor for you and you are gracious, a special bond is formed. If you are constantly trying to help but never accepting it back, you will seem needy.
- Ask big-picture questions about the work to those who have been there longer than you. This will make the specific questions about your project easier to talk about, because you have a rapport.
- Write down answers to questions you might have more than once. Nothing is more annoying than someone always asking the same question, no matter the seniority. Keep a cheat sheet. 



## Young Professionals

By Ariel Lev

### Executive Summary:

*Assigned a task or handed a project you're not quite equipped to perform? Don't go at it alone.*



## Cast away >

### Executive Summary:

*Missile Baits in Salem manufactures products for recreational and professional use—both capitalizing on a popular and favorite pastime: fishing.*

By Pete Deaver

John Crews, the president and owner of Missile Baits, a bait shop located in Salem, does not mess around when it comes to lures. He has worked hard in the short five years that his business has been open to ensure that they produce the most effective and valuable baits on the market. He has literally made it his business to figure out which baits work best and then to improve them further, and he certainly has a knack for it. After all, he has been fishing for most of his life.



# MANUFACTURING FRONT

"I've always enjoyed fishing," Crews says, reflecting back on his passion for the sport. "I didn't start fishing tournaments until I was fifteen. I just dabbled with it and had fun, I didn't take it serious until I got into college."

Once Crews left college and started bass fishing, he knew that he couldn't stop at tournaments. "It was going to be a gateway to something else within the fishing industry." Crews' time spent participating in tournaments introduced him to connections and opportunities that he would not have found elsewhere. "If I was not a professional angler, my learning curve would have been way slower than it has been because I knew a lot of the right people and it has helped me get into the right doors."

One of those "doors" of which would inspire his business idea.

John Crews began working with a pro organization, helping them design crankbaits. "I always designed things that were different than anything on the market and I thought, 'Maybe I'll do the same thing for soft plastics and start my own brand.' I really enjoyed that design and promotion process and so I wanted to keep doing that with soft plastics."

Crews has a commitment to soft plastics and he proudly displays it in Missile Bait's tagline: "Serious Soft Plastics." He knows that quality is the name of the game in his line of business. "I'm not playing the price game where we come out with the same thing and sell it for a dollar less, that's



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useless. It's not innovation, it's weak."

Innovation is where Missile Baits really distinguishes itself from the typical bait company, and they do it with the simplest reason in mind. "If I fish with a bunch of different baits and I realize that there's another tool that's not on the market that I need and that I think other people will need, I'll design it. If I can make the bait do what I want it to do, we'll think about coming out with it. That's basically how we introduce the baits, out of necessity for what I need on tour."

Crews designs each lure with competition in mind and it is that kind of quality that translates well into his own ideologies about how a company should be run.

"The golden rule is that the products have to sell. If you don't produce products that work and [repeatedly] sell, it doesn't matter how much money you put into advertising, it's going to be a short term situation."

It is a rule that has served him well ever since the early stages of the business. "We started in January of 2012 and three months into the company's existence, there was an elite series tournament won [using] our D Bomb, which is our biggest and best seller. And that really helped put us on the map." Among other achievements, Crews claims that their D Bomb has also been used to catch two bass that were over fourteen pounds. "That's not a big bass, that's a huge bass."

Missile Baits has not been in business for long, having just hit its five year mark. But they are certainly making a name for themselves, with their lures having been sold or currently selling to the biggest retailers available. John Crews' focus on innovation and improvement has certainly made their brand a sought-after and successful tool for those who fish professionally. "They're not gimmicks, they're not fakes, they're not knock offs, they're serious soft plastics for serious anglers." 




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## Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

### Executive Summary:

*Before you become part owner of a company, make sure that you're protected against having to pay taxes on the company's "phantom" income, which can appear on your tax return even if you never got any cash from the company.*

## The phantom income menace >

My friend the restaurant owner was freaking out. "The IRS says that I owe \$5000 in taxes on money I never even got!" he said.

"That doesn't sound fair," I said. "What happened?"

"They say that I have to pay taxes because of these shares that I own in Offendy," he said. Of course, by that time most people in the area had heard of Offendy, the up-and-coming technology startup famously founded by four Virginia Tech graduates in the basement of a restaurant—which happened to be my friend's restaurant.

"I let them use the basement for almost two years, and they paid me the rent in stock," he said. "I think I wound up owning 5% of the company. I didn't really care about getting the stock. I just liked them, I thought they were nice kids."

"Hey, maybe that stock will be worth something some day," I said. "They're making a big splash. I heard that they actually have revenue now."

"Right, that's the problem," he said. "They're earning revenue, and for some reason I've wound up having to pay taxes on it!"

My friend gave me his documents and I made a few calls. When we sat back down a few days later, I was able to explain to him why he owed tax on "phantom" income from Offendy.

"OK, it looks like Offendy is an LLC," I said. "By default, an LLC is taxed like a partnership. We call that pass-through taxation. It means that the LLC itself doesn't pay income tax. Instead, the owners of the LLC pay all the income tax."

"But how can I be required to pay tax, if I never got any money?" he said.

"It looks like Offendy had a decent year," I said. "They earned \$600,000 in profit."

"And they didn't share it with me?" he said.

"Well, they spent it," I said. "More specifically, last year they reinvested all of Offendy's profits in some expensive equipment that they needed in order to grow the business."

"Well I don't mind that," he said. "It's important to invest in growing the company. But if there was no money left, then why do I have to pay income tax?"

"There was no cash left," I said. "But spending that cash didn't make last year's income go away completely. You're

familiar with depreciation for tax purposes, I suppose?"

"Mostly," he said.

"So, when you have an expense related only to a single tax year, like employee wages, you can deduct 100% of the amount from your income in that year," I said. "But if you buy equipment that lasts for several years, then you only can deduct part of the cost in the first year. So for example if you buy a \$10,000 machine, you might be able to deduct only \$2000 in the first year, \$1500 in the second year, and so on."

"Yes, that's happened when we've bought restaurant equipment," he said.

"OK then, last year Offendy had \$600,000 in income. They used it all to buy equipment and other assets. They were only able to deduct about a third of the cost. That left \$400,000 in income. Because Offendy is an LLC taxed like a partnership, it didn't pay any tax itself. Instead all of that income passed straight through Offendy to the owners, and so your 5% share of it—\$20,000—is attributed to you. You're in the 25% tax bracket, and so you owe income tax of \$5,000."

“““

By default, an LLC is taxed like a partnership. We call that pass-through taxation. It means that the LLC itself doesn't pay income tax. Instead, the owners of the LLC pay all the income tax.

## W O R K P L A C E wisdom

By Christine Liana

**Q** My coworker is driving me crazy! He whistles constantly and it's disruptive to my work, while I suffer in silence. Should I talk to my boss about it?

**A** The concept of whistling while you work may be fine in a Snow White movie, but it can be distracting in many types of work environments. Before you complain to your boss, talk with your coworker first. He may not be aware of how his whistling affects you. When you approach him, be conversational, not confrontational. Gently explain that it disrupts your concentration and productivity. If it can be overheard by clients, mention it. If he's reasonable, he'll understand and quiet down. If this approach doesn't work and he disregards those around him, then talk with your boss in a positive (not whiny) tone, and let him know that you're at an impasse and need help resolving the issue. It may involve you or your coworker moving to another desk or workspace.

WORKPLACE Wisdom is a new column in FRONT. Got a question or an issue you're dealing with at work? Send it to [businesstalk@protonmail.com](mailto:businesstalk@protonmail.com)

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"Even though I never got any cash?" he said.

"Right," I said. "The income is on your Form 1040, even though the company spent all the cash."



The income is on your Form 1040, even though the company spent all the cash.

"When I took that stock, nobody told me I might have to pay tax on it every year," he said. "Does this happen to everyone who owns stock in an LLC?"

"There are ways to protect yourself from phantom income," I said. "Usually when people invest in a company with pass-through taxation, such as an LLC taxed like a partnership or an S-corporation, they make sure that the corporate documents require the company to pay out at least enough cash to allow the owners to pay their income tax on the phantom income from the company."

"Meaning that if I owed \$5,000 in tax, Offendy would pay it?" he said.


"Yes, except that the Offendy operating agreement doesn't require them to do that for you," I said.

"Can you call them and let them know that I want them to change the operating agreement?" he said.

"It might be tough, but we'll give it a shot," I said.



Usually when people invest in a company with pass-through taxation, they make sure that the corporate documents require the company to pay out at least enough cash to allow the owners to pay their income tax on the phantom income from the company.

The other owners of Offendy refused to change the LLC operating agreement. But in the end, after considerable back-and-forth, we were able to get them to buy back my friend's ownership percentage in the LLC for a comfortable amount that more than covered payment of his extra income tax bill. Still, if he'd protected himself in advance against the "phantom" income problem, then he might have had the stamina to hold out for the possibility of a big payday in the future. 

**Note:** *facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn't legal advice—you should consult a lawyer when deciding whether to acquire ownership in a company, how to negotiate revisions to company documents, whether you may be liable for income tax, etc.*



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Big Lick Boomerang's Diane Rumbolt with one of the "chase cars"



**Customer Rob Mazza gets in his own car with Boomerang designated driver Dustin Merideth**

## Keys, please >

### Executive Summary:

*Big Lick Boomerang, a new app-based designated driver service has arrived in Roanoke.*

**By Alison Weaver**

Diane Rumbolt is channeling the chaos of her childhood into what she hopes will be a successful designated-driver business.

However, her definition of success might not jibe with that of many entrepreneurs. "I hope we can make a profit, but I didn't start this business to make money. I started it to save lives," Rumbolt says.

Rumbolt grew up in Canada, where her father's alcohol addiction forced her and her mother to shuttle between Toronto, Ontario, and Newfoundland. "When Dad's addiction was bad, we'd go to Newfoundland to stay with relatives," she recalls. "When he was in recovery, we'd move back."

When Rumbolt was 8, she smashed through a pane of glass while playing with a friend. As her mother drove her to the emergency

room, a drunk driver struck them. Her mother suffered whiplash and other injuries. "That was the first time I saw the real effects of alcohol-related incidents," she says.

When she was 10, Rumbolt's father taught her to drive his tractor-trailer. "I guess he thought it was a bonding exercise. He was trying to share something with me to make up for all of the times we hadn't been together."

Soon after her driving lessons, he took her on an overnight trip to deliver a truckload of flowers. After making the delivery, Rumbolt's father returned to the truck with a case of beer and quickly became intoxicated. Long story short, "He insisted we go to a lake, whereupon he fell in and lost his glasses and his ID," Rumbolt says. "He turned to me and said, 'Well, kiddo, it's up to you. You need to drive us home.' "

Perched on his lap, Rumbolt drove the empty rig home.

## Always a caretaker

Perhaps because of the role she was thrust into as a child, Rumbolt was drawn to caretaker careers. She attended school to be a paramedic and worked at a hospital.



**How a typical Boomerang pickup works: Customer becomes the passenger in his own car as Boomerang driver Dustin Merideth transports, while Boomerang "chase car" driver Rob Leo follows; company expects to expand beyond late night party pickups to everything from same-day surgery transports, car repair scheduling, long term parking avoidance, senior activities, and more.**

She met her future husband, Rob Leo, and he was offered a job transfer to Roanoke. "He asked me what I thought, and we were both like 'Roanoke?' We Googled it and I said, 'Oh, there's a star on a mountain! And a pretty yellow church.'"

The couple arrived in Virginia in September of 2010 and soon had their first child. Two other babies followed and Rumboldt felt herself struggling with the isolation of being a stay-at-home mom in a new country with no relatives nearby.

"I felt restless. I wanted to 'do' something, but I wasn't sure what," she says.

Rumboldt worked for the Hollins Fire and Rescue squad in Roanoke County and then saw a notice for Roanoke's Citizens Police Academy. Part of the training included observing Roanoke's therapeutic docket.

"I watched [District Court Chief] Judge Jackie Talevi speak to the offenders with such patience and compassion, and the

idea for Big Lick Boomerang came to me," Rumboldt says. "I thought this is a way I can help, while giving me a sense of purpose again."

## No simple startup

Rumboldt admits she knew virtually nothing about starting a business. "I've learned so much about SEO, marketing, mobile apps, creating web sites ... and that everything takes longer than planned."

She incorporated an LLC on June 28, 2016, and spent two months trying to launch the business. "Insurance was a hang up. It's tough to get coverage because no one understands our concept. We're not a taxi service; we're not Uber."

Big Lick Boomerang's original premise was fairly simple: provide a service to drive people home in their own vehicles, with a chase vehicle following to take the driver to the next call.

"A lot of people who might be too impaired to drive don't want to take a taxi home and then have to find a way to get their vehicle the next day," she says. "We wanted to provide the option of getting them and their vehicle home safely."

Rumbolt's drivers operate on an independent contractor basis, using their own vehicles and insurance. She checks their criminal records, their driving records and the sex offender data base.

Big Lick Boomerang's hours of operation can make it difficult to find drivers. "We recently expanded our hours to seven days a week, from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Sunday through Thursday, and from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. Friday and Saturday," she says. "That's a difficult schedule for many people, but drivers set their own hours based on their availability."

## 'We try to be very transparent'

Safety is a priority, according to Rumbolt. "Our big thing has been to make it as safe as possible for both our clients and our drivers," she emphasizes. "Drivers never work alone, since there's always another driver following them. And, our drivers wear uniforms so clients can easily identify them."

Clients must register in advance and provide proof of insurance, proof of title to the vehicle and emergency contact information. Rental cars are excluded because rental contracts require preregistration of additional drivers.

Customers prepay using a credit or debit card so that drivers don't have to carry cash or risk getting stiffed. "We try to be very transparent. We tell clients exactly how much it's going to cost before we pick them up," Rumbolt says.

The initial pick-up is \$20, with an additional charge of \$2.50 per mile. "We have lowered our rates to match round-trip Uber and cab services for the same distance," she explains. "Clients will sometimes say, 'Uber can get me home for half that,'" and I say, 'And how much is Uber going to charge you to go back


the next day to retrieve your vehicle? And how much time will that take?'"

For an extra fee, Big Lick Boomerang will pick up not only the owner of the vehicle, but also other guests who need to be dropped off along the way. Because of customer demand, Big Lick has also added a paid service for stopping along the way so clients can pick up food, cigarettes, or yes, more alcohol. "We had so many requests to swing by McDonald's, or to stop to get a pizza ... sometimes when people have been drinking their sense of time is impaired and they don't realize how much time it takes to go through the drive-thru," Rumbolt says tactfully. "We decided to offer that option, for an extra \$15 per stop."

## Evolution of scope

Although Rumbolt's initial goal was to keep impaired drivers off the road, Big Lick Boomerang has steadily developed a much broader clientele. "We get calls from people using the greenway who get caught in the rain or suffer a minor injury and need someone to pick them up and take them to their vehicle," she says. "One client contacted me because he had driven from Pulaski to Roanoke to look at a car [to purchase]. He bought it and wanted to drive it home, but needed to get his other vehicle back home, too."

Big Lick Boomerang also gets requests to pick up a vehicle and take it for its annual inspection or repairs, or to fetch the family vehicle when someone is suddenly admitted to the hospital after what was expected to be a routine doctor visit.

"We keep adapting and evolving," Rumbolt says. "Our call volume has doubled every month. We keep urging people to plan ahead. There's no cost to register and once you're in our system, we can respond to your needs." 

**Note:** Hours of operation, rates, and service specifics may have changed as the new business is still in developmental phase; see [www.biglickboomerang](http://www.biglickboomerang) or download the app for current information.



## It's always a private matter >

Meet Doug. Doug has been in concrete all his life. He's a road-building construction specialist working for the federal government; and lists Interstate 81 as one of his proudest accomplishments, telling stories to his grandchildren of the things that happened on that project for many years to come. Once, Doug says, his best friend nearly lost his life from a dynamite mishap when they were excavating a section of road on Christiansburg Mountain.

Then there's Cindy. She got into technical services right out of vocational training in one of our local high schools. She worked for a private IT firm for nearly a decade, then transferred to a position with the state where she gets to pull cable in places as remote as a dirt road lined by telephone poles in rural Southwest Virginia, to underground conduits at the busiest intersections of downtown. Working in a mostly male-dominated field doesn't bother Cindy. She says she even loves wearing her bright orange vest as she helps advance our state with broadband service.

If something sounds a little funny about these two descriptions, you're a pretty sharp cookie.

They don't exist.

Federal highways aren't built by federal construction companies. State broadband networks aren't installed by state technology service providers.

Private contractors build our infrastructure. This means people who work for evil big corporations (usually) or not-as-evil small businesses.

"You're nitpicking," some of you will say. We all know these projects are merely managed or controlled or owned by local municipalities, state or federal agencies. Governments contract these projects and programs. The idea, many of us believe, is that such a process ensures fairness and utilization. Infrastructure is for the people; and therefore should not be relegated to a private entity that only has its own interest and stakeholder obligations.

I might be inclined to believe the notion of who truly has the better societal interest in mind if the mechanisms that produce the end result are unique. But they're not. The same people, the same companies, the same suppliers and systems that build a road or network remain in place—whether it's public or private.

The real difference, is the government-branded product is always more costly, and almost always inferior.

Which brings us right back to the question: Who should

continued on Page 47

## On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

**Executive Summary:**  
*Everyone agrees our infrastructure is a critical component to our progress; how we get there is another matter.*

## The changing nature of the workplace >

In today's workplace, the structure, expectations, and process of work are ever changing. And, it will continue to do so! CEO's put great demands on employees, job descriptions are expanding, and customers are now in the driver's seat expecting an experience that is targeted to their demands. Workers are expected to be team-based and collaborative, resilient, in-tune to dynamic competition, show evidence of "lean" thinking, and work under time pressures.

So, how can institutions of higher learning assist with this complex situation and help workers be the best they can be? In the Roanoke region, we have exemplary colleges who stand ready to answer the call to produce knowledgeable and skilled workers. After all, the education, experience, and abilities of the workforce create the human capital of a region. Those collective skills, knowledge, and other intangible assets of working adults can create economic value and impact. Quite simply, skilled and productive workers equates to efficient and profitable businesses.

The Roanoke Higher Education Center is a key driver for developing our human capital-both for incumbent and future workers. This historic and iconic building located in the heart of downtown provides many educational opportunities for the citizens of our region. Fourteen member organizations make up the center providing accessible career pathways through degree, certificate, and professional development programs. Adult learners can choose between day, evening, and weekend classes utilizing a mixture of traditional classroom delivery, computer assisted instruction, and distance learning technology. The Center is unique in the number and kinds of organizations that have joined forces in *one location* to help individuals attain jobs, achieve upward mobility opportunities, or to train people to become more proficient at their jobs.

### Members include:

- Averett University
- Bluefield College
- Florida Institute of Technology
- Hollins University
- James Madison University
- Mary Baldwin University
- Old Dominion University
- Radford University
- Roanoke College
- TAP/This Valley Works
- University of Virginia
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Virginia Tech
- Virginia Western Community College

Our Educational Testing Center administers a variety of

continued on Page 47



## Guest Commentary

By Kay Dunkley

**Executive Summary:**  
*The Roanoke Higher Education Center offers college degrees, certificates and programs as well as training and facility services to support the individual and ultimately enhance our local and regional economy.*

# CONTRIBUTORS

**Ashlyn Davidson** of Roanoke is a marketing and sales specialist with a public relations degree from Virginia Tech. [ ashlynd@vt.edu ]

**Pete Deaver** is a freelance writer, currently attending Virginia Western Community College and managing Salem Valley 8 movie theater. [ petedeaver@yahoo.com ]

**Dan Dowdy** is the business development director for Valley Business FRONT and owner of The Proofing Prof proofreading services (www.proofingprof.com). His background includes service in the U.S. Air Force and an extensive career in education, including teaching college-level writing competency and business courses, and working for a Fortune 100 company. [ ddowdy@vbFRONT.com ]

**Kay Dunkley** is the executive director of the Roanoke Higher Education Center. [ kay.dunkley@education.edu ]

**Tom Field** is a creative director, marketing executive and owner of Berryfield, Inc. in Salem, and owner of Valley Business FRONT

magazine. He has written and produced programs and materials for local and international organizations for more than 30 years. [ tfield@berryfield.com ]

**Keith Finch** is an attorney with Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg [ keith@creekmorelaw.com ]

**Kathleen Harvey Harshberger** is a graduate of Radford University and the Protocol School of Washington. She conducts seminars in business etiquette, international business protocol, and dining skills. She has an international clientele in business, government, and higher education. She is a certified Protocol Officer. [ harshberger@aol.com ]

**Bobbi Hoffman** has been an editor for Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia Tech for eight years, and she freelances as a copy editor, technical editor and proofreader, doing business as Hoffman Editorial Services. She holds a master's degree in community health from Virginia Tech, a bachelor's of business administration in finance and economics from

James Madison University and a certificate in copy editing from University of California-San Diego Extension. Bobbi volunteers for several area animal shelters and rescue groups. [ HoffmanEditorial@cox.net ]

**Mike Leigh** is president of OpX Solutions, LLC, a performance improvement company that helps organizations pursue operational excellence. A retired naval commander and former GE manufacturing manager, he has extensive experience in leadership development and process improvement. [ Mike@OpXSolutionsLLC.com ]

**Ariel Lev** is the director of Grandin CoLab. She has a B.S. in communications and broadcasting from Appalachian State University, a M.A. in communications, culture and technology from Georgetown University, lives in Roanoke with her husband, and enjoys her work with CityWorks (X)po and other business development activities. [ akleath@gmail.com ]

**Christine Liana** is a business writer and licensed insurance agent. Her 27-year

career includes banking, insurance, law and local government, in which she's worked with a diverse management and client base. Christine earned a Certificate in Management from Darden Graduate School of Business, University of Virginia. [ businesstalk@protonmail.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 15 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 ]

**Alison Weaver** is a freelance writer based in Roanoke. She has contributed to both the Blue Ridge and Valley Business FRONT business journals over the past 25 years. [ alison.weaver03@gmail.com ]

“Young professionals are more inclined to start searching for guidance on Google.”

— Page 29

## Field / On Tap

from Page 44

provide our infrastructure?

I certainly have my preference.

But in the meantime, if we could all simply agree to replace the word "government" with the word "taxpayer" at least that would provide a more accurate description of what's going on. A taxpayer broadband network doesn't sound all that cool, but that's what it is. A government or municipal broadband sounds like a great idea, built by and for all of us, with everybody contributing to the greater mission.

That's not quite the case.

Even Cindy will tell you that. 


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## Guest Commentary

from Page 45

standardized exams including national tests, professional certifications and licensure tests, credit-by exam tests, as well as the service to proctor exams for colleges and universities throughout the country.

Companies and organizations use our facilities for training, seminars, professional conferences, and meetings. We have versatile spaces that accommodate groups ranging up to 100 attendees that features state-of-the-art technology and video conferencing.

The Center falls under the Roanoke Higher Education Authority, a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia that is governed by a Board of Trustees. The composition of the board is elected officials, representatives from member institutions, and community leaders who are all genuinely interested in raising the educational levels of the citizens of this region. Since opening the Center in 2000, more than 9,000 degrees and certificates have been awarded. Our program portfolio consists of over 300 different degrees, licensure, and certificate programs. 

“

We take pride in offering quality learning experiences. Our programs are diverse in that we can provide job readiness training for nurse aides, prepare counselors for jobs at either a public school or clinical setting, acquire an on-line degree in criminal justice, or become a licensed clinical social worker.

—Kay Dunkley, Executive Director

“

The Roanoke Higher Education Center is an amazing educational resource for the citizens of the Roanoke Valley and surrounding areas. Whether you prefer the convenience of learning online or you enjoy interacting in a more traditional classroom setting, we have the programs and student support services to help you succeed.

—Carla James Jackson,  
Director of Academic  
and Student Services

## Books @ the FRONT >

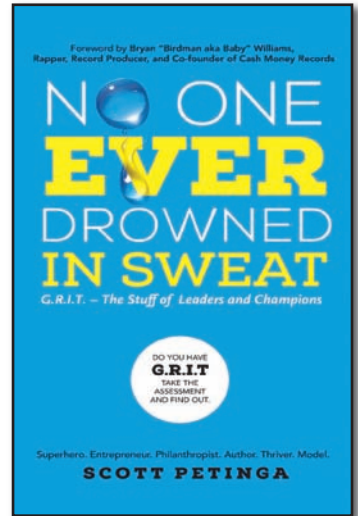
Following are book recommendations from our contributors and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit short reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre.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

### *Confidence in Business*

Life is full of resistance seeking to sink your dreams. It takes hard work plus a daily dose of G.R.I.T. to overcome this resistance and reach your goals. Serialpreneur, philanthropist and speaker, Scott Petinga, Chief Troublemaker at The Scott Petinga Group, says G.R.I.T. stands for Guts, Resilience, Initiative and Tenacity, the foundational ingredients necessary to get the journey started, keep momentum going, effectively handle hurdles along the way, and stick with the task until the destination is reached.

In his new book, *No One Ever Drowned in Sweat: G.R.I.T. – The Stuff of Leaders and Champions* (Timothy & Titus; 2017), Scott breaks down each trait of G.R.I.T. and how to successfully use them to reach goals and achieve success. Besides sharing his own experiences, Scott adds words of wisdom culled from interviews with over 50 notable CEO's, entrepreneurs, non-profit heads, thought leaders, athletes, everyday heroes, academics and forward thinkers from all walks of life.

And Scott believes you don't need higher education or specialized degrees to succeed. The fundamental elements of G.R.I.T. is all that are needed to restore the business world, which Scott believes has grown basically weak and unproductive because corporate heads have valued those with educational parchments and alphabetical titles over those with the characteristics of G.R.I.T.



The book is about how to rise above creeping and soul crushing mediocrity, ignore all the red flags, stand tall when just getting up is difficult and blaze your own path to being happy.

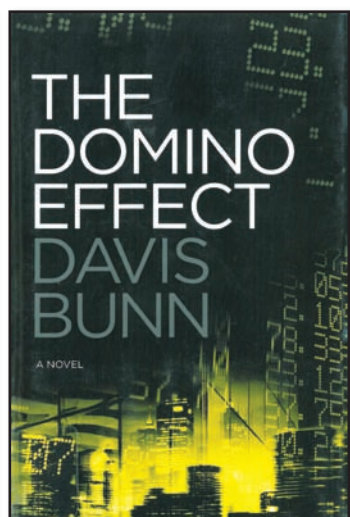
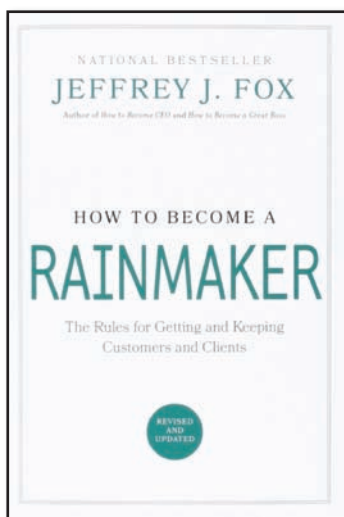
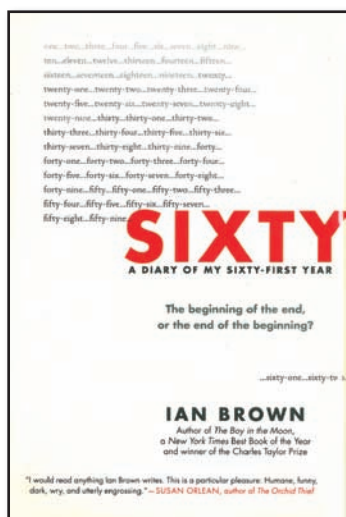
100% of profits from the book will be used to create lasting memories for adults with life-threatening medical conditions.

—Trina Kaye

### *A Year in the Life*

I want to thank Ian Brown for letting me spend a year with him. That's precisely the experience you get with *Sixty* (The Experiment; 2016)—a recording of daily diary entries from the Canadian writer from the day he turned 60 to the day he turned 61. It's a personal journey; and the first thing I discovered is that hypochondria can be a communicable disease. I never knew it was contagious.

Notwithstanding my journey-mate's obsession with the science behind all the ways our body parts fall apart; I remained transfixed in his observations... many, so, well... relatable. With gems like "if you have to do something perfectly, you will never attempt it" and how "the world would be a desolate place if we insisted that everyone pursue only those routes that are collectively agreed to be worthwhile and useful" you can't help but go all introspective. His anxieties about money and the inevitability on how life will play out for the aging man,



causes great vacillations between dread and promise. At its core, *Sixty* was an experiment in, as he puts it: stopping time, seeing what you remember, and why... before you take a step further. Revealing and poignant.

—Tom Field

## Real Tips for Sales Success

There are many authors selling ... well, sales advice. Unfortunately, it's little more than how-I-did-it self-promotion disguised as advice. In Jeffrey J. Fox's *How to Become a Rainmaker: The Rules For Getting and Keeping Customers and Clients* (Hachette Books; 2000), get ready for a refreshing change. Readers will find practical, no-nonsense tips for prospecting and selling - and getting ahead of the competition. Fox's fresh, timeless advice includes professional image and business etiquette (which are too often overlooked), how to prepare for and handle a sales call, how to make your time count, how to see things from your client's perspective, and how to ask strategic questions to help close a sale. Besides the value of this information, the design is perfect for the busy professional. Its trim size makes it easy to carry in a briefcase or purse, and the information is clearly presented with short, concise chapters and bullet point lists, making it easy to quickly find these pearls of wisdom. For those familiar with NYC's iconic Rainbow Room, the elegant restaurant with subtle lighting (hence the name) atop

30 Rockefeller Plaza, Fox's comment will invoke a smile.

—Christine Liana

## TickerTale

*The Domino Effect* (Bethany House; 2016) by Davis Bunn is one of those books where I decided to give it a whirl because the author was described as having a "wealth of experience in international finance." That's an area where I could learn a lot, I thought, and yet here's a novel weaving it in. Maybe I could absorb the topic better under the fiction banner rather than a real report or other expert's book that's likely to be dry. Oh, and the setting is in Charlotte; practically our neighbor.

I didn't need to worry about a complicated topic. Here we have an account of an eminent global market crash (thanks to continued unethical maneuverings by the big banks) tracked by our heroine, Esther, who is a genius analyst. The description of what leads up to the pending economic apocalypse isn't terribly sophisticated, and you don't have to be all that financially literate to grasp. The story kept me engaged, but by the end I found myself a little underwhelmed by its lack of depth. I could have handled more, after all.

—Tom Field

(The reviewers: Trina Kaye is a publicist in Los Angeles; Christine Liana is interim news editor and writer for the FRONT; Tom Field is creative director and publisher of the FRONT.)



Courtesy of Special Olympics Virginia

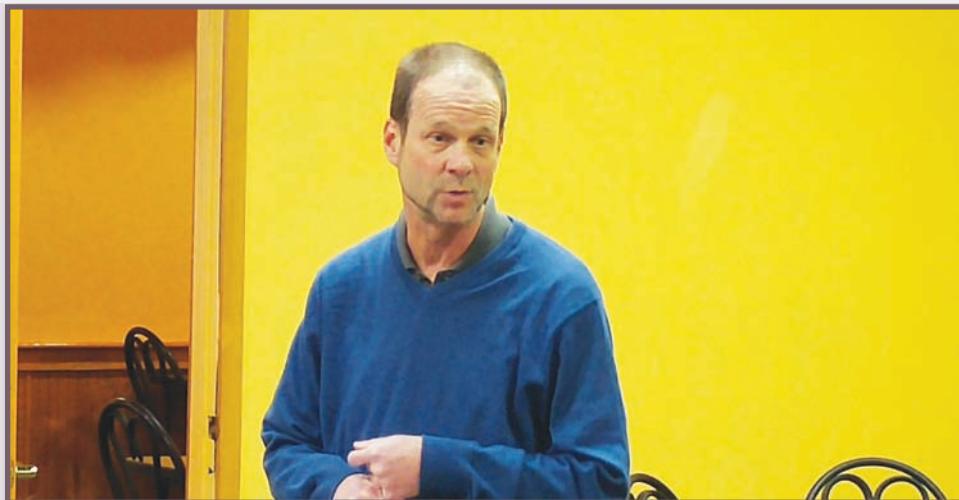
Brrrrrr >

**New River PolarPlunge Fest** was held Feb 18 at Bisset Park in Radford; presented by Radford Police Department and Radford University to benefit Special Olympics Virginia.



Hello from  
the other  
side >

**Citizens** communications co-op in Floyd has partnered with the "Cell Phones for Soldiers" program to provide gently used smartphones and tablets for US troops and veterans; Tera Hale prepares to send donated devices to military service men and women.



## Down-town up-dates >

The Bank of Fincastle held its Hometown Highlights networking breakfast with Botetourt Chamber of Commerce on Jan. 31; featuring reports from the towns of Buchanan (Mayor **Larry Hall** and Town Manager **Mary Zirkle**); Troutville (Mayor **David Horton**); and Fincastle (Town Manager **David Tickner**).



## Spooky cave draws an audience >

**Murder Hole Cave** in Catawba is the topic of local legend and lore. It's the site of an alleged murder in the 1800's, rumors of buried treasure, and the 1958 accidental death of a rappeller. The cave is owned by Dan and Marian McConnell and is the subject of Marian's book *Murder Hole Cave* (produced by National Speleological Society and Greyhound Press, 2012). The 28-minute documentary movie was created in 2016 by Marian and videographer David Socky. It premiered at the Grandin Theatre on September 21, 2016, and at the Salem History Museum on October 17, 2016. The documentary was accepted for the MystiCon film festival in Roanoke on February 23-25, 2017.



## Laying down the gauntlet >

The **Advancement Foundation's** 3rd Annual Gauntlet Business Program and Competition is underway in Vinton as green banners on Main Street attest; the event supports and expands a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem with over 65 individuals working in cohorts to develop their businesses.

The Advancement Foundation



## Helping local senior citizens >

The **Foundation for Roanoke Valley** awarded over \$250,000 in grants to non-profit organizations that help the elderly. Recipients included: Alzheimer's Association of Central and Western Virginia for its Arts Fusion Plus program; Botetourt Resource Center for its services to older adults on fixed incomes; LEAP for Local Food to expand its Senior Incentive Program; Local Office on Aging for assisted transportation for clients receiving intensive case management services; Mental Health America of Roanoke Valley for its Senior Extravaganza for the elderly; New Vision for equipment and training in the use of voice-activated virtual assistants; Roanoke Symphony Orchestra for its Wellness Arts program; Adult Care Center of Roanoke Valley for its Sue Nutter Scholarship Fund providing senior clients the opportunity to use the Center's services.



## Return of the Flat Pickers >

2017 **Flat Pickin' Fridays** country concerts series returns to Daleville Town Center in Botetourt County on May 12, June 9, July 7, August 11, and September 8. The series began in 2015 as a family-friendly event for Council of Community Services with Big Lick Entertainment. 100% of proceeds from ticket and beverage sales benefitted the local non-profit. This year's lineup includes Nashville stars, regional favorites, and talented songwriters. Activities for children, artisan food trucks, and local craft beverages for adults will be available. Events begin at 5:00 p.m. Cost is \$5.00 and children 12 years old and under admitted free.



## A Day of Remembrance >

**Virginia Tech** marks its Day of Remembrance with a three-day series of events beginning April 14. This annual event remembers the lives of the 32 students and faculty killed on April 16, 2007. April 14: The Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention: open house from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Moss Arts Center hosting a Performance in Remembrance at 7 p.m. April 15: The 3.2-Mile Run in Remembrance starts at 10 a.m. Registration is required. Community picnic follows at 11 a.m. on drill field. Food from local vendors available and attendees are encouraged to bring additional food. Saturday afternoon: First Responder Appreciation Day at 1 p.m. at English Field, Union Park. Free admission. April 16: Events begin at midnight with ceremonial candle lighting at the April 16 Memorial located in front of Burruss Hall.



## Life after death >

Roanoke College commemorated the unfortunate demise of its 100+ year old tulip poplar tree (planted by the college's first president, Dr. David Bittle) that had to be taken down after lightning and wind damage, by fabricating a "Bittle Tree of Life Cross" out of the wood, for its Antrim Chapel and the 175th anniversary of the school this year.

*Valley Business FRONT is FRONT'n About at many events each month.  
Check the social media links at [www.vbFRONT.com](http://www.vbFRONT.com) for more coverage.*

# FRONT NETWORK



**Advertising Awards: March 4 • 6:30pm • Charter Hall**  
**Lunch: April 5 • Noon • Hotel Roanoke**  
**Lunch: May 17 • Noon • Hotel Roanoke**  
**SEE WEBSITE FOR MOST CURRENT INFORMATION**  
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**CHRISTINE A. SMITH, CDFA™**  
 Financial Advisor • Franchise Owner  
 christine.a.smith@ampf.com  
 CA Insurance #0F69689

**BRIAN E. SMITH, CFP®**  
 Financial Advisor  
 brian.e.smith@ampf.com

**Smith & Associates**  
 A financial advisory practice of  
 Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc.  
 1901 S Main St, Ste 4D  
 Blacksburg, VA 24060  
**540.443.9143**  
 ameripriseadvisors.com/team/  
 smith-associates/

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**Tom Field** President  
 Tel: 540.389.9945  
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# Career FRONT

## FINANCIAL FRONT



Hall

**Trevor Hall**, market manager, joined Member One Federal Credit Union at the Lakeside Crossing Retail Center, in Lynchburg.



Hanna

**John Hanna** has been named business banker with HomeTown Bank.

## WELLNESS FRONT



Harrah

**Kenny Harrah** and **Rachael Tylock** earned the Certified Personal Trainer designation. Both work at The Fitness Center at Warm Hearth Village,



Tylock

Blacksburg, Va.

**Dr. Chérie Gallant** has joined the Radford/Fairlawn clinic and **Dr. Michelle Balestrieri** has joined the Galax office at Tuck Chiropractic.



Colby

**Jill Colby** is executive director for Dental Aid Partners of the New River Valley.

## TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Robinson

**Laura Robinson** was hired as marketing manager at Inorganic Ventures of Christiansburg.

## DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Musselwhite

**Bryan Musselwhite** was promoted to senior vice president at Poe and Cronk Real Estate Group.



Nolan



Pline

## RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT



Clontz

**Jerry Clontz** was named president of Kroger's Mid-Atlantic Division.



Mims



Gnyawali

## EDUCATION FRONT



LaConte

**Leslie LaConte** was named assistant dean for research; **Michael Nolan** was named assistant dean for basic science education;

**Elizabeth R. "Beth" Pline** was named senior director of administration and integration at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. **Meryl C. Mims** is assistant professor at the Department of Biological Sciences; **Devi R. Gnyawali** was appointed head of the Department of Management; **Kevin Carlson** was appointed associate dean for Research and Faculty Affairs at Pamplin

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Carlson



Schramm



Oaks

College of Business; **Melanie Schramm** was named director of marketing; **Kelly Oaks** was named assistant vice president in the Office for Equity and Accessibility; **Julia Ross** was appointed dean of the College of Engineering; **Selma**



Ross



Wijnands

**Haghamed** is faculty support associate at the Global Education Office; **Marielle Wijnands** was appointed assistant director for student services in the Global Education Office; Alumni Distinguished Professor **Rosemary Blieszner** was named interim dean of the

College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at Virginia Tech.



Glenn

**Idella Goodson Glenn** was named Special Advisor on Inclusivity and Diversity at Hollins University.



Horan

**Dana Horan** was appointed as the new

executive assistant for the Roanoke Higher Education Center.

**Meredith Woo** was named president of Sweet Briar College.

## CULTURE FRONT

**Kim Thurlow** joined the board of directors at Community Housing Partners.

**Jessica J. Gauldin** of Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer was appointed at chairperson, Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce for 2017.

Compiled by  
Christine Liana



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FRONT

## Starr Hill Brewery of Crozet is opening a second location

### *Need a Lyft to the Airport?*

**The Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport Commission** announced that rideshare company Lyft has signed an operating agreement with the airport that's in compliance with all Commonwealth and local ordinances. Residents and visitors of Virginia's Blue Ridge can use the Lyft app to request a ride to and from the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport.

### *New Business is Brewing ...*

**Starr Hill Brewery** of Crozet is opening a second location in Roanoke in autumn this year. The Starr Hill Pilot Brewery & Side Stage will be housed in a historic building at Six Old Whitmore Avenue in the redeveloped industrial neighborhood of The Bridges, part of downtown Roanoke's Riverside district. The brewery will feature new beers and

live music. Starr Hill began in Charlottesville in 1999, and is the largest independent brewery in Virginia. It distributes throughout the mid-Atlantic and Southeastern United States.

### *.... And so is the Coffee*

**Red Rooster Coffee Roaster** of Floyd has opened a Tasting Room and lab at 1116A Main Street in Roanoke's Wasena neighborhood. Guests can enjoy their coffee and purchase coffee and brewing accessories. Classes are offered on coffee history, tasting, and production. There's also space for training baristas from their partner cafes throughout the region.

### *Hobby Lobby Coming to Christiansburg*

**Hobby Lobby** plans to open a new store at the former Kmart site on North Franklin Street in Christiansburg later this

year. The nearest Hobby Lobby stores are currently in Danville, Virginia and Bluefield, West Virginia. The arts and crafts retailer has over 700 stores nationwide, and plans to open 60 new locations and hire 1,700 to 2,500 new employees across the U.S. in 2017.

### *Right in Time for Tax Season*

**Brown Edwards** CPA firm has acquired the Roanoke practice of Dixon Hughes Goodman, increasing the size of the Roanoke office to 12 partners and 75 associates.

### *Television Garage Sale*

**Citizens Cablevision** subscribers can now buy, sell, and trade items through Citizens Swap-N-Shop, a website and televised show. This free service is available 24/7, airing on Citizens' CCTV channel 20, daily at 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m., and 10 p.m. The new

programming is available to Citizens Cablevision viewers in Floyd, Ft. Chiswell, and New Castle. For more information, visit [citizensswapshop.com](http://citizensswapshop.com) or call 745-SWAP (7927).

### *New Member in the House*

**Community Housing Partners** of Christiansburg has become a member of Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future (SAHF), a non-profit collaborative of multi-state non-profit affordable housing providers.

### *New Blood*

**Virginia Economic Development Partnership** has hired Stephen Moret as its president and CEO. Moret previously served as secretary of the Louisiana Department of Economic Development. This fresh start comes in the wake of Governor Terry McAuliffe's approval of a \$1.4 million grant from the Governor's



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Opportunity Fund for China-based Lindenburg Industry LLC's fraudulent automotive catalytic converter plant in Appomattox.

## *Contract for Port of Virginia Project*

**TMEIC** of Roanoke has contracted to design the crane automation software system for the Port of Virginia's expansion project for its Norfolk International Terminal and Virginia International Gateway facilities. According to the Roanoke Regional Partnership, TMEIC signed the largest one-time contract order for automated stacking cranes in \$217 million

contract with Konecranes, their automation tech partner, with TMEIC supplying the automation.

## *Housing Rehab*

**Restoration Housing** of Roanoke, a non-profit affordable housing provider, recently celebrated their first rehabilitation of a vacant, blighted 96-year old house in Roanoke's West End. Historic tax credits helped fund the renovation overhaul to create two large apartments. Contractor Chad Brown of Square 1, Roanoke, was hired for his carpentry skills and experience with historic buildings. This rehab led to an increase in

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surrounding property values by \$53,000 on average.

## *Steel Dynamics Invests in Roanoke Bar Division*

**Steel Dynamics, Inc.** is investing \$28 million at the **Roanoke Bar Division** to install new equipment, make upgrades to increase production and improve energy efficiency, and

expand its product offerings. The contract for expansion was awarded to SMS Group. Steel Dynamics, Inc. is one of the largest domestic steel producers and metals recyclers in the U.S. based on estimated annual steelmaking and metals recycling capability. Its other locations include the New Millennium Building Systems plant in Salem and OmniSource metals



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recycling yards near Vinton, Montvale, and Rocky Mount. Steel Dynamics has facilities throughout the U.S. and in Mexico.

---

## *Bike Sharing Coming to Roanoke*

**Ride Solutions**, the region's commuter options program, is working to bring bike sharing to the Roanoke Valley this spring, starting in and around downtown Roanoke. Bike sharing is an alternative to driving with bicycle stations set up throughout the community. Through a membership system, people can rent a bicycle from one station and ride it to another. This program works with the sponsorship of local businesses. If you're interested in sponsorship, contact Jeremy Holmes, Ride Solutions director at: jholmes@rvarc.org or 1-866-424-3334.

---

## *Acquisition*

**Vital Records Control** (VRC) has acquired Roanoke-based **EvriChart Inc.**, a provider of health-care information management solutions to hospitals and health systems throughout the U.S. VRC is an information management and storage company serving Fortune 500 companies and thousands of regional, state, and local companies throughout the United States.

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## *Environmentally Designed*

The **U.S. Green Building Council** (USGBC) ranked Virginia #8 in 2016 for

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) green building in the United States. The ranking assesses the total square feet of LEED-certified space per resident based on U.S. Census data. In its 2015 Green Building Economic Impact Study, USGBC said LEED construction is expected to support 107,000 jobs and affect GDP by \$9.3 billion from 2015-2018 in Virginia. Other states rounding out the top 10 are: Colorado, Illinois, New York, California, Nevada, Maryland, Washington, Texas, and Massachusetts at #1.

---

## *Hyatt Comes to Blacksburg*

**Hyatt Place Blacksburg/University** plans to open in April 2017 and is taking online reservations starting in May. The 123-room hotel is next to the Virginia Tech campus and is accessible to shops and restaurants at University Crossroads.

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## *The Pinnacle of Achievement*

**Pinnacle Financial Partners, Inc.** announced the merger of Pinnacle Bank and BNC (Bank of North Carolina) in an all-stock transaction.

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## *Contract Renewed*

**SiteVision's** Hosting Services and Software as a Service contract was renewed by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) for another year. The contact is part of Virginia's electronic government services program (eGov) and

includes all state agencies and local government entities. VITA supports the Commonwealth by providing cybersecurity, IT infrastructure services, and IT governance. SiteVision, Inc. of Roanoke is an Internet application development, consulting, design and hosting firm.

---

## *Housing to Keep Pace with Workforce*

**Botetourt County** is investigating potential locations for rental housing to accommodate manufacturing employment growth. Some sites under consideration include the Daleville Town Center, Santillane subdivision near Fincastle, and the former Haffleigh Bone Button Factory in Buchanan.

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## *Liberty University Expands its Reach*

**Liberty University** purchased the Center for Advanced Engineering and Research (CAER) building on U.S. Route 460 in Bedford County for \$4.3 million, where Liberty will locate their School of Engineering and Computational Sciences. Construction for classrooms, offices, and labs is planned to start this spring.

---

## *Getting the Right Dose of Medicine*

**eBroselow LLC** of Blacksburg won second place in the Patient Safety Movement Foundation's (PSMV) 2016 Innovation Award competition for its SafeDose Scan™. The award recognizes novel products designed to help

reach PSMV's goal of zero preventable patient deaths by year 2020. The handheld SafeDose Scan™ device helps reduce human error by transforming the National Drug Code barcode on acute medications into instant critical knowledge for accurately dosing, preparing, and administering medication.

---

## *Bank Merger*

The **Bank of Floyd** has merged with **Grayson National Bank** of Independence, Virginia. The new name is Skyline National Bank.

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## *Concert Tour*

**Advance Auto Parts, Inc.**, of Roanoke is sponsoring the 2017 concert dates on Florida Georgia Line's nationwide DIG YOUR ROOTS Tour. The first leg of the tour started on January 27 in Tallahassee, Florida. With special guests Dustin Lynch and Chris Lane, select dates will also include Ryan Follese, Seth Ennis and Morgan Wallen.

---

## *New Horizons*

**Horizon Behavioral Health** and Lynchburg-based **FCS, Inc.**, a janitorial services company entered into a public/private partnership. FCS will provide a full line of janitorial services to all Horizon locations.

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## *Lodging Revenue Growth*

**Virginia's Blue Ridge** lodging industry totaled over \$101 million in room

revenue, a 1.8% increase over the previous year. Sports groups and events in 2016 helped contribute to this record growth. Included were the cities of Roanoke and Salem, and the counties of Botetourt, Roanoke, and Franklin.

*Economic Development  
Strong in SW VA*

The **U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)** designated the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany region as an Economic Development District (EDD) in January 2017. This designation

enhances the ability to obtain grants from EDA. The EDD area will be comprised of the counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, and Roanoke; and the cities of Covington, Roanoke and Salem.

*Support your cause  
on March 15th*

**Foundation for Roanoke Valley** announced that Roanoke Valley Gives will return on Wednesday, March 15th. Support your favorite local charity in this 24-hour online fundraiser. Go to [rvgives.givebig.org](http://rvgives.givebig.org) to register and make

tax-deductible donations to Roanoke Valley non-profit organizations.

*A Healthy LEAP  
into Roanoke  
and Fredericksburg*

**Local Environmental Agriculture Project** (LEAP), which connects local farmers with consumers, was awarded a \$24,988 grant from Wholesome Wave, a national non-profit helping Americans in poverty to afford fresh fruits and vegetables. The grant – one of just nine awarded nationally –

will fund LEAP's new Virginia Fresh Match Medicaid Incentive Program in Roanoke City and Fredericksburg. For every dollar spent on food at a LEAP Community Market, Medicaid recipients will receive an additional dollar to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. LEAP markets include the Grandin Village Community Market, West End Community Market, and LEAP Mobile Market.

*Compiled by  
Christine Liana*

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“

That's not a big bass, that's a huge bass.

— Page 34

“

My mom told me one morning... that  
I was dreaming out loud in English.

— Page 25

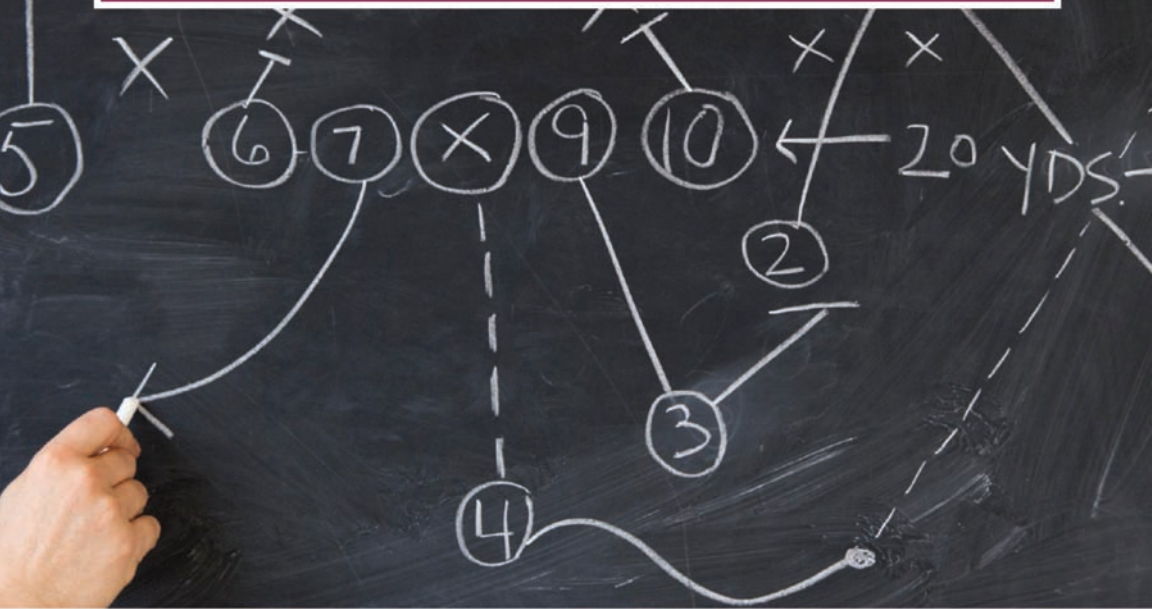
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