

# Valley Business FRONT

**VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE  
BUSINESS JOURNAL**  
ROANOKE/NEW RIVER VALLEYS & REGION  
FREE • ISSUE 122 • NOVEMBER 2018

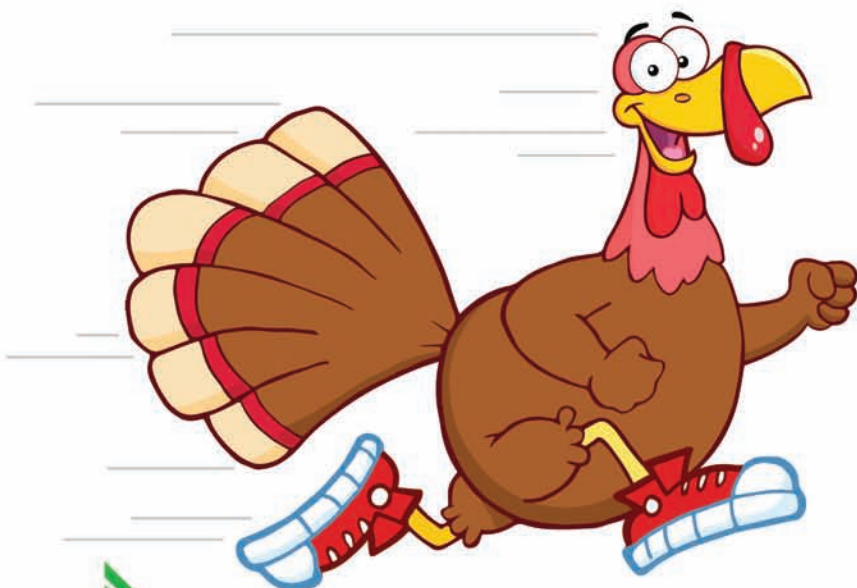
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## Customer/Employee Appreciation

Lynessa Dae,  
Candy enthusiast

# Register NOW!

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**2018**

*Move Your Feet So Others Can Eat!*

## 9 am – Thanksgiving Day

Race Day Registration begins at 7:00 am, but don't wait!

- 5K Race & Family Walk
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- USA Track & Field CERTIFIED Route
- Music to Enjoy along the way thru Historic Downtown Roanoke
- For more information contact Uneita Mathews at (540) 343-7227 or [Uneita@rescuemission.net](mailto:Uneita@rescuemission.net)



# WELCOME to the FRONT

It's November. A good time to be thinking about what you might do for your customers or employees or fellow associates to show appreciation as the year winds down and the holidays light up.

Over the years, I've received some thoughtful and memorable gestures of appreciation on the business front. As a professional associate, a client, a patron, a publisher, an agency principal, and many moons ago—an employee.

Holiday cards might be considered basic, but I certainly appreciate them. I really like the ones signed by multiple people I work with—and I love the ones that are either personalized or feature local scenes or artwork and photography from local artists. Valcom, a local company (and for me, both a former employer and a client) sends out a custom-made Christmas card with unique art every year. You look forward to traditions like that.

And who doesn't appreciate the popcorn tins and candies and other sweet treats from our favorite vendors? Then there's the swag... the merchandise that often has the business logo or brand featured in some way. I can't help but notice the ones that select top-notch items (YETI, anyone?)... you tend to hang on to those babies.

But my all time favorite is the gift that shows the giver really knows you (regardless of the cost). An easy way to accomplish this action is to give your recipient a gift card from the local book shop or local coffee shop or local restaurant or local theatre or local merchant he or she frequents, patronizes, supports, loves.

Okay, so it doesn't have to be local... Just Kidding. Yes. It. Does.

In any case, if you're going to show appreciation in this way and at this conventional time of year... it's November. Better be checking off your list soon.

  
**Tom Field**



It's not exactly fun  
to be phubbed. — Page 19





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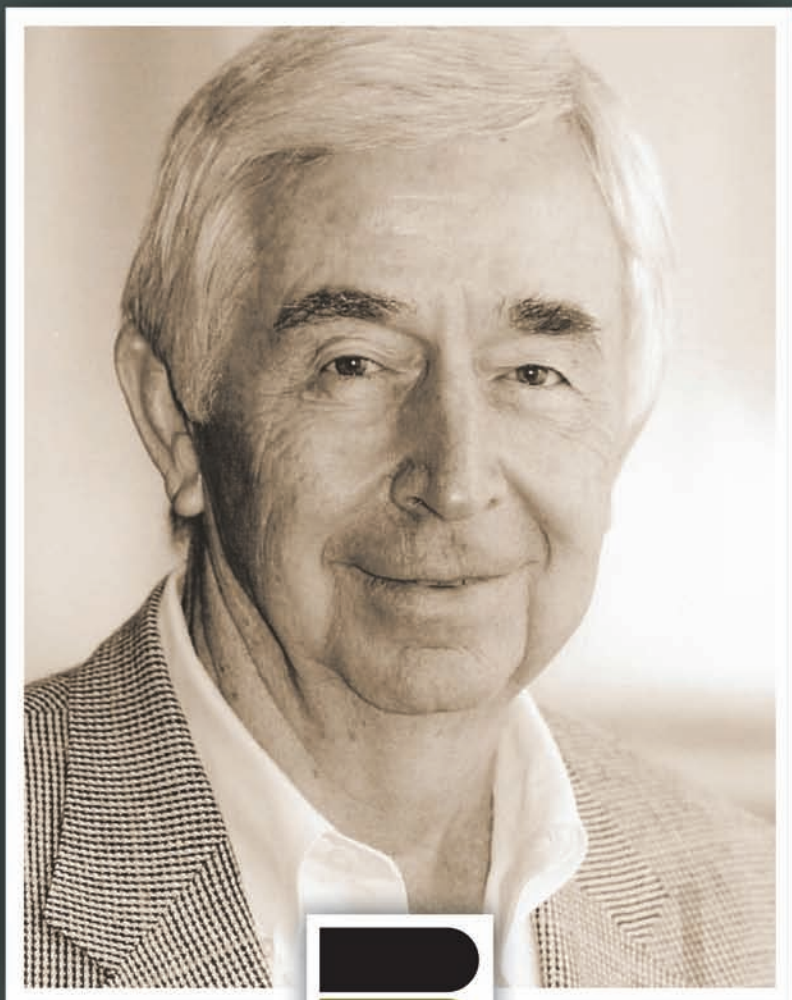
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Cover photography of Lynessa in The Candy Store by Bella Muse Photography.

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# NOVEMBER



Brian Bongard



Bruce Bryan



Keith Finch



Rachael Garrity



Becky Pollard



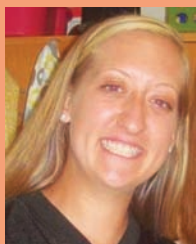
Michael Shelton

## Editorial Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of diverse business professionals, who will serve as a sounding board throughout the rotational term.

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.

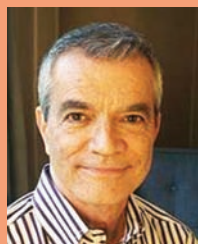
# CONTRIBUTORS



**Cara Cooper**



**Bonnie Cranmer**



**Dan Dowdy**



**Tom Field**



**Lesa Hanlin**



**Kathleen Harshberger**



**Mike Leigh**



**Anne Piedmont**



**Nicholas Vaassen**

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 58.

## 2018 Members

**Nancy Agee** Carilion (Wellness)  
**Laura Bradford** Claire V (Retail)  
**Nicholas C. Conte** Carilion (Legal)  
**Warner Dalhouse** Retired (Finance)  
**John Garland** Garland Properties (Development)  
**Nancy Gray** Hollins University (Education)  
**Nanci Hardwick** Aeroprobe (Tech/Industry)  
**George Kegley** Retired (Seniors)  
**John D. Long** National D-Day Memorial (Culture)  
**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.

“The mind  
is a good  
helper but  
a terrible  
master.

— Page 28

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# Showing Appreciation: The How & Why for Business



## To incent or not to incent: There's no question >

### Executive Summary:

*Looking for an incentive to improve or grow your business? Offer incentives!*

By Dan Dowdy

What kicks you into high gear to accomplish a work-related goal? What encourages your loyalty to a business? In other words, what motivates you as an employee and as a consumer?

The Oxford Dictionary defines motivation as “the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way.” Some behaviorists refer to motivation as goal-directed action. For the purpose of this article, I’ll use “goal-directed action” as the foundation for understanding incentive motivation.

Let’s take a look at what motivates people or incentivizes (I like “incent”) them to perform at a certain level in their jobs.

An employee’s desire to achieve a goal cannot be mandated by someone else, but company leaders can create a climate that inspires employees to pursue goal-directed action.

Businesses are always looking for ways and gimmicks to motivate their employees to higher levels of performance, and sometimes to keep them happy so they’ll stay put. So, what do businesses in our region offer as employee incentives?

Travel rewards probably top the list of incentives. The recent U.S. recession, from December 2007-June 2009, put the kibosh on these kinds of rewards for some enterprises, but they still exist.

Woodmen of the World offers attractive travel incentives to its insurance agents. Those who meet production



Marketing agency principal Bruce Bryan of **B2C Enterprises** announced a "mandatory" lunch meeting where he surprised his team with a craft pizza-making session in appreciation for a job well done.

requirements of a specified level of commissions earned, sales volume, and new member applications qualify for trips. WOW is a fraternal organization; hence, the interest in building up membership. Destinations include Hawaii, the Bahamas, and Alaskan cruises. Davis Dowdy, a semi-retired WOW agent in Bedford, has been to these and other locations in recognition of his performance. He says these incentives work. Attractive trip rewards keep him energized and focused on working toward production goals.

Bruce Bryan, owner of B2C Enterprises, a Roanoke advertising agency, recalls some pretty fancy rewards trips when he was director of sales for a TV business. All-expense paid trips for two to exotic locales—for top-performing employees and key clients—provided opportunity for camaraderie and *schmoozing* (translated as relationship building, hopefully leading to more sales). This was common practice in the ad business into the early 2000s, but it declined in popularity during and following the recession. Bryan occasionally rewards his agency staff who exceed their sales and additional stretch goals with trips. But he prefers what he calls unpredictable rewards: unexpected recognition for work well done. For example, after mysteriously announcing a "mandatory" lunch meeting, he treated his team to a craft pizza-making and eating experience at a downtown restaurant. He believes these out-of-the-blue expressions of thanks for a job well done improve his company's culture and create a collegial atmosphere—and occasionally provide delectable benefits.

“““

Company leaders can create a climate that inspires employees.

**360 Tax Solutions** created a fun contest to build awareness where car window stickers were sent out to customers and when "spotted" and posted on Facebook and in the newsletter, a winner is drawn and awarded up to \$100.



In lieu of monetary rewards, he might give high performers a TV or treat them to dinner for two at a nice local restaurant. "They will remember the product or experience more than money," he says, which hopefully enhances that constantly-sought motivational atmosphere.

Travel rewards may be down in some industries, but they remain lavish in others. One of the most impressive examples of trip-related employee incentives comes from a financial services person who asked to remain anonymous. Over the years as he achieved sales targets for the parent company with which he is affiliated, the company sent him, along with other top performers from around the country, to exotic places such as South Africa, Aruba, and Germany. In Germany, the company flew in Jennifer Hudson for an exclusive show just for people on that rewards trip. On one occasion, the company treated top performers to a private dinner at the Palace of Versailles outside Paris. Talk about incentive programs! He says these experiences create lasting memories and build loyalty for the business that provides such incentives. For example, this person might advise a client to spend \$15K to take her staff of three on a luxury Disney cruise rather than give each employee a \$5K check. The team cruise experience creates memories and enhances a culture of dedicated employees that would surpass what a check would do for most people.

Don't fret. You needn't necessarily spend big bucks on trips to motivate workers, but don't forget the importance of investing in your employees. Consider some additional food for thought on the non-monetary rewards point of view. Hays, a global recruiting firm, came up with five





# Incent & Reward: Some Ideas!

- Michael Shelton with Roanoke-based **360 Tax Solutions** is enjoying success from a contest using car stickers that he recently rolled out to promote customer loyalty and to garner new business. Clients receive stickers via a company newsletter, or they can pick them up at his office. They share the stickers with friends and encourage them to put them on their vehicles and to subscribe to Shelton's newsletter. Owners of vehicles "spotted" with stickers, both current and prospective clients, are entered into a pool from which a monthly winner can receive \$25 for claiming his/her reward, \$25 for subscribing to the newsletter, \$25 for liking Shelton's company on Facebook, or \$100 for doing all three.
- Sports-related competition: build sales goals incentives/contests around March Madness or Fantasy Football times of year with individuals winning brackets; friendly team competition can also foster a more collegial corporate culture. **Pella Windows** in Richmond reported a 50% increase in annual sales after implementing these incentives.
- Offer on-site fitness facilities or paid gym memberships to promote better employee health and hopefully avoid talent drain. **Citrix**, a downtown Raleigh tech company, provides free bikes for use in the vicinity of its office—an environmental-friendly and a healthy thing to do that the company's employees really appreciate.
- Providing new customers with gift bags including company T-shirts, food, concert/event tickets, and other nifty items engenders customer loyalty and can result in free publicity via social media posts.
- Employment benefits are used by some businesses to encourage employee loyalty and retention. **Chocolate Paper**, in downtown Roanoke, and **Fleet Feet** pay 100% of full-time workers' health insurance costs. Melissa Palmer, co-owner of Chocolate Paper, says, "It's a huge expense for us as a small, family business, but we feel it's how you treat your 'extended' family."
- In a discussion about incentives, a Federal Agent I know quipped: "I get paid to help get rid of corrupt employees and recoup millions of dollars from fraudsters who rip off the government." Now that helps incent me to appreciate how some of my tax dollars are being spent!
- Options galore:
  - o Free tickets to concerts, festivals, theaters, opera, and symphony performances
  - o Massage and spa treatments (some massages offered on-site at businesses)
  - o Clothing, apparel, merchandise, flowers, and edible fruit arrangements
  - o Paid registrations at conferences and for training opportunities
  - o Free tickets to sporting events and hospitality suites
  - o Weekend getaways to posh resorts or rustic cabins
  - o Day outings at Smith Mountain or Claytor Lakes
  - o Paid time off for volunteering (so many opportunities)
  - o Wineries, breweries, and hard cider tastings and tours
  - o Golf tournaments (just for fun or to support a cause)
  - o Habitat for Humanity house building
  - o Bonuses and profit-sharing
  - o Flex-time options



**Brian Powell of Wine Gourmet** says gifts of appreciation, whether single or packaged products or store gift certificates, are especially popular at holiday time.

**Chocolate Paper** is the very definition of "the gift shop" and even offers a gift program service for individuals and companies; An "Express" version of its store is configured in Wine Gourmet's shop in Roanoke County, a second location from its primary story in Roanoke's downtown market.

things that motivate employees more than money:

1. **Learning and development** (Training and developing workers demonstrates that they matter and provides them with tools and skills for upward mobility.)
2. **A clear path of progression** (Consider one's ambitions vs. one's viable opportunities for growth.)
3. **Recognition** (Be sensitive to each person's need for and appreciation of recognition: some people are shy, some like fanfare, but most of us like to be recognized now and then.)
4. **Autonomy and responsibility** (Assign meaningful responsibilities for which the person is qualified and capable.)
5. **Work environment** (Provide amicable working conditions; recognize the importance of good work-life balance.) [haysplc.com]







Sweet treats can be a good choice for customer and employee appreciation; and **Baylee's Best Chocolates** in Roanoke County offers a lot of options that are well-received.

The other side of this incentive coin is how companies cultivate and maintain customer loyalty.

Bayla Sussman, owner and chief chocolatier at Baylee's Best Chocolates in Roanoke County, has corporate clients that send boxes of chocolates at winter holidays, such as Christmas and Hanukkah, to patrons as expressions of thanks for their business. Across Electric Road from Baylee's is Wine Gourmet. Owner Brian Powell gets busy at holiday times as well. He creates gift packages of wine, artisanal cheeses, and Chocolate Paper's sweet goodies for his customers, who range from small businesses to larger corporations, all of whom want to recognize their employees or reward those who do business with them.

Some businesses support the communities they serve by helping local residents and organizations, thereby building a loyal clientele; they establish themselves as good corporate citizens. Fleet Feet Roanoke is a public-spirited example. Owners Robin and Blaine Lewis have exemplified the spirit of community support and give-back during the 15 years they have operated their shoe business. They host fundraisers for local charities that include West End Center, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Southwest Roanoke, TAP, and Rescue Mission of Roanoke, among others. The events average around \$4K annually per organization. They donate approximately \$6K per year in new products (shoes, socks, shirts) to charities. The Lewises offer a training program called "Couch to 5K through Marathon Training" that helps



**Fleet Feet** joined other stores across the country for "The Big Run" and held its own 5k race on Global Running Day in June; 250+ runners and walkers raised \$2,394 for Project Forward in order to put new shoes on needy feet in Roanoke.







**Fleet Feet** held a Plant Night at the store which raised \$660 for the American Heart Association.

**Fleet Feet** fit the 120 kids at the West End Center with new shoes and socks for the last three summers and brought volunteers (from its training programs) to walk with them four times each summer.

people not only train for running events but also change behaviors that ultimately change lives. A program like this is an excellent example of encouraging people to pursue goal-directed action that produces long-lasting beneficial results. Who wouldn't continue to patronize a business that changed him/her from a couch potato to a distance runner?

What resources are available in our region for businesses that want to motivate their workers or keep customers coming back?

Tour Roanoke, owned by Larry Landolt, offers a variety of





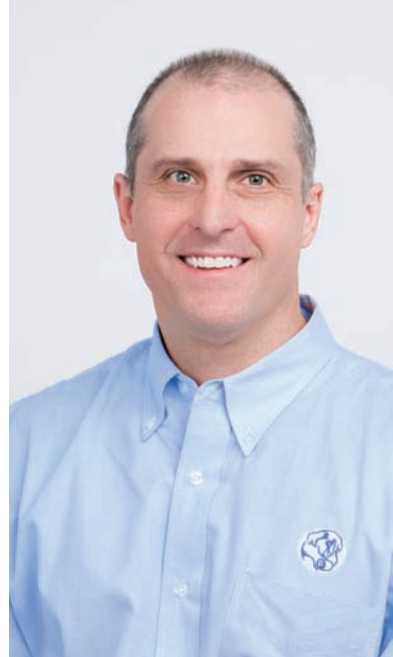
**Larry Landolt of Tour Roanoke** (including Downtown Food & Culture Tour, Sunday Brunch, Virginia's Blue Ridge Hop-On-Hop-Off Brewery Tour, Appalachian 'Shine & Spirit Tour) offers gift certificates that make most memorable experiences (for "natives" and visitors, customer and employee appreciation) with a bus or transport circuit to popular points in our region on guided programmed and custom excursions.

experiences to incent employees and to recognize customers. A significant portion of his revenue comes from area businesses that want to reward employees or build esprit de corps; others want to thank their clients—or entice new ones. Landolt shared an interesting situation in which conference planners for around 150 medical professionals were deliberating between The Hotel Roanoke and The Homestead for their upcoming conference venue. Hotel Roanoke staff partnered with Tour Roanoke to provide decision-makers with an opportunity to experience Roanoke in a fun way. A personalized scavenger hunt won the day, and Hotel Roanoke hosted the group. Scavenger hunts, just one of Landolt's offerings, are fun. They can build company or department team spirit (staff appreciation), or they can provide opportunities for employees to bond with clients (building customer loyalty).

Another local rewards enterprise is Robertson Marketing. Vice-president David Robertson says his firm primarily works with larger corporations by crafting tailored programs, activities, or campaigns to recognize employees for their performance, or to help build customer loyalty. Robertson says that rather than cash rewards, tangible items such as merchandise or trips help people remember the experience of being recognized in a more lasting way than money. (There seems to be general consensus on "experience" as a powerful incentive.) For example, Robertson cites a program he developed for a client in which employees earned points for certain activities such as meeting sales goals, achieving industrial plant safety targets, or maintaining quality standards. Robertson Marketing



**David Robertson of Salem-based Robertson Marketing Group** specializes in customer loyalty and employee recognition programs with catalogs of promotional product offerings from all around the world.







Experiences make some of the most unique gifts for customer and employee appreciation, such as tickets to an "escape room" like **Deciphered Roanoke**.




designed a website on which program participants could redeem their points for merchandise or for more experiential rewards such as travel. It was well received.

Escape room adventures provide fun and interactive team-building experiences. Deciphered Roanoke's general manager, Sophie Yountz, says that a significant portion of her business comes from small groups, usually 4-6. They spend an hour or so moving from one room to another solving clues and working against the clock. Communication skills also are critical in this fast-paced and spirited environment.

Incentive motivation works. It's not as ideal as intrinsic or self-motivation, but it produces results.

If you're a business owner, department head, or a team leader, and you want to instill within your employees a sense of goal-directed action (i.e., motivate or incent them); or if you want to inspire or maintain customer loyalty, consider the successes of the enterprises and the resources mentioned in this story.

When businesses do good by being good (to employees, patrons, communities ), everyone benefits. 



# Like a Kid in a Candy Shop

People like getting treats. To illustrate our FRONTcover story on incentives and customer / employee appreciation, we figured nothing said that better than having a "kid" surrounded by candy. The local venue we selected is **The Candy Store** at downtown Roanoke's Center-in-the-Square ([www.thecandystore.roanoke.com](http://www.thecandystore.roanoke.com))—thanks, guys! And who better to shoot this than Marissa Yi of **Bella Muse Photography** ([www.bella-muse.com](http://www.bella-muse.com)), who not only has mad fashion-photog skills, but just so happens to have the perfect model, always on hand (her daughter)—thanks, Lynessa, for the spot-on pose and expression!





## Professional Development

By Lesa Hanlin

### Executive Summary:

*There's a 'badge' many professionals are striving for (intentional or unintentional) that isn't one you really want to have.*

## Addicted to busyness >

Tony Crabbe, the author of *How to Thrive in a World of too Much Busy*, says "Busyness is a choice. In fact, busy is the easy choice." Do you wear busyness as a badge of honor? Are you confusing busy with value and self-worth? You may have it wrong.

Busyness differs from living a full life. A full life means you are happy, growing, have momentum and feel good.

You wear a Busyness Badge if you:

1. can't remember the last time you woke up refreshed.
2. don't have time to take vacations.
3. don't ask for help.
4. can't remember when you last felt on top of things.
6. are always trying to meet others' expectations.
7. have a messy work space.
8. put off taking care of yourself (planning meals, exercising, enjoying your hobby).

You can't fight fires every day and not pay the price. How can you reverse this pattern and become less busy?

Disengage. Become unavailable occasionally to work on meaningful things. Don't check emails and send calls to voicemail.


Decide. What are your priorities? Do activities that support only those.

Defer. Say no, create boundaries, and become politely selective. Think of it as saying yes to something that matters more. Make fewer commitments.

Delegate. Look at your to-do list. Who would do these tasks if you were away.

Delay. Ask if it can wait. You'd be surprised how people solve their own problems if you aren't available to take them on.

Detox. What do you do the minute you get up and the last thing you do before sleep? Turning off email notifications on my cell phone has made a huge impact for me. Another detox idea is to schedule a Day of Thinking every now and then at work. No meetings, phone calls, or emails. Also, spend time outdoors. We live in one of the most beautiful parts of the country and should enjoy it!

Being busy decreases motivation and focus and increases task completion time. By turning in your Busyness Badge, instead of doing more you can *be* more. 

## Phubbing – eh, what? >

Phubbing? What on earth is phubbing? I must admit that was my initial reaction when I recently read about the phenomena in a post from a British etiquette expert. I felt a little out of touch because I had never heard the word before. It turns out it was generated through research by language and marketing experts at the University of Sydney in 2012. It is now a bona fide word in many dictionaries.


What does this funny sounding word mean? It is a combination of “phone” and “snubbing” and it means ignoring someone while interacting with one’s smart device. Who knew? Certainly not me, and I bet you millennials are having a snicker at my expense right now!

Who knew that the word would go viral, and that a graduate student in Australia started a “Stop Phubbing” campaign to address this growing social problem? He even suggested (tongue in cheek, perhaps) staging interventions as a possible solution. The campaign spread around the world and attracted over 300 million people, encouraging dialogues on smart phone etiquette.

It’s fun to say the word phubbing. Let’s face it, though, it’s not exactly fun to be phubbed, as all of us have surely been. We had better come clean here too, and admit that most of us have been guilty of being the phubber. How often have you felt annoyed or even hurt and marginalized when a friend, relative, or co-worker ignored you in favor of their smart device? This is phubbing and, at its worst, it is breaking up relationships both personal and professional.

Some feel that this 21st century phenomenon is simply part of modern life, and that it’s harmless. But let’s look at what research says about the effects of phubbing. Emma Seppala, a psychologist at Stanford and Yale universities, and author of *The Happiness Track* observes “... phubbing is meant to connect you with someone through social media or texting...but it actually can severely disrupt your present-moment, in-person relationships.”

Studies show that phubbing actually makes one feel less connected, and that being phubbed negatively impacts inclusiveness, self-esteem, and other fundamental needs by making persons feel left out or ostracized. I must say, though, that one doesn’t really need a scientific study to conclude that people’s feelings get hurt if they are snubbed!

I think we can all agree that phubbing isn’t really good for anyone. Now that we have a name for it, let’s consider cutting back on this demeaning habit. Let’s face it – phubbing is just plain rude! 



## Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

**Executive Summary:**  
*Smart phones can be used in such dumb ways during real-time social interactions.*





**Lisa Poff Oliver**

## Let's go! >

### **Executive Summary:**

*Postcard Trips is a boutique travel agency designed for today's seeker of adventure.*

### **By Bonnie Cranmer**

She's sitting behind a huge desk. There's a map of the world behind her head. She invites me to sit and then the adventure begins.

Lisa Poff Oliver loves to travel! If she had her way, she would be jumping on and off a train in Europe, or sailing in the Caribbean, or escorting a group on a walking tour of the French Riviera. Yet, we're in her home office in Salem, Virginia and still about to take a ride.

Oliver's business is Postcard Trips, LLC. Life threw her some curves early on, going from a nursing career to assistant to the president of World Travel, Carrie Irvin, in 1994. The travel bug hit hard while working at World Travel, leading up to a "familiarization trip" in 2012 that inspired Postcard Trips to become her business.

A travel agent is more than just someone who books a trip or schedules a tour. "I take my responsibility seriously," Oliver stated. She's a Sandals Specialist, as well as a certified Autism Travel Professional, which means she can care for the special needs of your travel party and ensure everyone has a wonderful experience.

Oliver works through a consortium of travel services, allowing her to find the best deals on the best locations for clients. She has developed a client base that trusts her for repeat business and happily provides referrals. Her wealth of experience covers college break trips, to destination weddings to bucket list journeys. Each trip is detailed in a digital format for easy access and for special trips, printed in a travel folder. "I just think the old school itinerary and travel details make a nice presentation," Oliver shared.

She's witnessed how much the travel industry has changed, since 9/11 and much more. Oliver was on a trip in Disney World when 9/11 happened, which was scary but the professional way that the resort handled the emergency was a demonstration of how to serve your guests in the most difficult situation. "By now you have heard of the very unfortunate events that occurred today in Washington DC, New York and


elsewhere. Our teams have been monitoring the situation and have been in close contact with law enforcement officials..." the memo began. It was this travel situation, and several others that have given Oliver the ability to serve her traveling clients with the best advice and arrangements, taking full responsibility for the travelers' experience.

The trends in travel have changed over the years, too. It's all about the "experience" for most people currently. Personalization is the name of the game in 2018/19 as rated #1 booking trend by TrekkSoft, international travel industry software company. Oliver specializes in custom travel plans for events, groups and solo travels. She's looking forward to creating some European train trips soon as she loves the "adrenaline of European travel."

Adventure for the millennial generation,

wellness and health travel, and culinary travel experiences have been on the rise of late. Everything green for destinations, and everything electronic, even AI (Artificial Intelligence) is in demand for the travel shopper. Specialized services are the skills Oliver offers to wade through the noise and make the right decisions for an exceptional experience.

What's her best advice for a truly memorable travel adventure? "Get outside your comfort zone!" Oliver states emphatically. If it's available, get "cancel for any reason" insurance as it's definitely worth the investment; and whether you plan far in advance or for the next weekend, do your homework.

Oliver can be found on Facebook with Postcard Trips LLC and locally at the Roanoke and Smith Mountain Lake chapters of Professional Women Resources. 

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The mural above the couch is a stylized version of the Uttara logo painted by local artist Katherine Devine.

## Find your center >

### Executive Summary:

*Uttara Yoga Center is the result of a founder who realized she could "really help people."*

**By Brian Bongard**

"Find Your Center": that's the banner that has headlined Uttara's website for years. It is clearly a reference to the practice and benefits of Yoga, but it is particularly appropriate now as she has recently moved

into a spacious new Yoga center with room to breathe and room to grow at 401 Highland Ave SE, in Roanoke.

I met Jill Loftis down there recently to chat about yoga, get a tour, and ask about the journey that lead her here.

We sat down on the couch in her new lobby and started out by talking about the benefits of yoga. I mentioned that the upcoming holiday season can be a busy and stressful time for many people, and asked her what thoughts or advice she had for people in regards to that.

Jill said "The practice of Yoga is great for


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reducing stress” and also that “Most people have no idea how stressed they are until they start working with their body and paying attention to it. The mind is a good helper but a terrible master. We need to turn our attention inward.”

Studies have shown that slouching, sometimes called “text neck” or the “iHunch”, influences our moods, behaviors, and even our self-confidence as well as damaging the spine. Yoga can help us be happier, healthier and more confident, simply by helping us improve our posture.

Jill started practicing yoga in her living room while she was home nursing her second child with a TV show called “Inhale Yoga with Steve Ross”.

After discovering the benefits of yoga, she took a yoga teacher training class thinking that she would really like to

work with kids. She had kids and enjoyed them, plus the thought of teaching adults terrified her. She volunteered to teach yoga for children’s organizations like the Boy Scouts, the Girls Scouts and Girls on the Run. Approaching the Gym teacher at Roanoke Catholic where her kids were going to school led to teaching two to three classes a day to kids from kindergarten through 7th grade. The kids loved it and so did she.

The benefits of Yoga and Mindfulness practices are also recognized on a federal level by the U.S. Department of Education who started offering grants to include classes in after school programs. Through the hard work of local advocates, Roanoke City schools received one of those grants and Jill started teaching 16 classes a week over 24 weeks to elementary, middle, and high school kids.

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**Jill Loftis plays a Harmonium, a small pump organ that blends naturally with the human voice and is frequently used while chanting.**

under her belt, she decided to face her fears about teaching adults, and started volunteering at Bethany Hall Treatment center for women. While there, she realized, "Wow, I'm good at this. I can really help people".


Jill decided to make the leap and opened the first Uttara Yoga studio on Kirk Avenue in

2006. Her vision was to "Create a safe and sacred space to share the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of the practice".

With that as her guiding light, her business has grown and the need for an increasing amount of that sacred space has led her to her new studio. Having two large classrooms and several smaller rooms



is a huge advantage that enables her to schedule multiple classes at once and expand her offerings. She has attracted amazing instructors from all over the country as well as grown some right here through teacher training programs. Classes range from beginner through advanced, from restorative to focused power and stretching for athletes. Some of her instructors have special passions like working with disadvantaged youth, helping people with chronic conditions stay active, and working with women during the birthing process. You can schedule a private session or a kid's party. You may even want to join them for one of their immersive yoga retreats to locations around the world.

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## Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

**Executive Summary:**  
*Sometimes victory in a lawsuit is prohibitively expensive.*

### Yes, you can be sued for that >

We had three very similar cases last week.

First, a website company got a threatening letter from a former customer who wanted a refund because its new web site had no mobile version. However, the website company's quote had said that a mobile version would cost extra, and the customer didn't pay the extra fee.

The question for us was, "Can they really sue us for that?"

In the second case, a former banker got a threatening letter from his ex-employer, who said that he had violated his non-competition agreement by going to work for a competitor. However, his new job wasn't with a competing bank, it was with a technology startup developing a new type of lawnmower.

The question for us was, "Can they really sue me for that?"

Finally there was the case of a local restaurant with a green dinosaur in its logo, who got a threatening letter from a big computer company that also has a green dinosaur in its logo. But the computer company doesn't run any restaurants, and the restaurant company doesn't make computers. No one could possibly confuse one company for the other.

The question for us was, "Can they really sue us for that?"

In each of these cases, the other side's case against our client was really lousy.

The website company was accused of failing to do work that it never agreed to do in the first place.

The ex-banker was accused of taking a job with a "competitor" that was not a competitor.

The restaurant was accused using a confusingly similar logo, even though no customer confusion was remotely possible because the types of business were so different.

In each case, the client wanted to know, "Can they sue me?"

And in each case, our answer was "Yes." This is because it is very simple to file a lawsuit.

Now, when a client asks "Can they sue me?" usually what the client actually wants to know is, "Can they sue me and win?"

But often it doesn't really matter whether the other side will win. This is because defending a lawsuit can be so expensive that even if you have a great defense—even if the other side

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

has zero chance of winning—it would cost way too much for you to fight the case through to victory.

Just filing the initial documents in response to a lawsuit can cost several thousand dollars.

Your lawyers might have a good legal argument why the lawsuit should be thrown out. However, having them prepare the legal briefs and make the argument before the judge will cost several thousand dollars more. But the judge might still allow the case to continue.

That's when you'll start spending serious bucks. Because that's when you begin the process of "discovery." In discovery, each side can force the other side to answer written questions, to provide copies of documents, and to submit to depositions (where the other side's lawyer asks you questions in an interview and a stenographer takes down your answers). This can take hundreds of hours of attorney time, and the costs can rapidly mount into the tens of thousands of dollars.

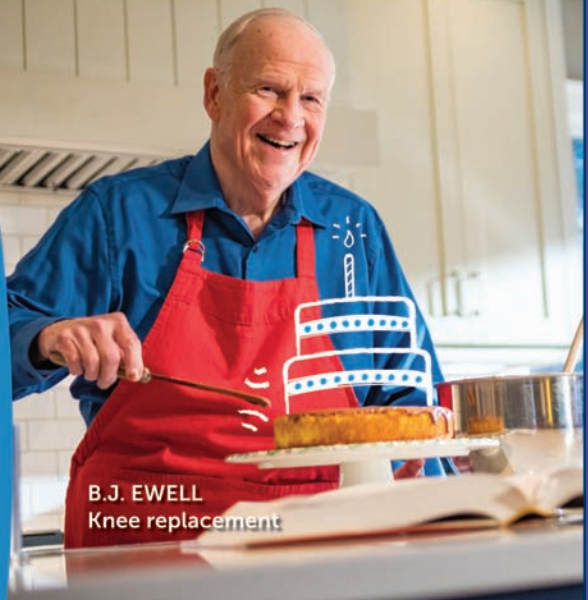
After discovery, your lawyers might again have a good



When a client asks 'Can they sue me?' usually what the client actually wants to know is, 'Can they sue me and win?'

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In discovery, each side can force the other side to answer written questions, to provide copies of documents, and to submit to depositions. The costs can rapidly mount into the tens of thousands of dollars.



You might have a great defense. You even might be certain to win. But victory will cost you so much that it won't be worth it.

argument why the lawsuit should be thrown out. They'll prepare legal briefs (again) and make their argument before the judge (again), except this time they'll also quote from all the documents and interview questions. But the judge might still allow the case to continue to trial.

Ah, trial! The pinnacle of our civil justice system. And the pinnacle of your costs, too. Your attorneys will drop all their other work, skip their gym visits and their kids' soccer games, all to focus exclusively on your case, day in and day out. So expect to spend tens of thousands of dollars more taking your case all the way to a jury.


If after all this you win your case, then congratulations. But your victory will have cost you a bundle. (And we haven't even talked about the possibility that the other side might appeal to a higher court.)

Not a lot of businesses can afford this sort of justice. So most folks who get sued (and especially small businesses that get sued by huge businesses) decide to settle the lawsuits, just because it's so much cheaper.

The website company reluctantly agree to refund half of its fee to its much-larger customer, because defending against the lawsuit would have cost at least five times as much (and would have monopolized the owner's time and attention for weeks).

The ex-banker agreed to leave his new job because it would have cost him more than his salary to raise a defense, and because his new employer was terrified of getting sued itself.

The restaurant decided to change its logo, since the cost of a new sign and new branding was so much smaller than the cost of defending a trademark infringement suit in federal court.

So can they sue you for that? Yep, they sure can. You might have a great defense. You even might be certain to win. But victory will cost you so much that it won't be worth it. That's simply the way our civil justice system works. 

Keith can be reached at [keith@creekmorelaw.com](mailto:keith@creekmorelaw.com)

**Note:** *facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn't legal advice—you should consult a lawyer before deciding how to respond to a legal claim, deciding whether to file or defend against a lawsuit, calculating the risks of litigation, etc.*



## Can we talk? >

### Meet People4Good

Twice in my life I found myself as an adult without a job. The two situations were quite similar and they both happened fairly close together. It's not something I would wish upon anyone, but as you might imagine I learned a lot about life and about myself during those challenging times.

One of the things wise people encouraged me to do was to meet with people to help me see what possibilities existed out there and to better understand what made me special, valuable, and unique. A handful of people took time to meet with me and it made a big difference.


While the two seasons ended in very different employment situations, they confirmed something I had generally tried to do throughout my career. It's a different kind of "networking."

I'll meet with almost anyone who asks me to connect with them professionally – especially when they are in a time of transition.

### It's Easy2Make a Difference

While my schedule is as crowded as any of yours, if a new college graduate, a trailing spouse, or a friend of a friend wants to get together to talk about their career or to learn about mine, I'll work really hard to make time. Partially it is because people did the same for me. At times it's a way to give back to others in the same way connections have been given to me. And while I try not to do it for selfish reasons, I can honestly say these meetings have provided me some significant personal and business gains through the years as well.

Sometimes you meet a person who is just right for your own company. Other times you find someone who may be a perfect fit for one of your clients. But even if those things don't happen, it's rewarding to help other people. If they leave your meeting and take some of the steps and find their own path – in a problem, a career, or with their product, it does feel good knowing you were able to help.

It's a simple way to give back and to acknowledge those who gave to me. 

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## A Little Insight

By Bruce C. Bryan

**Executive Summary:**  
*Taking time to meet with people—particularly job seekers—is a good idea for both parties.*



Hap Ender, SouthWings; Dave Sligh, Wild Virginia; Andrea Brunais, Virginia Tech

## Ouch >

### Executive Summary:

*Virginia Wild is at the top of the list of folks and organizations protesting the Mountain Valley Pipeline installation.*

### By Tom Field

"Show me your scar!"

Uncle Bob might be proud to show off his battle scars (wherever they came from) to unsuspecting nieces and nephews to his delight of horrifying them. But in most cases, nobody goes up to a person and asks to see the scars and old wounds.

Enter Wild Virginia.

This organization wants to see all the ugly. They knew it was coming before it happen... and are certain the worse is yet to come.

"Don't be fooled by the promise of

economic gain," says David (Dave) Sligh, a conservation director for the grassroots nonprofit preservation advocacy.

That's the least disgusted reaction he had on the Mountain Valley Pipeline flyover aerial survey on an early October trek in a small Cessna piloted by "Hap" Ender of SouthWings—a conservation aviation service out of Asheville, NC. Andrea Brunais of Virginia Tech's Outreach & International Affairs also joined the crew to document and supplement her production work on the Save Our Towns initiative.

Dave doesn't want to see the "scar." But he has to.

As if tied by a string to the strip below us, the Cessna tracked at low altitude from the tip of Giles County, through Montgomery and Roanoke counties to Franklin County at US 220—a mere 60 mile segment of the 300+ mile MVP route. Only 30 miles, "as the crow flies" though, if a crow flew in zig-zag fashion.

The project is impressive. From the air, one person could marvel at the incredible engineering feat, while another person





**Pipeline construction workers park their vehicles and head off to work in both directions at this pathway bend in Franklin County.**

sees nothing remarkable except all the evidence in the world to be angry or sad. The strips through cleared farmland evoke one response (such as worry about the red dirt runoff in Franklin County) but the strips over previously undisturbed mountains and rolling forests seem

especially shameful from this perspective.

One can't help but notice the electric power lines (from decades' old projects) that still interrupt the scenic Southwest Virginia panorama, whether viewed by air or ground. So, aesthetically at least, will the gas pipeline



**In this stretch of the path, pipes are being placed in the mountain range (top) while the southern portion has been clear cut.**



**42-inch diameter pipe sections in place**





**Pipeline path takes interesting course in sections, including this Z-pattern on Fort Lewis Mountain.**



**MVP section over Roanoke County's Poor Mountain**

be less noticeable once the vegetation grows back?

Dave is skeptical.

"Keep in mind, the Corps of Engineers say the contour must be restored [to pre-pipeline state]," he says. "But that can mean dumping dirt over it." In other words, not necessarily permanent. And Dave says the state requires the disturbed area must be "restored to a meadow environment." That's because you can't re-plant trees on top of the gas line, including about a 50-foot wide swath.

With an environmental science degree from University of Virginia and a law degree from Vermont Law School, David Sligh worked as an environmental engineer for the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and founded Virginia PEER (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility).

His major concern about Mountain Valley Pipeline involves damage and threat to the watershed and the region's water supply, though other environmental impacts are also substantial, he says. His and Wild Virginia's initial mission was to stop the construction of the pipeline altogether. He still fights to do that as an expert witness in lawsuits by property owners and speaks as if it is still possible to stop the project, even as it moves ahead full steam below.

Today's mission is modified, but still just as important, Dave says.

"We want to not damage places they haven't already," he says. "And we are going to hold them accountable, especially on the water quality."

The pace of the MVP construction project is surprising. Even with the delays from weather to legal orders, most of the stretch



**Roads like this one in Franklin County were especially susceptible to runoff and mud when hard rains hit during project work.**



**Pipeline crosses (under) Blue Ridge Parkway**


below the plane is clearly underway in one stage or another. In some places, the pipeline goes right up and over steep mountaintop ridges, even making sharp turns in places that seem strange from a bird's eye view. A few segments show only felled trees, other short segments have buried pipe, but the majority of this section has pipes in the process of placement in the trenches, followed by welding. Every now and then, you'll see a cluster of parked vehicles from the workers, with earth moving equipment crawling down the line.

The pipeline will transfer natural gas from a station in Wetzel County, West Virginia to a station in Pittsylvania County in southern Virginia. Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC (builder and owner) is part of EQT Midstream Partners (operator), NextEra US Gas Assets, Edison Transmission, WGL Midstream, and RGC Midstream. The pipe is about 42-inches in diameter and its placement will require

about 50 feet of permanent easement. It is regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

MVP's timeline shows its first application filed in October 2015, FERC certification in October 2017, construction starting in first quarter 2018, and a targeted in-service date of fourth quarter 2019. MVP also published a summary of economic benefits for all affected counties in both states, which includes six in Virginia.

Whether the pipeline is a permanent scar from an injury that will never go away or a surgical-like necessity that is needed for progress is a matter of perspective, though opponents and proponents hardly see any of the issues as even remotely arguable.

Right now, it's just ugly. And there "ain't no mountain high enough" that appears able to stop it. 





# Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

## Executive Summary:

*The last point in our 14 part series is the one that's going to matter the most.*

## Take action >

This month we wrap up the series on W. Edwards Deming's 14 points for management to follow as covered in his book, *Out of the Crisis*.

### **Point #14** – *Take action to accomplish the transformation.*

For the past year, I've provided a summary of the philosophy of Edwards Deming and his 14 Points for Management. If you've read this column, you should have several ideas on how you can improve the quality and operations in your organization. So what are you going to do about it?

Unless your organization is perfect and there is no opportunity for improvement, it's time to act. Reading the excellent articles in FRONT is smart but gaining knowledge without acting is simply entertainment.


In his final point for management, Deming challenges management to act. He offers a plan of action to get started:

1. Get consensus with the leadership team that change is necessary and determine the direction you want to go. Adopt a new quality philosophy (Point #2 – FRONT November 2017).
2. Take pride in adopting this new philosophy and have the courage to break with tradition.
3. Explain to your employees why change is necessary, and that the change will involve everybody.

Deming offers additional action recommendations, but what's most important is that you take one or more of the ideas from the first 13 points and START NOW!

I often give presentations and seminars at conferences and other gatherings. During these speaking engagements, I try to provide something useful to the audience. Additionally, I almost always challenge the audience to act, even if it's only one small task to improve. The same is true here.

I'm challenging you to break tradition and do something different this week. Choose one improvement idea from my articles the past year, or an idea from any article in this month's FRONT issue and make a commitment to act on it. Better yet, send me an email and tell me what you are going to do, and I'll help hold you accountable.

It's time to act! It's time to start the transformation!  
What are you waiting for? 

*Send your questions or comments (and improvement ideas you will act on!) to [Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com](mailto:Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com)*




## Are you budgeting for prosperity? >

It's probably no surprise, as a financial geek, I'm big believer in budgeting. It's likely also no shocker I've spent a lot of time seeing people challenged with follow through on this front. Over the years, I've spent many hours trying to figure out how to best help clients get around this money planning roadblock.

What I've discovered is, the self-proclaimed financial gurus have it wrong. Maybe their formulas work for the very wealthy or disciples they've been advising for decades, but for us average folk today, that's not reality. Housing costs have increased as a percentage of our income. Experiences are becoming more important, which means we want a bigger payoff in play time as we work harder. A larger percentage of income needs to be allocated for savings. Necessities are blurring into what should be considered discretionary spending.

Which brings me to my 40/20/20/20 spending rule. It's designed to help you achieve more financial independence in the future while having more fun today. Here's the breakdown:

- **40% for housing.** This includes rent or mortgage payments and the basic expenses involved in keeping a roof over your head. Utilities, property insurance, home maintenance costs and repairs are included here.
- **20% for necessities.** Consider basic food, automobile, medical and other essentials as appropriate items for this allocation.
- **20% for savings.** Traditional recommendations for 10% here isn't enough anymore. Stocks aren't offering average 12% returns as in the past and with interest rates holding at historic lows, conservative investments are paying less. Ideally, these funds go directly to a retirement fund you devise with your professional financial advisor to determine your best investment opportunities, but if you have significant debt or no emergency fund, start paying off high interest obligations and setting aside enough to cover 3-6 months of living expenses first.
- **20% for discretionary spending.** This is the fun part of the formula. We all have our wants. It's not practical to think we should go every month without rewarding ourselves. Whether it's the gym, clothing, eating out, a vacation fund, charity donations, Christmas gifts or your decision to shoulder an outrageous monthly phone or cable bill, this is up to you.

As you reflect on your household spending, consider crafting a realistic budget with a decent amount going toward savings and entertainment. You'll be amazed at how easy it can be to have more fun and financial security when you take the time to budget first, then track expenses monthly, making adjustments as you stray off course. 



## Financial Figures

By Michael Shelton

**Executive Summary:**  
*A good formula for spending is the 40/20/20/20 rule.*



Jim O'Brien

Jim O'Brien and George Lester, II

## Home grown >

### **Executive Summary:**

*The Lester Group makes a lot happen from Martinsville... and it's been happening over a century.*

**By Cara Cooper**

It's not easy for a company to stay in business for more than 100 years, and Martinsville's The Lester Group certainly looks different than it did when it began as a single sawmill back in 1896.

Now, The Lester Group has diversified into five divisions, all but one of which come together at the company's headquarters in Martinsville.

The Lester Group was started by George

Lester when he was 20 years old. With just a fourth grade education, the mechanically inclined Lester turned a sawmill headed for the dump into what would become Barrows Mill, and built a lumber company that made both building supplies and supplies for World War I and II.

The Lester's son, George W. Lester II, served as CEO of the company for 44 years before retiring this past May. He is still the chair of the board of directors, while Jim O'Brien, who's been with the company for nine years, serves as current President and CEO.

Given the changing economy over the last 122 years, Lester said the company has had to adapt and diversify in many different ways to stay afloat, especially over the last decade.

"We've been through two world wars, the Korean War, we've been through the Great Depression. To me, the Great Recession was as bad as the Depression for our particular industry," Lester said. "A lot of things changed. Our industry,

we've seen a lot of change in our life. From products we made, places we do business, the type of things we do."

The company really started to expand in the mid 1900's. They got into real estate in the 1920's when the first Lester built Liberty Heights swimming pool in Martinsville out of the town's reservoir that also served as the water supply for the fire department.

"They said 'if they have a fire we'll just blow a whistle, and everybody gets out and we'll put the fire out,'" Lester said.

Now, the Lester Group owns real estate throughout Virginia and North Carolina, including a medical facility in Roanoke, office buildings in Blacksburg, and much of the land along Commonwealth Boulevard in Martinsville that houses the mall, several restaurants, and the Clock Tower Building in Uptown, which was once a factory but has been refurbished into office buildings.

The little company has expanded a lot over the years, and O'Brien said they set

Cara Cooper



Clock tower refurbished by Lester Group





Cara Cooper

### Lester Group building supply store in Martinsville

new records for growth every year. Real estate is one of five divisions which make up The Lester Group – real estate, building materials and stores, wood products and wood treating, the Fortress Door Company, and forest lands where they plant their own trees for lumber.

The building materials division houses stores in Lynchburg, Manassas, Fredericksburg and Martinsville where they sell hardwares.

The company got into treated lumber in 1977, and makes decking materials for construction of houses in Greensboro, and has expanded to a newer plant in High Point and another in Henderson and Elizabeth City, North Carolina. The treated lumber division ships for piers and construction as far north as Maine.

They also most recently bought a door manufacturing plant, now named Fortress Door Company, in Fredericksburg in 2016. O'Brien said he got a call from someone who said the plant was going to be shutting down, and asked if he and Lester would take a tour and consider buying it.

"We spent about an hour, took a tour and said 'I think we can do this,'" O'Brien said. "So we ended up buying their equipment, keeping all employees, kept all jobs in the areas. We re-leased the building. It closed on Friday under one name, and opened on Monday under another name. So it was an opportunity presented to us. It's now a sound company. We're doing well. We still have all those employees... and it's successful." The forest land division is one aspect

that Lester said he's most proud of. The company, which employs a forester who runs the division, has almost 19,000 acres of forest land, and they will cut so many acres a year, spray it the next year, and replant it the next, giving them a lifecycle of trees and a renewable resource for years to come.

"We've planted over a million trees," Lester said.

And all employees, no matter what division, are stock shareholders in the company, another aspect Lester said he's proud of.

"They are the third or fourth largest ownership group within the company," Lester said of the employees. "We have stockholder meetings with our employees twice a year at all the various divisions, and the managers report to the employees what we're doing in the various divisions. When you hear the term 'family business' it usually means the family owns it and runs it. But the stockholders, the ESOP, the big shareholders, and all the employees can buy stock in the company. We all get together and if we have a decision we talk about it, if we have a problem we talk about it. So I think that to me makes it fun. We have celebrations. If we make a sales record we all celebrate together because everybody made it happen. One person didn't do it. Everybody did it."

While the company as a whole is quite wide

spread, Lester said about 30 percent of what they do is still in Martinsville, and the headquarters are still in the same town where it all started more than a century ago. On a practical level, O'Brien said Martinsville is a good spot because it's in a central location that puts them within a day's drive of major metropolitan areas in Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina.


"This is a very good hub for us," O'Brien said. "When you start looking at the radius, it's really not a bad place to be."

Lester said that being in Martinsville also puts the company just outside of the Roanoke and New River Valleys, where they've seen growth and hope to continue to grow.

Plus, Martinsville is home to Lester. While they've had to grow and change quite a lot over the years, and will undoubtedly have to change more in the future, that adaptability

has made The Lester Group the success it's been for so many decades.

"Our business is taking our customers, finding what they need, and providing a good product to them, quality service, give our employees a long term commitment and a good return for our shareholders," Lester said. "But it's changed. If we did today what we did 10 years ago, or 10 more than that, we wouldn't be in business. And in 10 years if we don't change some more we probably won't be in business here. But that's the world we live in. We've got to change, adapt, get better."

"We have a good geographic position in the country. It has a lot of organic growth. It's a good place, it has a lot of possibilities. A lot of people say the grass is always greener on the other side, but the grass is pretty green right here in Martinsville if you work and take advantage of it." 

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## Shelf life >

People who have spent their time and energy, not to mention their money, on helping those members of a community who – for whatever reason – haven't the ability to support themselves agree that the formula for success in a charitable giving program derives from three important elements:

- community involvement – individuals, corporations large and small, churches, service clubs, and students
- volunteers who are trained, experienced and excited about what they're doing
- program organization that not only allows for, but stresses that recipients are able to make choices regarding what they receive and when.

## Good Work

By Rachael Garrity

**Executive Summary:**  
*The Radford Elf Shelf program is one the community really rallies behind; and it's operated with integrity and attention.*

Celebrating its 25th year in operation, the Radford Elf Shelf is as good an example of why and how that formula works as one can find. Founded by a group of members of First Baptist Church in Radford under the leadership of Kent Taylor, the Elf Shelf right away proved to have "hit a nerve." Director Ann Walker, who originally served as an "elf" before assuming her current position in 1999, remembers: "We opened the doors and the line stretched around the block. We ran out of toys, called the Marines, and they saved the day."

The need has increased in recent years, and what was at first a rather loosely organized effort has since been structured so that the people with the greatest need can be assured to be served. During the first part of November each year, fliers are distributed throughout Radford (the program is exclusively for city residents) detailing requirements for establishing eligibility, and when and where to apply. While the program is best known for the new-toy shopping it offers, it also provides food vouchers for needy families, with or without children. Eligibility is based on national poverty guidelines.



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Once they are qualified, families are issued a number of points, which become the “currency” for purchasing the toys. They receive 40 points per eligible child, and Walker explains that is roughly equivalent to \$60. In addition to new toys and books they purchase, they can browse bonus tables that offer items valued at less than \$5 plus some previously owned toys and books.

What’s more, when Elf Shelf volunteers do the shopping for toys in early November, they take with them lists of specific requests families have submitted. If they are able to find the toys at allowable prices, they purchase them and mark them for each family.

“There are several hundred volunteers every year,” says Walker. “It is not unusual for Radford University fraternities and sororities to bring trailers and set them up outside Walmart to collect toys. We put boxes in various business locations, and the businesses create all kinds of incentives for employees and customers to participate.”

Mark Twain once wrote: “To be good is noble, but to show others how to be good is nobler and no trouble.” This particular group of “elves” seems to have taken that as their motto. 



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# On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

**Executive Summary:**  
*Supporting a cause is no longer a secondary or trivial matter for most organizations.*

## Causes >

Who do you support?

Who does your organization support?

Social causes are becoming more a significant line item for businesses than ever before. Some organizations still have an undefined policy (well, I guess that would be NO policy) where they respond to charitable requests or community support activities on a case-by-case basis. One day it's a major fundraising drive and they rally up to help out the agency in record-breaking fashion. The next day it's a \$200 check to Jimmy's t-ball team, so they can have jerseys. (Jimmy is Maryanne's grandson, by the way. You know... Maryanne from accounting.) If it's a really good year, a lot of folks get a lot of help from the company donations. If it's a bad year, well... Jimmy is lucky if Maryanne can even come and watch his game; because she's working overtime since the company can't afford enough help.

Today, more companies have defined statements about to whom and how they provide support. And it's interesting to see how these statements are developed.

One company considers the causes its employees support or volunteer for—while another company ties its very brand to a singular cause (and prefers its employees to be on board with that). An organization may choose to associate with a cause because it is something that directly affects an individual (founder, officer, employee, customer, community) or matches the very product or service it provides. That makes sense. It's a natural alliance for an athletic shoe business to support a wellness or fitness mission.

Company leaders could struggle with the best way to support important causes. Do you diversify and give a little to multiple causes, charitable or advocacy organizations? (That way, you're showing the love to more than one agency that helps your community, environment, market. And you're not putting all your eggs into one basket, in case the organization falters or loses its reputation or ability to make an impact for one reason or another.) Or, do you go for it, and select a major cause where your contribution and resources really do make a noticeable difference and measurable engagement? (How nice is it to tie your organization to a known entity that so many people can rally behind?)

At Valley Business FRONT, we set an agenda from day one that addressed five core areas: educational, environmental, wellness, cultural, and business. Low and behold, we've been pretty balanced in our contribution to those five areas (though I'm not sure our bean counters would see exactly 20% for each).

*continued on Page 44*

## Healthcare reimagined >

Have you ever wondered why you offered healthcare benefits to your employees in the first place? Have you ever thought you'd like to change the system because you know the rules need to be changed?

Although the healthcare system in the U.S. is highly complicated, there is a straight-forward reason that controlling healthcare costs is seemingly impossible: that reason would be "misaligned incentives." In our current system there is no real stakeholder that is incentivized to reduce healthcare costs. From the PBM, hospitals, TPA, drug companies, insurance companies... all of these entities have a responsibility to show profits to their shareholders and board of directors. The current system is destroying our middle class as rising costs of healthcare is cannibalizing wage increases across the United States.

First and foremost, we must break the status-quo and "reimagine" healthcare as it should be. We should actively engage all the healthcare vendors to cull out excess profits. The CEO, CFO, and HR Directors should engage in strategic discussions and decision about their healthcare by looking in these areas:

- Employer strategy for purchasing and managing healthcare
- Healthcare delivery and use of networks
- Aggressive fiduciary oversight of the healthcare spend
- Align themselves with forward thinking brokers who will break the "status-quo" cycle of healthcare
- Engage in becoming the fiduciary of the plan as required by ERISA and the US Department of Labor
- Review of your PBM spend and how rebates affect your healthcare rates
- Aggressive review of your hospital and outpatient surgery charges

Across the United States there are insurance consultants called "disrupters" that are taking a different approach to how our insurance products should be structured in the future. These consultants know that our current system cannot continue to sustain itself unless big changes are made. I would think that all business owners will admit to knowing this, but few have yet summoned the courage to change it or just have not been approached with new ideas from their "status quo" broker/consultants.

Ideally, REIMAGINED HEALTHCARE should be divided into separate vendors who agree to dedicate themselves to cutting out extra waste in the healthcare system. This method is called "the unbundled approach." This approach permits a client to take back control of their healthcare

continued on Page 44



## Guest Commentary

By Becky Pollard

### Executive Summary:

*No one believes our current healthcare system is 'healthy' or sustainable; here are some solutions—and yes, they require action.*






Within the State of Virginia, it appears that most businesses are insured by conventional types of insurance and most have an opportunity to make big changes in how they purchase healthcare.

## Field / On Tap

from Page 42

We also support demographic segmentation in those areas at times (women, minority, disability, veteran, youth, senior, community focus); but the primary drive is always advancement, progress, improvement.

Supporting a cause is not always easy. Thankfully, for many of us operating a business, it's as rewarding as it is imperative. 


---

## Guest Commentary

from Page 43

spend and require those vendors to act in the best interest of their plan and NOT the stockholders. Within the State of Virginia, it appears that most businesses are insured by conventional types of insurance and most have an opportunity to make big changes in how they purchase healthcare. Here are some ideas that employers can implement when and if conditions are suitable for their companies:

- Engage a consultant that will give you aggressive cost containment ideas and not just "spreadsheet" renewals year after year. GET RID OF THE STATUS QUO APPROACH.
- When conditions allow... move to a Third-Party Administrator (TPA) and look at the new level funded/self-funded products
- Create a more transparent approach to claims management by aligning with an insurance product that will furnish the employer with detailed claims and pharmacy information
- Review the possibility of the "reference-based pricing" products
- Research Direct Primary Care options in your benefit designs.
- Engage a firm to audit large claims for compliance issues. There is an enormous opportunity for saving dollar when audits are performed.
- Engage a PBM that agrees not to spread-price or rebate your drug spend

REIMAGINED HEALTHCARE can be within reach. As the football season starts into full swing I would tell you to think about this approach as a new game. Adopt new rules to win the game. Change your players. Implement new plays. Throw a Hail Mary... And change who wins the game. 

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NOV 6 • READ THINK CHAT  
NOV 7 • SOUL SESSIONS  
NOV 14 • COFFEE & CHAT  
NOV 16 • RIOT ROOSTER  
NOV 17 • SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY  
NOV 21 • SOUL SESSIONS  
NOV 28 • COFFEE & CHAT  
DEC 5 • SOUL SESSIONS  
DEC 7+14+21 • DICKENS OF A CHRISTMAS  
DEC 12 • COFFEE & CHAT  
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## 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)

### *Losers weepers*

When a woman asked Benjamin Franklin what kind of government the Constitutional Convention had given the country, he famously replied, "A republic, if you can keep it."

More than 230 years later, Franklin's response still resonates, especially as Americans raise questions and concerns about just how well the republic is functioning in the 21st century. David Kirsch explores these issues in his new digitally interactive book *A Failure to Keep It: How Misdiagnosis, Missed Opportunity and Misplaced Hope Are Dooming the American Experiment* (WeLeadUSA; 2018).

One of Kirsch's goals is to remind Americans that they hold significant powers and responsibilities as citizens and people, but those powers and responsibilities are meaningless when they fail to get involved. This idea of personal involvement is carried out in the book itself because the Kirsch's core arguments are expanded on through videos, infographic content and web links. Readers are urged to make use of that extra content for a greater understanding of the ideas.

—Miguel Casellas-Gil

### *More meaningful marketing*

Nobody starts out automatically caring about your products or services. So, how can brands make and maintain meaningful connections and create a lifetime value with customers in ways that'll set them apart in a "noisy," increasingly jaded and discriminating marketplace? How can businesses tell an authentic story so as to foster maximized marketplace engagement and breed brand loyalty? According to Kevin Lund, author of the new book, *Conversation Marketing: How to be Relevant and Engage Your Customer by Speaking Human* (Career Press; 2018), the

proverbial key to the Kingdom is for companies, no matter their size and scope, to simply "speak human."

"Those who are wildly successful at conversation marketing understand the strategy is not simply about propagating online content and sharing through social media accounts," Lund says. "Rather, it's a disciplined approach to communicating with a target audience in a way that tells a simple, human story that will educate, inform, entertain and, most importantly, compel customers in a way that fully captures mind—and-market share through messaging that truly resonates."

The book lists eight tactical strategies: earn attention; tell a story; stay humble; pick your party; be relevant; start the conversation; stop talking; ditch the checklist.

Lund also suggests finding sources of inspiration. "Explore some of the successful content marketing plans that showed passion, ditched the tired old language, zeroed in on what customers needed, and started a real conversation with the market," he urges. "Then scrutinize your own strategy and see where it might be lacking, so that you can continually refine your own checklist."

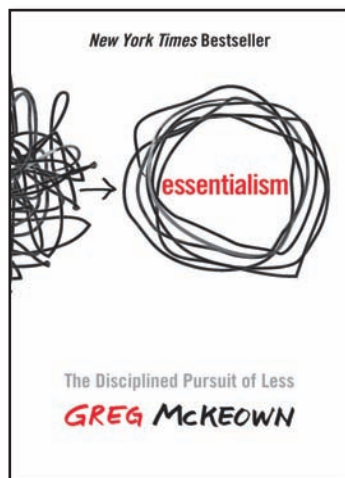
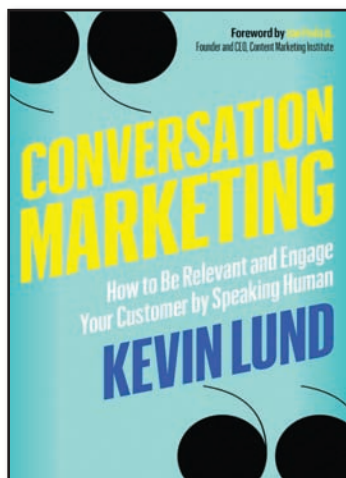
—Merilee Kern

### *Short game hopeful*

*The Putting Green Whisperer* (White Rose Publishing; 2018) is a fun, emotional, faith-building story. Allie is discouraged, insecure, and feels hopeless from being suddenly unemployed. Her father is on the PGA Seniors Tour and she returns home to Cary, NC, to be her father's caddy.







Another caddy on the circuit captures her attention, until she realizes who it is—Shoo Leonard, someone from her past. Even if you don't know anything about golf, this story is a keeper. The relationships between Shoo and his friends, Allie, and Jesus, make this story shine.

Shoo's strong steadfastness trusting in God's will for his life is encouraging. Allie goes from hopelessness, to a new job, to facing her past. The author does a great job portraying her hesitancy in trusting God. As the story progresses, faith, hope, and love shine through.

*The Putting Green Whisperer* is a very satisfying read!

—Sally Shupe

## Less is more

How do you live a life without regret? One could argue, convincingly, that answering that question is the foundation of Greg McKeown's fabulous book, *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less* (Currency; 2014). For many, regret comes after making decisions to say yes to obligations and events that are good, but, not great.

The book begins with a powerful and intimate look at how the inability to figure out what is essential resulted in a life altering experience of regret for the author. I am not going to share it...you need to buy and read the book. Trust me, it will get your attention and you will immediately examine yourself as a result.

The end result of over committing oneself to things that are good is the inability to recognize and/or say yes to things that are great...missing

out on opportunities and relationships that are exactly what we truly believe in and dream about. That, my friends, creates deep, sorrowful regret at what you settled for instead of what you could have had and Greg explains this better than any author I know of.

In my business coaching practice all my clients struggle from an abundance of opportunity. The real challenge they face is to discern what things and people clamoring for their time are worth their attention and then how to gracefully say no to those that aren't. McKeown does a masterful job contrasting the desire to be liked by others and the 'essentialists' acceptance that to be respected in the end is worth more than being liked in the now.

The good news for all of us that already know we struggle with this is that the book is far more than a high level explanation, it is also a very practical guide on how to make better decisions and how to share those decisions with people that will be disappointed in them. There are several scripts to help you tell people 'no' gracefully...and that gives us all the courage to focus better on what is most important to us.

—Mike Garrison

**The reviewers:** Miguel Casellas-Gil is a print campaign manager in Wesley Chapel, FL; Merilee Kern is a communications strategist, editor and producer of The Luxe List International News Syndicate; Sally Shupe lives in Newport, works at Virginia Tech, and is a freelance editor; Mike Garrison is a professional sales coach and leadership developer who operates Garrison Sales Consulting out of Roanoke.



## Grand lady sidetrack >

**STEAM Coffee & Eatery** has opened inside The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, featuring coffee, teas, pastries, sandwiches—all enhanced by the celebrated and treasured railroad heritage of Roanoke and the region.

## Water taxi >

**Virginia Tech College of Architecture and Urban Studies** students explored a variety of locations, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and parts of France, as part of a trip to study sustainability policymaking and planning, led by School of Public Affairs professors Todd Schenk and Ralph Buehler.



## Help when you grocery shop >

**Kroger** stores has assembled "Feed the Hungry" boxes for all 107 stores in the Mid-Atlantic Division (as demonstrated by Kroger associate Christian Rogers, left).



# FRONT 'N ABOUT



And, we're walking >

**Warm Hearth Village** employees at the senior living community in Blacksburg joined the **New River Valley Walk to End Alzheimer's** on Sept. 29, where they raised \$1,210 as part of the event.



Thumbnails rule >

**Outdoor Blogger Summit 2018** was held Oct. 14–16 in Roanoke, featuring nearly 30 experts presenting skills and best practices; including Seth Alvo's "Hacks for Growing Your YouTube Audience" (above), where one of his tips showed how effective a thumbnail image of your video can be in attracting and engaging viewers.





## See Rover fly over >

**Roanoke's Go Outside Festival** (known by the locals as simply GoFest) was held Oct. 12–14 at Rivers Edge Sports Complex, featuring, well... everything 'outdoorsy' including camping, hiking and water recreation, demonstrations, merchandise, food and music—and even a "flying dog" competition.



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



## Hay, ride? >

**Jeter Farm** in Botetourt County holds farm and Fall festival activities Sept. 29–Oct. 28, with barn animals and livestock petting and viewing, locally made products and crafts (including popular seasonal apple cider and kettle corn), a corn maze, and hay rides (using multiple tractor-wagon combos to serve the crowds growing larger every year).

VCOM



## Addiction stop >

Governor Ralph Northam visited the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) in Blacksburg on Oct. 19 for his final stop in a grand round lecture series on opioid addiction. As a physician and politician, Governor Northam spoke about the devastating impact of opioid addiction and how doctors, like VCOM's, can combat it. With him was Ryan Hall, a recovering addict from Covington, Virginia, who shared his experience with the disease.



# Career FRONT

## FINANCIAL FRONT



Guy



Powell

**Angela Guy** has joined as financial specialist and **Josh Powell** has joined as credit advisor at Pinnacle Financial Partners Roanoke office.

**Krystal Largen** has joined as sales agent at AmeriLife in Roanoke.

## LEGAL FRONT



DeGroot

**Caley DeGroot** has joined as an associate in the personal injury and malpractice teams at Gentry Locke.

## WELLNESS FRONT



Jones

**Lance Jones** has been appointed CEO and market president at LewisGale Regional Health System.

**Darlene Griffin** of

**Brandon Oaks** was named Director of Nursing of the Year by Virginia Health Care Association and Virginia Center for Assisted Living; **Sterling Hall** was named Teen Volunteer of the Year.

## TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

**Eileen Beckman** of Otteridge Farm in Bedford has been inducted into the Virginia Livestock Hall of Fame.

**Greg Feldmann** has been hired to serve as interim executive director and CEO of Valleys Innovation Council.

## DEVELOPMENT FRONT

**Laurie House** and **Jill Morris** have joined the sales team at Long & Foster Roanoke.

**Steve Zegarski** has been named corporate real estate director for



Zegarski



Johnson

The Branch Group.

**Jessica Johnson** at Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer in Roanoke has earned the Certified Commercial Investment Member (CCIM) designation.



Brown



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**Paula Brown** of Freedom First Credit Union mortgage was named 2018 Affiliate Individual of the Year by Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors.



Simmons



Williams

**Ashlee Simmons** has been promoted to projects coordinator and **Alex Williams** has been hired as events coordinator at Southern Trust Home Services.

**Jessica Antos** has been hired as environmental project manager at Engineering



Antos

Consulting Services Mid-Atlantic Roanoke office.

## EDUCATION FRONT



Miner

Virginia Tech has announced the following positions: **Elaine Gall**



Ducote

has been named university building official; **Laurel Miner** has joined as chief of staff at the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation; **Carolyn Copenheaver** has been honored with the 2018 Carl Alwin Schenck Award from the Society of American Foresters; **Heather Ducote** has been named the university's director of marketing; **George Norton** was named a Fellow of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association;



Norton



Wilkes

**Lisa Wilkes** has been named vice president for business affairs; **David Schabdach** has joined as an associate vice president for research and innovation, attending veterinarian and directing the university program for laboratory animal



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Career FRONT



Schabdach



Meacham



Spakofsky

been named executive director of Shenandoah Valley Partnership in Harrisonburg.



Bryd



Gabriele



Zhu

Agriculture and Life Sciences; **Huiyuan Zhu** has been appointed assistant professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering; **Natalie Hart** has been named assistant vice president of advancement, National Capital Region; **Michael von Spakovsky** has been named the Robert E. Hord Jr. Mechanical Engineering Professor.

**Kevin Bryd** of New River Valley Regional Commission was elected first vice president of National Association of Development Organizations.

*Compiled by Tom Field*



Hughes



Hart

resources; **Matthew Gabriele** has been appointed chair of Department of Religion and Culture; **Byron Hughes** has been selected dean of students; **Susan Hypes**

in housekeeping has been awarded 2018 Facilities Employee of the Year; **Vernon Meacham** has been named chief advancement officer in the College of

MUNICIPAL FRONTS

**Kristie Chittum** has been appointed interim Commissioner of Revenue for City of Salem.

**Jay Langston** has

“Get outside your comfort zone.”

— Page 21

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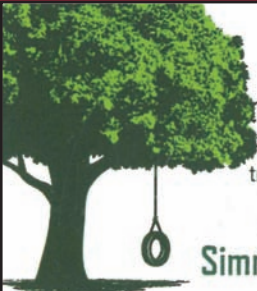
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# FRONT Notes

## Multi-mill mill

**WestRock Company** (Covington paper mill) is investing \$248 million in a five-year facility and equipment upgrade at its 1,000-employee plant in Alleghany County.

## Wahoo for business

**University of Virginia** McIntire School of Commerce and School of Medicine received a \$25 million gift from The Chris and Carrie Shumway Foundation to develop a collaborative program combining business concepts with biomedical science and leadership in healthcare.

## Sustainable style

**Karisma Salon** has opened at 1320 Grandin Road in Roanoke; also specializing in eco-friendly products.

## Endowment talks

**Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute** received a \$1 million gift from Strauss

Development founder **Maury Strauss** to be applied to a VTCRI Maury Strauss Distinguished Public Lecture Series.

## A bigger bag, please

**Meanwhile Back on the Farm**, a Virginia-manufactured tote bag and accessories company, has expanded in Lynchburg.

## Liberty largesse

**Liberty University** hit a milestone in August surpassing \$3 billion in gross assets and an economic contribution to the Lynchburg community that includes \$434 million in labor income and \$618 million in direct spending by employees, students, and visitors according to a report by Magnum Economics.

## Bigger bank bang

**American National Bank** (Danville-based; 24 offices) is acquiring HomeTown Bank (Roanoke-based; 6 offices) in a projected

\$95 million transaction slated to close first quarter 2019.

## LG ortho

**LewisGale Physicians** has acquired **Virginia Orthopaedic**; the new organization to combine the name.

## RU gift

**Radford University** College of Business and Economics will be named the Sandra C. Davis and William C. Davis College of Business and Economics as the school received an \$8 million gift (announced as the University's largest individual donation ever).

## Quite the hike

**Valley to Valley Trail**—an early stage proposition for a biking and walking trail stretching from Botetourt County to Galax has been drafted by Montgomery County, which could involve five counties, nine towns or cities, two regional commissions, two state universities,

and a metropolitan planning organization.

## Subtract \$14k per year

**University of Virginia** President James Ryan has pledged free tuition for students in families earning less than \$80,000 a year, though the start date for such a program isn't yet determined.

## Sweat at dry cleaners

**Ignite Training Facility** physical fitness workout business has opened in Salem in the historic, iconic brick facility that used to house Peacock-Salem Dry Cleaning.

## We have ignition

**Eldor Corp.** at Greenfield Industrial Park in Botetourt County publically opened its auto parts plant in early October with the first 120 jobs.

## That other pipeline

The Colonial pipeline that delivers gas to the large terminal fuel complex in

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Montvale has finally shut down, after 50 years of operation; trucks will primarily be served now from Richmond and Greensboro, NC.

an open seat at their table with someone new to "bring people together and connect."

## HU E-schooling

**Hollins University** has launched a new Institute for Entrepreneurial Learning, a collaborative venture with Roanoke Valley innovators and an international development company.

the United States by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.

(about 60) as well as self-storage units.

## Agency scratches

**NDP** ad agency has secured the Virginia Lottery account, now in its 30th year.

## Table for... more?

**Alexander's** restaurant in downtown Roanoke has joined the OpenSeat program, a collaboration of OpenTable with Virginia Tourism Corporation where diners can share

## Developer adopts award

**HHHunt** real estate development company has been listed in the 2018 Top 100 Adoption-Friendly Workplaces in

## Parkside living and storing

The former **Graves-Humphreys** facility at Franklin Road and the River's Edge Sports Complex in Roanoke is planned for redevelopment to an apartment complex

## Nano start

**Virginia Tech College of Science** earns the designation as offering the first undergraduate degree major in nanomedicine of any university in the U.S., according to its report.

*Have an announcement about your business?*

Send announcements to **news@vbFRONT.com**

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

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You'd be surprised how many people solve their own problems if you aren't available. — Page 18



## New tricks

**Black Dog Salvage** in Roanoke will be featured in new episodes of "Salvage Dawgs" on its popular reality television series still running on DIY network.

## Franklin County dough

**Empire Bakery Commissary** in Rocky Mount is expanding; a \$10 million investment that should add 75 new jobs.

## Popcorn plus

The historic **Grandin Theatre** in Roanoke has added a craft beer, wine, hard seltzer, and prosecco offering to its concessions.

## Thought police dismissed

**VocalVerse**, a new social media platform developed by a Salem company, launched at the

end of October, promising to offer a censorship-free content-video-audio posting service.

## Safe haven grant

**Straight Street** ministry received a \$75,000 grant (from Foundation for Roanoke Valley) for its Street Ransom human trafficking prevention program.

## iMill in Vinton

**The Innovation Mill** has opened in downtown Vinton, a product (and service) showcase and support network for entrepreneurs and collaboration from The Advancement Foundation.

## Bromancing

**Modern Gentlemen's Brotique** menswear and **The Den Gentlemen's Grooming** have opened in the Ponce de Leon

building on Campbell Avenue, downtown Roanoke.

## Uzbaki, anyone?

**Bamyan** restaurant, featuring Afghan cuisine, has opened in downtown Roanoke on Campbell Avenue.

## Truckin' along

**Volvo Trucks** in Dublin has hired 300 new workers in the last two months, its current employment count now at 3,500 at the plant; North American and Canadian sales are up 60% from last year.

## Southside wrap

**BGF Industries** fiber and materials manufacturer is relocating its North Carolina headquarters to the Danville-Pittsylvania County Regional Industrial Facility's Cyber Park; a

projected \$7 million relocation investment.

## More to measure

**Luna Innovations** has acquired Micron Optics, an Atlanta-based optical measurement technology company.

## Plastic stretches

**Rage Plastics** bottling and packaging manufacturer in Altavista announced a \$2 million investment to expand, creating about 20 new jobs.

## Randy perk

**Randolph College** is renovating and naming its athletic center using a \$1 million donation from graduates Doug and Mary Scovanner; a projected \$3 million upgrade.

*Compiled by Tom Field*

Check out additional FRONT Notes from Valley Business FRONT on our Facebook site or social media links at [www.vbFRONT.com](http://www.vbFRONT.com).



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## Designed for the child >

### Executive Summary:

*Carilion Children's Playroom offers youngsters a safe space, separate from the medical environment.*

### By Anne Piedmont

Bright colors, child-sized tables and chairs, different play areas and the love and caring of a community. All of that went into the planning and creation of Hannah's Place, the Carilion Children's newly renovated playroom, which opened in September.

The room is named in honor of Hannah George, who, along with her father, Dr. Jeff George, died in a car accident in 2008. Her mother, Teresa George, led the project as a meaningful way to recognize her daughter, said Linda

Hodges, development officer for Carilion Children's. The Georges had both worked at Carilion when they met and later married.

The room is open to Carilion's young patients all day, every day as a place for children to laugh and heal, and to provide a pleasant distraction from illness and treatments, Hodges said. Led by Teresa George, it was funded entirely from donations by individuals and local companies.

The playroom was first created in 2007 when Carilion Children's moved into Roanoke Memorial Hospital, and it needed an update, said Elizabeth Parkins, marketing consultant for the Pediatrics Department. Thanks to the Carilion Design Group, it is not only more accessible and brighter, but "everything in it has a purpose," she said.

The room features different areas for different ages, including a cozy toddler



space, a play kitchen (with a farmhouse sink!), a doll house, and a comfortable spot for watching videos. There is even a “medical” corner featuring an ambulance and a little CAT scan. A mural by local artist Steve Stinson – which, Hodges said, can also be used for “eye-spy activities” – dresses up cabinet doors. And an original-art, child-sized table offers various play opportunities. To bring a bit of the outside in, the ceiling has been painted to look like the sky.

“It’s a safe spot where children can come to just be kids,” said Dr. Kimberly Dunsmore, chair of Pediatrics. “They have

a space free from medical procedures.”

“Play is important to children, emotionally and especially during times of stress, such as illness,” Dunsmore said. Facilities like Hannah’s Place allow them to “feel like they are part of the outside world. We want to make their lives as normal as possible.” She said that, beyond the opportunity to just play, the room allows for interaction among children.

She said the renovated Hannah’s Place, with its thoughtful design and broad support, demonstrates “a commitment to the children of the community.”



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The Great Recession was as bad as the Depression for our particular industry. — Page 37

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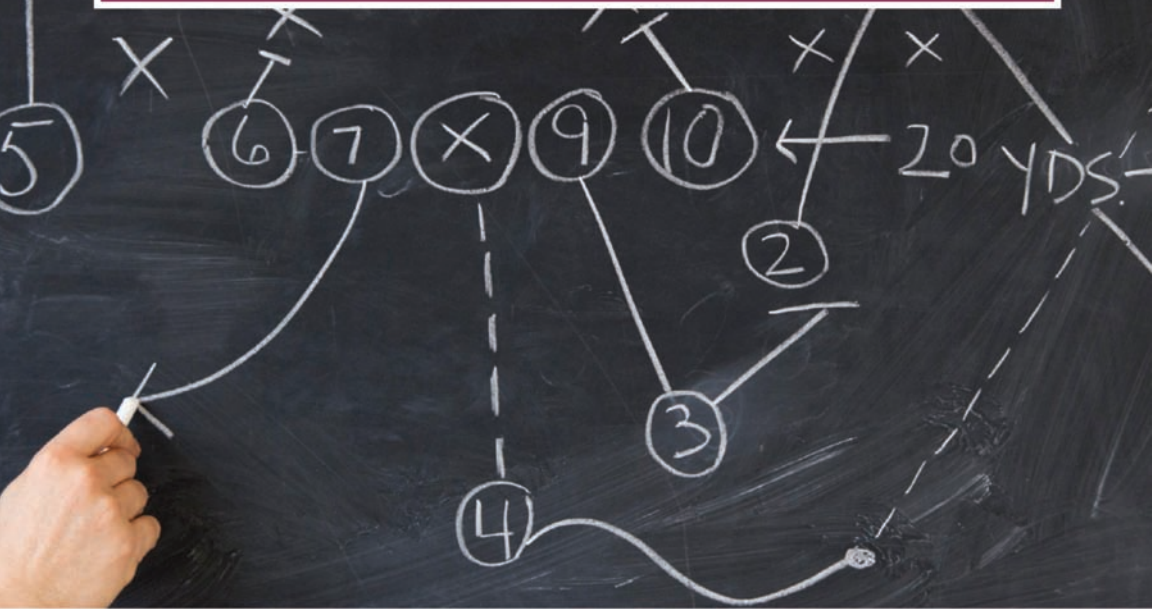
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