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In one sense, it's business as usual in Virginia's Blue Ridge. And when you see month after month what that looks like—it's all the reason to celebrate.

You're more likely to get referrals if you focus on adding value — Page 34



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We kind of outgrew our digs - Page 25



WE REMEMBER.

At Carilion Clinic, we know the answer to a mystery could be just over the next hill. That's why we take those extra steps every day. Our mission, and your health, depend on it.



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Lesa Hanlin

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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



Bruce Bryan



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Tom Field







— Page 19



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Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 44.

2019 Members

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Ed Walker Regeneration Partners (Development)

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

CC⁹⁹
Thelma and Louise—can be seen growing under a lamp

— Page 37

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INCOMING!



Population explodes at Virginia Tech >

Executive Summary: Oops! How does a university and a town deal with a thousand more freshman than was forecasted?

By Jennifer Poff Cooper It seems like a classic "town versus gown" clash, but the current situation in Blacksburg is more complicated than that.

This fall, Virginia Tech expects 1,000 more than the 6,600 students initially planned for. The university's offer to pay students to defer enrollment made headlines nation-wide, with related articles on National Public Radio and in USA Today. It is widely thought that a mistake in Tech's statistical modeling caused the discrepancy.

The university "goofed and acknowledged it," said Blacksburg Mayor Leslie Hager-Smith. However Tech has also been transparent that it wants to grow the school – Virginia Tech's goal is 30,000 undergraduates by 2023 – a business decision, said Hager-Smith, "not made in consultation with the town or made with the student experience in mind."

The town's planning process is ongoing, the mayor said, much of it begun before the latest enrollment surge. Blacksburg continually plans improvements to facilities, including roads and recreation spaces said the mayor.

Hager-Smith also says there is agreement with Tech that the two entities need to "collectively get better at managing growth" and to clarify exactly where the growth is to occur, as Blacksburg is land-locked.

The mayor explained that the Virginia General Assembly wrote an amendment to the state constitution making it

STORY

difficult to exercise eminent domain, so "not all the money in the world" would enable Blacksburg to overcome its land limitations. "There is not a town as out-proportioned by its university as Blacksburg is," she noted during a one-on-one interview.

Indeed, there are widespread concerns that neither the school nor the town is equipped to take on so many students at one time. "We are a town of 15,000 providing services for 48,000," said the mayor.

Residents willing to voice opinions informally are wary about speaking on the record, but Hager-Smith said that she hasn't talked to anyone who feels the excess growth is an "unqualified good."

Parents of current students are afraid that the \$3.3 million cost of solving the enrollment crisis will land on their backs in the form of higher tuition. Other parents are worried about places for students to sit in overcrowded classes and dining halls, as well as about adequate parking.

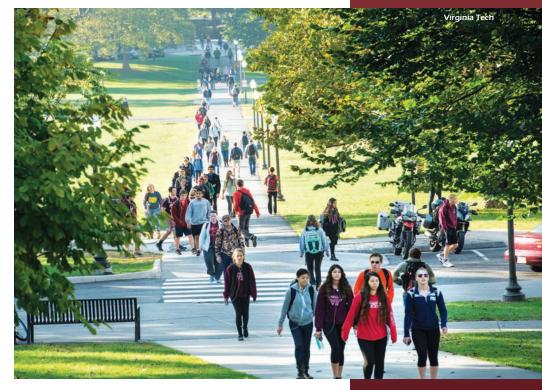
One resident said the rapid growth has "changed the character of Blacksburg," with others even planning to cash in on their high property values and move away instead of retiring here as they expected.

"V[irginia] T[ech] is an excellent school but you can't create the infrastructure after the fact. It needs to be in place before the growth happens," commented one Blacksburg resident on Facebook.



Mayor Hager-Smith

There is not a town as outproportioned by its university as Blacksburg is





6633

We don't believe there is a single solution to the increase in students

However, "we can't plan for what we don't know about," said Hager-Smith, adding that, "we are focused on the next steps." What do those next steps look like?

"[We] don't believe there a single solution to the increase in students this fall. We've worked to address this in a variety of ways—including the option of delaying admission one year, or attending a Virginia community college, or to begin their time with us this summer rather than the fall," said Mark Owczarski, Virginia Tech's Assistant Vice President for University Relations in an email.

The town wants to be an ally with Virginia Tech, said the mayor, who has regular meetings with Virginia Tech



COME ON ABOARD!

Meet your driver (and our FRONTcover model) Glenwood Martin. He's a Bus Operator 1 for Blacksburg Transit who's been on board since 2007. Glen was "recruiting" for the company during our photoshoot and there was no doubt of his enthusiasm. "Tell everybody we have job openings," he called out. The training's great, he told us, and the shifts and routes are plentiful (confirmed by this very cover story!). Glen is the kind of driver you'd appreciate transporting you around town; he positively loves his job.

Blacksburg Transit was just named an "Outstanding Transit System of North America" by the American Public Transportation Association (July 2019). This top award is presented each year to a system that excels in overall performance as an organization and benefit to the community. BT earned the award in the small urban system category characterized by annual ridership of four million or less. This category not only includes all bus



systems in North America but also rail transportation systems as well. Described by APTA, the award represents "the 'best of the best' of the public transportation industry... whose accomplishments have greatly advanced public transportation."

BT was singled out for their successful delivery of service to Virginia Tech, Blacksburg and Christiansburg based on performance on 24 quantitative and qualitative criteria.

Per Tom Fox, BT Director, "We've had unprecedented ridership growth of 22 percent over the last three years when most systems in our industry are facing declines. Through employee dedication, innovation and the support of our stakeholders we've taken the organization to new heights while never compromising our high standards."

"Congratulations to the entire Blacksburg Transit team for being named Outstanding Transit System of the Year for 2019," said Paul Skoutelas, President and CEO of the American Public Transportation Association. "Blacksburg Transit has demonstrated creativity and innovation in all aspects of their system, from expanding options and growing ridership to delivering effective and efficient services. In winning this prestigious award, Blacksburg Transit is a model for public transit systems across the nation."

Lincoln Sklar, communications and customer support assistant for Blacksburg Transit (which is a department of the Town of Blacksburg) describes the company's mission quite succinctly. "We're ready," she says.



President Dr. Timothy Sands. In addition, Blacksburg is constantly learning from other large university towns.

Housing is a key component. Hager-Smith emphasized that the local crisis is occurring against a national backdrop. "There is a housing crunch nationally," she said. "Labor is in short supply and materials are costly."

"Virginia Tech has had many conversations with community members (including the Town of Blacksburg) regarding off campus housing options," Owczarski noted. Hager-Smith agrees that the university is stepping up to help solve the problem by being flexible and allowing freshmen to live off campus. That, in turn, creates the need for more student housing in town.

TnT Flinchum Property Management property manager Regina Sutphin said this year's influx was unexpected. The only interface the university had with her company was a phone call in early June seeking apartment units with multiple apartments available.

The additional students will "take every bit of housing in Blacksburg and Christiansburg," Sutphin said, and the large increases in rent in Blacksburg over the past several years will continue.

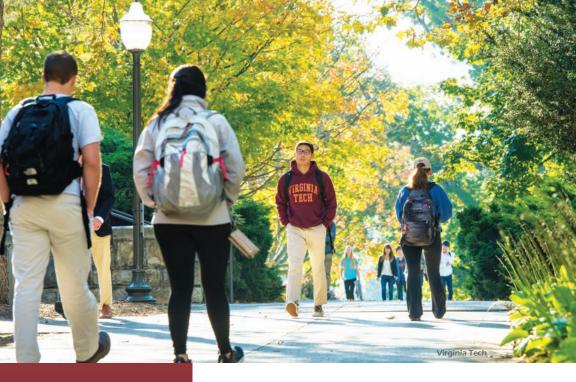




"As a property manager I am thrilled at the prospect of 100% occupancy rates," said Sutphin, "but as a mom I'm terrified for kids being out in the real world [off campus] when they're not ready."

Unconventional housing solutions have been required. Both the Holiday Inn Express and three floors of The Inn at Virginia Tech have been co-opted to become student housing for the upcoming school year. Questions remain at both hotels as to what happens to existing reservations, as well as the fate of the hotel staff of Holiday Inn Express (The Inn has a goal of retaining staff).

"With these two additional properties dedicated to student housing, combined with moderate extended housing strategies in existing residence halls that have been successfully deployed in the past, Virginia Tech will Large increases in rent... will continue



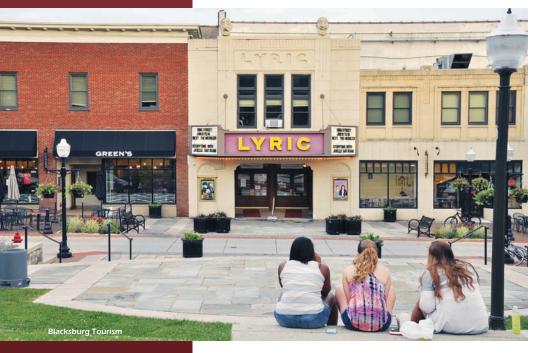
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The area is badly in need of housing of all types, not just student housing

be able to meet the need for on campus housing for all its incoming class and returning students," according to a June 24 news release from the university.

The area is badly in need of housing of all types, not just student housing, Hager-Smith said. She mentioned several Blacksburg-based businesses – TORC, Block.one, Ozmo, and 1901 – that are heavily recruiting. Because they recruit people past student age, it also increases the need for housing for young families.

As Blacksburg fills up and housing prices rise, new employees are looking to Christiansburg or Montgomery County for residency.



COVER

S T O R Y

Melissa Demmitt, Public Relations Director for the Town of Christiansburg, said in an email, "We estimate a limited number of the new students will live in Town...As far as property values and rents, assessments have been steadily increasing over the last few years, which has [impacted] and will affect property values and rents over time."

These students will have an impact on the businesses community at large. Said Owczarski, "these people will most certainly seek the goods and services available to them through local businesses."

Christiansburg's Demmitt said, "We feel our retail base is equipped to handle the growth." Daniel Riley, owner of The Blacksburg Tavern, said he anticipates his restaurant and all local restaurants - will be visited by many of the new folks. "We're excited about it," said Riley. "The more the merrier."

These students will have an impact on the businesses and community at large





609 It takes 60-90 days to train a bus operator

Laureen Blakemore, Director of Downtown Blacksburg, Inc., said in an email, "The downtown merchants share concern that this massive surge in growth for the University will test our small town infrastructure to the limits, which could result in an increase in traffic as well as potential parking issues in the downtown area."

Still, she added, "We are excited to welcome more Hokies and their families to our beautiful town and hope that the students will become involved in our downtown community, their home away from home for the next four years."

The additional students will increase the hiring pool in a town where "help wanted" signs grace many businesses. Hager-Smith blames the dearth on students not taking part-time jobs anymore because they are more focused on building résumés with internships and volunteer activities.

Transportation is another critical dimension, especially with more students living off campus. Tom Fox, Director of Blacksburg Transit (which just won a national award for its growing service), said that BT, as a department of the town, is involved in discussions as to where new apartments will be located. Fox said they have worked closely with Virginia Tech on where new students will be housed so that it can make schedule adjustments. More student housing beds have been approved in areas with public transportation, noted Mayor Hager-Smith.

Fox said a key to BT's managing the new situation, which he deemed "a little challenging," is that they need more bus operators. Due to the part-time nature of many drivers and their life situations, such as being students who graduate, turnover is high. It takes 60-90 days to train a bus operator and BT is looking to increase staffing levels by this fall.

Anecdotal evidence says that buses are full at certain times and places, requiring students to wait for the next bus. Fox said that educating riders to take buses at off-peak times will help smooth things out. Two additional 100-person

STORY

capacity buses are arriving this fall, bringing the number of larger buses to 13 and the entire fleet to 71 vehicles.

Fox said that in terms of road congestion, BT already builds in extra time to its schedule. But much like the town, BT's planning for the upcoming year began before the enrollment surge. New buses take 12-18 months to come through the pipeline, and the budgeting process for the upcoming fiscal year started last fall. Fox said the existing budget can absorb most of the increased demand.

There is a "silver lining" to the enrollment surge, said Hager-Smith. The Virginia Tech Transportation Institute is growing, plus the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership (a drone delivery outfit headquartered at the Corporate Research Center) and others are "here and successful because of the university affiliation." Other good news is that Virginia Tech can expand in northern Virginia (the Innovation Campus for example) and in Roanoke.

Mark Owczarski's email concluded that, "achieving a solution for this enrollment growth is a work in progress. The university has been working hard since early May, and has reached out to the town and others in the community to help find those solutions."

The mayor emphasized the need to accommodate students. "They are the lifeblood of our community," Hager-Smith said. "We want to welcome them."

Virginia Tech can expand in northern Virginia and in Roanoke





Professional Development

By Lesa Hanlin

Executive Summary:

Whether you're an intern or new on the job (or even an old-timer, for that matter) conduct yourself as if you need to impress.

You're always on a job interview >

Recently I spoke to a group of young people beginning summer unpaid internships. I asked them what job title they wanted when they entered the world of work and their answers showed ambition and enthusiasm. Then we discussed how to go from here (internship) to there (great job). Everyone can learn to be more aware of how they are perceived at work so they are ready for the next step. Here is some advice I provided the interns.

- 1. Add energy to every conversation. Inject positivity by being enthusiastic.
- 2. Ask why. Understanding the why of what's going on at work helps you make stronger contributions. Experienced workers enjoy explaining what they are doing and why.
- 3. Treat customers and coworkers better than they expect. To have someone give your boss a compliment on your behalf speaks volumes.
- 4. Offer to help before you are asked. Be proactive!
- 5. Cut costs. By finding ways to save the organization money, you'll earn respect.
- 6. Get smarter through training, reading books, or however you absorb new knowledge. See "Who is responsible for your professional development?" Column in the October 2018 Valley Business FRONT/Hanlin, L. H. (2018, October). Who is responsible for your professional development? (121), p. 16.
- 7. Figure out what doesn't work and provide a fresh perspective. If you're fresh out of college or if you're new to an organization, you'll have new ways of looking at things that long-timers don't have.
- 8. Build relationships. You never know when you will need a reference. Or a cup of coffee coupled with advice. It's awkward to reach out to someone for support when you once worked with or for them years ago and haven't kept in touch because you didn't build a relationship.
- 9. Smile a lot. Just trust me on that one.

You are always on a job interview. If you behave as if you are on a job interview during the internship and as an employee, you'll be poised to take the next step when the opportunity presents itself – and it will. Be ready.

PERSPECTIVES

Getting more money from a business sale >

The best time to start planning for a business sale isn't when you want to sell. Many will cite three years as ideal for getting your financials in order, but there are many other factors to consider. Jeremy Lassiter, EA, who's joined the 360 Wealth Solutions team, sat down with me recently to discuss what small business owners fail to do in preparation for an ownership transition.

The number one issue he sees is failure to delegate along with a poor plan for transitioning clients over to new owners. "What happens is the owner does all the work. When you're in your 6os, you get tired. They need to learn how to relinquish, how to let go," says Jeremy.

He illustrates the challenge of failing to delegate with a rope analogy. When you keep adding strands over time to your load, the rope, or task list, gets so thick by retirement time, you can't cut through it.

It's challenging for owners, employees and clients alike when abrupt changes happen. It makes sense to plan a transition where the buyer works with the seller for several years.

Cash flow is critical in business purchase decisions. Look at the balance sheet to eliminate as many liabilities as possible. This includes things like credit cards, lines of credit and loans that may detract from the valuation of the business. Also, reduce items that are considered add backs for the purchaser's benefit such as depreciation, software assets, and sometimes rent. Get rid of using business money for personal expenses while you're at it.

Consider putting yourself on payroll if you're currently doing distributions and withdrawals. W-2 income to the owner can be handled as an add back, moving it from the expense to profit column for a buyer.

Most companies should aim for at least a 30% profit margin. If your books don't reflect that, it will be harder to find a purchaser.

Jeremy notes that a big issue with business sellers is not knowing their numbers. Failing to maintain a good database of clients, revenue specifics, geographical concentrations and monthly payment history will cost you. Many don't even keep accurate books because they're too busy or not delegating effectively.

Few consider the legacy of a business while they're building it. Sooner is better, but any preparation you do for a sale should improve your chances of finding a buyer and securing a fair price.

Next month, we'll explore particular areas to ponder for increasing the valuation on your company.



Financial Figures

By Michael Shelton

Executive Summary: Don't wait until you're ready to sell before you plan to sell your business.



Ally and Tyler Bowersock

Gaining a shoehold in the valley >

Executive Summary:

The new kid on the block finds creative and energetic ways to garner its share of the market.

By Gene Marrano

On a mid-June Saturday afternoon the Runabout Sports retail store on Brambleton Avenue in southwest Roanoke County was filled with loyal customers and employees, celebrating the fourth anniversary for Runabout's second location. The original store was founded by James and Mina

Demarco in Blacksburg; he was Blacksburg High School's track coach until they moved to Wisconsin for her new physician job.

Ally and Tyler Bowersock became partners with the Demarcos to open a second Runabout in the Roanoke Valley, entering a market for athletic shoes and related gear where Fleet Feet Sports, a large national chain, had a decade-plus head start. Fleet Feet has long sponsored races, pub runs and training programs for budding runners, so Runabout had a hill to climb.

So did Dr. Allison Bowersock – Ally – who has an educational background in health science and nutrition (Bachelor's), a Masters in exercise physiology and a Ph.D. in health promotion. Bowersock was director of the undergraduate exercise program at Jefferson College of Health Sciences before it was



RETAI

phased out as the merger with Radford University got underway.

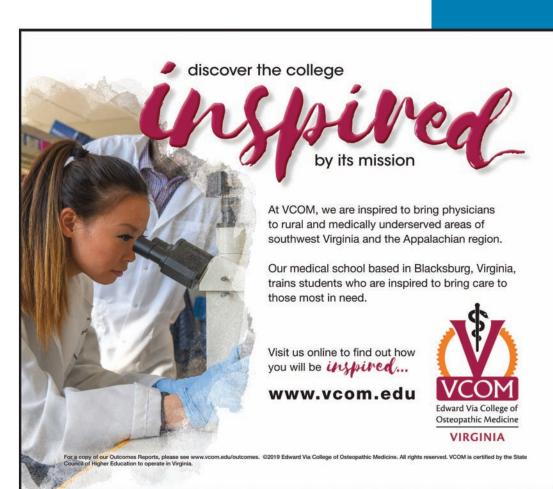
She then jumped into to a larger role at Runabout Sports last year. "It felt like a good time to invest more of my time in managing the store." She put that background to work and now does her teaching through group runs, strength training classes for women and other free offerings including Deschutes and Ladders – where participants run the steps at the Elmwood Park Amphitheatre, do exercise routines between each lap - and then walk down to the Deschutes tasting room on Market Street for a communal beer.

All of that, combined with Runabout's sponsorship of local races, has helped the Bowersocks gain a "shoehold" in the market, where the competing stores vie for exclusive rights to some product lines while selling many of the same. "I realized this would be a more

practical application of what I teach," says Bowersock, who focuses on injury prevention and recovery.

Next door in the same shopping center is her husband, physical therapist Tyler Bowersock. The duo formed a synergistic business relationship where she refers Runabout patrons to him at University Physical Therapy if they need further treatment beyond just a better running shoe. They also own Crystal's Healings Hands in the same center. "This is not a retail space; really, it's a destination for people who want a massage, or PT [physical therapy]. That's really why we decided to open the store, to reach out to James [Demarco] and make this happen."

Ally Bowersock says there was a "need in the community not being met, largely through our association with patients in PT.





Runabout pub run at Starr Hill

What a perfect opportunity to have a shoe store next to a PT clinic." The couple also developed relationships with podiatrists and other physicians in the area "because of our [shoe] fit process." Bowersock is not a big fan of orthotic inserts as a cure all – instead the focus she contends should be on finding the optimum athletic footwear.

She's trained Runabout employees to watch customer gaits when they walk into the store, so they can offer the best recommendations for the type of shoe needed, or alterations to their running style. That extra attention has also helped build customer loyalty.

Don't discount the pub runs held at venues every week like Olde Salem Brewery and

Starr Hill, where as many as a hundredplus runners and walkers gather during the warmer months for a short run and then a beer or two. Participants talk about the "community" it has fostered – and the affinity for Runabout Sports.

Bowersock says there's enough business for two athletic shoe and related gear retail outlets in the Roanoke Valley, as more people get out on local trails, greenways or side streets. "We [also] get lots of customers from outlying areas. Our philosophy in terms of how we fit people is very different [too]. There's absolutely room for both. Our mission is helping people be more fit, healthy and happy. Hopefully that also includes buying more shoes."





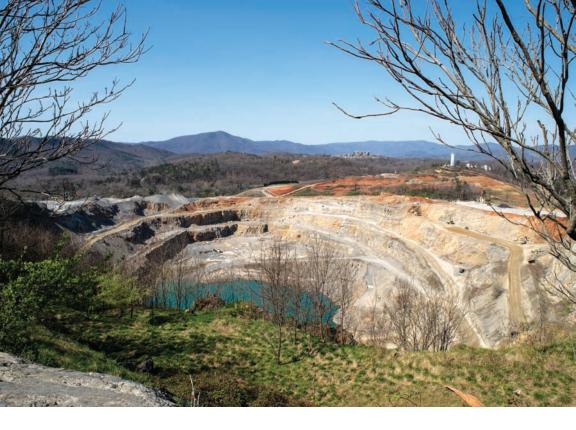
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Rock Solid: Rockydale Quarries still thriving after all these years >

Executive Summary:

We dig into Rockydale Quarries now with eight Virginia locations, serving diverse industries.

By Anne Sampson

Perhaps you've noticed the stately brick home from a previous century as you've sped down 581 towards downtown Roanoke. It sits adjacent to the barn and silo that once announced the former municipal golf course, Countryside. Before that, it housed Newbern Trane, a well-known HVAC equipment distributor. When Emory Jacob Frantz built it in the 1870's, it anchored a large dairy farm.

Since 2016, it's been the corporate home of Rockydale Quarries Corporation, itself a venerable local business dating back to 1932. The move was the culmination of a two-year search for enough square footage and parking spaces to accommodate the growing company. The Newbern family, which owned a compound on a hill next to Countryside, wanted the farmhouse to go into the "right hands," a business that would stay there for the long term.





MANUFACTURING

Ken Randolph has been CEO of Rockydale since 2009. "Our people love it here. A lot of them travel north and it's close to 81 and Valley View. Sometimes we grill out for management meetings. Debbie [Beasley, executive assistant] is in charge of the team-building lunches. It's home."

Rockydale Quarries has its origins in the financial difficulties of the Great Depression. The owners of a quarry defaulted on a loan, which placed Mountain Trust Bank in a difficult position. Russell Holman Willis, Sr., chairman of the bank's finance committee, assumed the note and quarry operations.

The business operated from a series of locations before assuming operations at the quarry near Route 220 in 1944 and setting up offices there. Generations of the Willis family oversaw operations until seeking a board and management outside the family in 2007. Since then, the company has added guarries

in Central and Northwest Virginia to their portfolio.

By the time the corporate office was ready to move from Route 220 - between sales, administration, engineering, safety and operations -- they were in three separate buildings. "We kind of outgrew our digs," says Randolph, no pun intended.

Think about all the places you encounter rocks in your daily life. Bet you missed some. "Rock is used in the manufacture of rubber, plastics and ceramics, to name a few," says Randolph. "A 2000 square foot home can use up to 400 tons of stone, between the foundation, the sidewalk and the driveway. That's about 20 truckloads."

Concrete and asphalt might look something like thick batter, but they're mostly stone: Roughly a yard of concrete is 85% stone, and a ton of asphalt is 90%. A city with a



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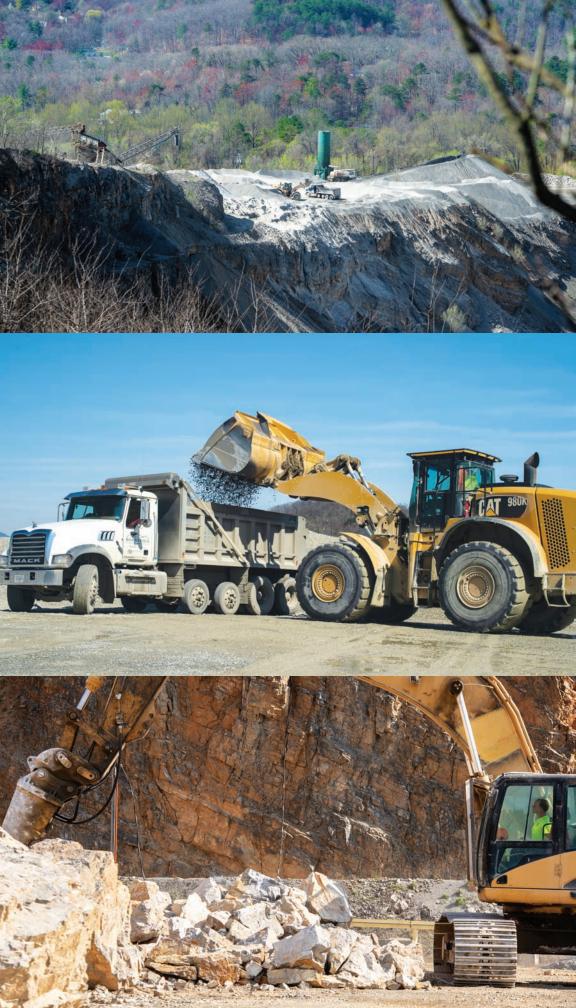
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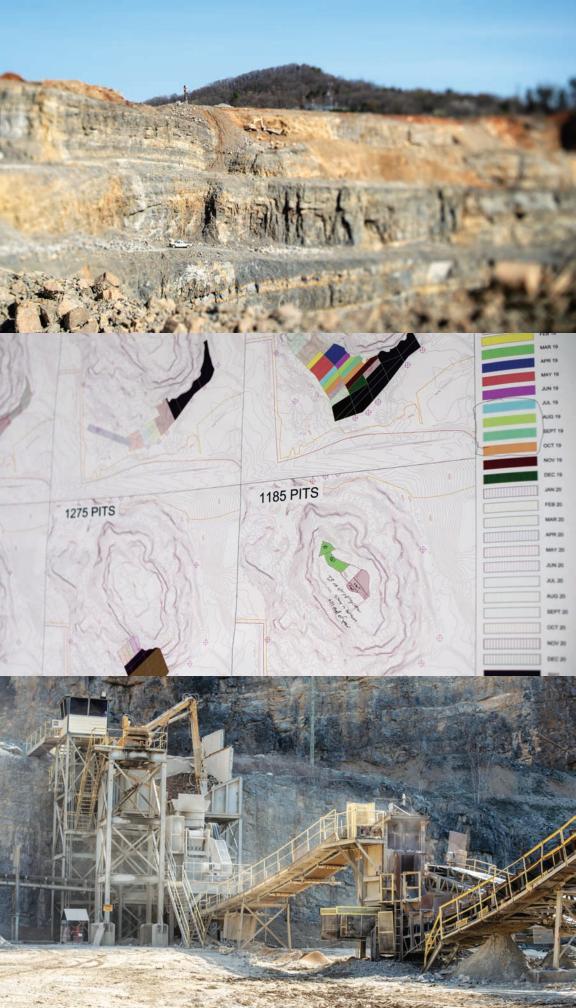
population of 500,000 can use 5 million tons of stone in a year (Roanoke City's population is close to 100,000, so you could figure using about 1 million tons).

With eight locations in Virginia, Rockydale Quarries produces a variety of materials, like construction aggregate (think rock, gravel and sand), erosion control products (riprap), agricultural products (lime, fertilizer filler) and a wide range of specialty products, such as masonry sand, decorative sand, bio-retention soil and engineered topsoil.

Those last two belong to a palette of green products introduced in 2002. "When you have big construction like a Walmart or a Lowe's, you get a lot of stormwater runoff," explains Randolph. "Retention ponds collect the water, and bio-retention soil goes on the bottom."

A deep layer of bio-retention soil (a mixture of sand, soil and compost), along with appropriate plantings, filters pollutants from runoff and allows the clean water to return slowly to the environment,





MANUFACTURING

along the lines of a natural wetland.

Engineered topsoil, a soil/mineral/compost blend, is a nutrient-rich, erosion-resistant planting medium used, well, everywhere: residential, commercial and municipal projects all make use of engineered topsoil. Both products use leaves collected and composted locally by Roanoke City. "We've been partnering with the City on this for a long time," says Randolph.

Like industries everywhere, Rockydale has seen the patterns of employment change. "In 2012-2013, a lot of Baby Boomers started retiring, people with 43 years of experience, 38 years, 26 years. A lot of knowledge went out the door. It's hard to replace."

"We use all kinds of skills," says Randolph. "Teachers, rock hounds, people who like to work with their hands or who want a second career. The last 10 or 15 years we've had a lot of engineers from Virginia Tech and University of Missouri. We use welders and electricians. We've hired a lot of people right out of high school. But things are different. We assume the people we hire now will not be with us for 40 plus years due to the changing objectives of the workforce."

There's a sense of history at the headquarters on Highland Farm Road. Vintage photographs commemorate quarry work in an earlier time, from picks to steam shovels, to aerial shots from the 40's to the 6o's. The foyer displays polished minerals from the Willis family collection and watercolors of the 1870's home they occupy. One wall is a gallery of the Willis men who've run the company.

There's also a sense that Rockydale Quarries has played a role in the larger history of the region, by supplying the materials that helped fuel growth. Call that role rock-solid.





Business **Operations**

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary: Delegation works particularly well for problem-solving.

Managing the monkey >

"Hey boss. We have a problem. How would you like to handle it?"

If you are the supervisor, how you handle this question says a lot about your leadership skill. If you are the employee asking this question, you're not helping your boss or your career.

In a Harvard Business Review article titled "Management Time: Who's Got the Monkey?," the authors use the analogy of a monkey on your back to describe having the responsibility to take the next step. In this scenario, the subordinate employee is attempting to move the monkey from his back to the manager's back. Written back in 1974 and one of HBR's two best-selling reprints ever, the article describes effective (and ineffective) delegation.

Delegation is the act of giving someone else the responsibility and authority to carry out an assignment or to represent the leader in a specific role. When done effectively, delegation provides significant benefits, including improved productivity, and employee development and engagement.

Unfortunately, most leaders will take the monkey back by immediately providing an answer or accepting the responsibility of researching a solution. This is usually done for expediency, or due to a mistaken attitude that a leader must give direction and make a decision in these circumstances. This "upward delegation" by the employee has now caused the leader to become subordinate to the employee! Don't take the monkey!

In this scenario, ask the employee for a recommended solution. If more investigation is needed, ask the employee to do the research. Then depending on the subordinate's skill, you can either have the employee bring you the solution for approval, or implement a solution and tell you later what was done.

If you are the subordinate, don't be the one who always tries to pass the monkey to the boss. Use these opportunities to provide recommended solutions and show your initiative and critical thinking skills. If it's unclear how much authority you have, then discuss it with your manager. Show yourself to be a problem-solver and keep the monkey off your manager's back!

Send your questions or comments to Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com

Delegation provides significant benefits

PERSPECTI

Your business entrance >

Sprucing Up2Make an Impression

Way back in the olden days, the proverbial shot of the storekeeper with a broom at his front step, apron tied around his waist, seemed to be everywhere. You know the scene. Mister Jones' grocery (florist, hardware store, drug store, candy shop, appliance outlet, etc.) was the Main Street retailer and everyone knew his name. In the window was the display with his hot-selling items, specials, and maybe some local news of interest.

Mr. Jones wouldn't dream of opening his store without sweeping the entrance area or washing the windows, updating his posters or flipping the "closed" sign to "open". After all, dozens – maybe hundreds – of people would be walking by that day and he needed to put his best foot forward to earn his share of their hard earned money.

Mind the Store4Faster Growth

These days you have your own entrance area to tend.

You may not be Amazon, or even a mid-sized web company, but there's a good chance you have dozens or hundreds of people coming by your online storefront. At the end of the year, even a small traffic website likely has thousands of visitors. Maybe there are even tens of thousands of people visiting your website. And yet, unlike the storekeeper, you've probably not cleaned the windows, rearranged the items on display, or swept out the entryway.

We've spoken to scores of business owners who have let their website go untouched. Not just for days or weeks, but virtually untouched for months or years.

How does that happen? You wouldn't dream of letting your shop go, but that first impression that initiates a consumer or patient's choice remains out of date, unattractive, and maybe not even responsive to visitors who choose to "surf" on their phones or tablets.

It's true you can have a successful business without a relevant and enticing website. But why would you? In these "uber" competitive economic times, there are some simple ways to keep up with Mr. Jones. Build a useful and attractive website and make a plan to update it on a regular schedule. It's as simple as minding the store.



A Little Insight

By Bruce C. Bryan

Executive Summary: First impression may be the only impression you get from today's customer.



Lee Learman

VTCSOM's new dean: medical school students should make an impact >

Executive Summary:

Culture eats strategy for lunch and other lessons from Dr. Lee Learman

By Gene Marrano

Only the second dean the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine has had in its ten year existence (not counting interim Dr. Dan Harrington after founding dean Cynda Johnson retired at the end of 2018), Dr. Lee Learman began his job last month after being recruited from a somewhat similar environment at Florida Atlantic University in South Florida.

FAU launched its own medical school nine years ago, making it even younger than VTCSOM. Learman was the senior associate dean for academic affairs and graduate medical education before coming to Roanoke. "I love the startup energy, the fact that there wasn't a lot of inertia that prevented change from occurring. The environment of trying things and hoping they succeed – and if they don't pivoting and trying new things."

Before his stint at FAU he sent 21 years in San Francisco and Indiana "at two very large public medical schools. I was intrigued to get involved in a whole wave of startup medical schools. That's what drew me to Florida Atlantic University."

That same "sense of a startup," attracted Learman to Virginia Tech Carilion. He says the "alignment of mission," between VTSCOM and Carilion Clinic - which he calls a value based health system, "sets



the stage for an unbelievable opportunity for the medical school."

One of the first things on Learman's agenda: looking for "responsible" growth in class sizes from the current freshman intake of 42 freshmen every year. Dean Cynda Johnson had suggested that 100 might be a nice round class size number. Any growth there will be a two-step process Learman noted on his first day, possibly requiring the need for more bricks and mortar at some point.

As for the possibly outsized impact VTC campus might have in the valley: "some really amazing things are happening in Roanoke. I've [already] met a number of community members and will meet many more." They've told him of the changes already perceived on many levels because of the Virginia Tech-Carilion collaboration. Learman terms it "a perfect convergence of agendas between the community, business leaders, the university and Carilion. That's what makes it such a wonderful opportunity."

The medical school, which already features a research-based curriculum, is a stone's throw from the growing Fralin Biomedical Research Institute next door (an expansion is scheduled for completion next year). That excites Learman. "Talk about kids in a candy store." It means access to clinical trials and links to overlapping projects in Blacksburg he notes, and "amazing opportunities for our students to really understand cutting edge science - how it's going to affect the future of health care." Learman also sees the opportunity to expand the research requirement for medical school students.

He wants medical school students to go beyond learning how to diagnosis and treat illnesses or broken bones; he wants them steeped in health sciences, to take the lead in solving future problems, not "just to be participants in health care but to help lead change." Learman envisions creating thought leaders and change agents.

He will keep his teaching chops sharpened by also being a professor in the medical school's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Learman received a bachelor's degree from UCLA, then both his M.D. and a Ph.D. in social psychology from Harvard.

Learman (60) says he is prepared for this role, the stewardship of a medical school, as perhaps the capstone of his career. As part of the interview process he met with Virginia Tech president Timothy Sands and Carilion president and CEO Nancy Agee. What he gleaned from that was a "shared sense of culture, of service and mission. They say that culture eats strategy for lunch. Strategy is important; [however] you can't really achieve that strategy successfully without a culture that promotes the kind of future we're looking at for health care."

When Dr. Learman noted Agee and Sands "almost completing each other's sentences" he knew they were in sync on VTCSOM and that helped clinch the deal. Now, "I'm a Hokie for life," he claims.







iftyCentLove Photographie

Mindful Business

By Beth Bell

Executive Summary: Take more time to really know the people you meet – what makes them tick?

Networking with intention >

I've experienced it over and over again. Your business (insert industry) has a coveted seat in the networking group. You attend weekly meetings, pass your business card around the room, give a 60 second sales pitch and anticipate instant sales and customers. When this doesn't happen, or when those "referrals" are actually just weak leads, you feel like you're wasting your time.

A few years ago, I experienced major burn out on this style of networking. I analyzed my ROI and how I felt about the whole process and realized I made the biggest strides in business when I genuinely got to know others and the passion behind their businesses. It became easier to share their products and services because I had built authentic relationships with them and was confident in how they would treat my peers as customers.

If you're showing up at networking events just to see what you're going to get out of it — you're probably not seeing an ROI and should consider changing your intention.

Here are a few tips on how to network with intention:

Give before you get.

Networking isn't only about what someone else can do for you. Networking is about building lasting professional relationships that are mutually beneficial. When you meet someone new, ask them what they are passionate about and what kind of help they need. Get into the habit of asking, "What can I do for you?"

Be strategic of whom you spend your time on.

Your ideal connection is someone who has similar clients as you, provides a level of service and has business practices that you can stand behind, and is open to sharing information and referrals. You'll know when you've met them, the collaboration and ideas will come easy, as dots are connected over that first cup of coffee.

Look beyond your networking group.

Do not expect every member of your networking group to spend money on your products and services. Some will and some won't. However, most of them will know someone that can use your services or products. You're more likely to get referrals if you focus on adding value in the form of ideas, resources and connections consistently to others.

Once you identify a key group of connections, you'll want to stay in touch with them at least once a month. We'll share tips for nurturing your network in an upcoming article.

PERSPECTIVES

Reading, responding to a child >

The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more you learn, the more places you'll go. –Dr. Seuss

In September 1989, the women of Trinity United Methodist Church opened their hearts and doors to children living in downtown neighborhoods. They met once a week to share a warm meal and provide a safe haven to children in need. These compassionate acts eventually turned into the Community Outreach Program.

The Community Outreach Program continued for many years to help children and their families receive basic necessities such as food, clothing, and security. But, there was always a lingering sense that something more was needed. That revelation happened five years ago when the organization gave professionally-administered reading tests to the many children it was serving.

The results were shocking. Not a single child was reading at grade level!

Staff knew that children reading below their grade level have a tremendous disadvantage and experience difficulty advancing within their school system. The path was now clear – to restructure the program with a focus on literacy and to aspirationally rebrand the organization. Thus "Kids Soar" was born.

Today, Kids Soar offers literacy-based after-school programs Monday through Friday and serves over 40 children and their families. This program provides a safe place for kids to go after school, professionals who help them read and complete their homework, and a place for their basic needs to be met – truly a place where they can each "take flight."

...something more was needed



Good Work

By Kaitlyn Van Buskirk

Executive Summary: Community Outreach Program developed a literacy program for children to meet an additional challenge beyond its core services.



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The business of hemp >

Executive Summary:

Used in production for industrial and consumer goods, the hemp plant promises high hopes for entrepreneurs thanks to relaxing regulations.

By Nanette Levin

The cannabis plant, long maligned in the United States for one of its derivatives, distant cousin marijuana, received new status as a result of the federal 2018 Farm Bill. The Marihuana Tax Act of 1937 virtually eliminated the hemp plant from this country. It had been prolific in our food chain prior to that. Now a number of businesses have cropped up in Western Virginia focused on hemp and byproducts derived from the plant.

Debbie Custer, Founder and CEO of Coeus Research—a firm that assists startup consumer products—believes the country has suffered as a result of having this natural crop removed from our landscapes. "Cannabis is a remarkable plant," says Custer. "It's all natural. The [hemp] plant also has medicinal properties. The FDA just approved a drug made from the cannabis plant to treat epilepsy for kids. It takes toxins out of the soil and water . . . (and) also takes toxins out of the air. It's a wonderful remediator," she explains.

The new federal legislation stipulates that

certified grower plants have no more than .3 percent of THC in their hemp crop. That means plants grown legally can't get you high. The new legislation expands who can grow hemp and for what purpose, while allowing for the transfer of hemp-derived products between state lines.

Hemp is used in everything from insulation and paper to car parts and clothing. "Now, as a country, we need to begin that process of planting and processing domestic product to reduce the reliance on imports," Custer explains. She's doing so herself on four acres of land as well as with hydroponic systems.

Virginia challenges for hemp growers

While the licensing process is relatively quick and easy in Virginia, taking about 75 days from application to approval, the outdoor planting season isn't. Custer received certification from the Commonwealth last July. "You need to plant hemp in early May, early June," she explains. Not wanting to be a year behind in production, she set out to find creative solutions after missing that outdoor planting window.

That's a challenge a lot of her colleagues in the industry face as well. She turned to Blue Ridge Hydroponics on Williamson Road to troubleshoot solutions. With owners Jeremy Poe and Tommy Bryant, she was able to develop a customized hydroponic system to begin growing plants immediately. Two of them nicknamed Thelma and Louise – can be seen growing under a lamp at The Innovation Mill in Vinton.





Poe and Bryant have since honed their specialized industry knowledge to provide tailored services to hemp growers, says Custer. This includes everything from organic soil to nutrient mixes, air stone recommendations (used to create more oxygen in hydroponic systems), heat, lighting and customized containers. The company is now the go-to resource for hemp production companies in the area, Custer states.

The future with hemp

She says the biggest issue locally is manufacturing. "Because there are no processing facilities for seeds or fiber, you can only grow hemp [in Western Virginia] to be utilized in oil products. The plant needs to be harvested and processed within a 50-70-mile radius to make it profitable." Transportation costs otherwise eat away at slim profit margins. Custer is hoping area economic development leaders will see the benefit in encouraging manufacturing companies to locate here.

Custer's premier product, Oliver's Pet Calm, is trademarked. It's designed for dogs and based on her experience and research following a trip to Greece. She grows the plants that produce the CBD oil ingredient in hydroponic systems and organic soil. Custer also supplies Vintonbased LilyHemp with products that it markets. She has a patent pending for



Many hemp growers in Western Virginia are using indoor hydroponic growing systems to start seeds and avoid soil toxins

a process to formulate beverages with cannabinoids.

Custer sees hemp growth as an opportunity for Western Virginia to revitalize economies and strengthen communities, particularly in poor, rural areas. She's helping others get started indoors when the window for planting and soil conditions outdoors aren't ideal. She also runs Women in Hemp, an international organization with more than 1000 paid members designed to help track and provide education in the industry. "In the next five years, hemp as an industry will exceed beer and wine," predicts Custer. "Last year we imported about \$1 billion into the U.S."





On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary: A biased look at media objectivity.

Leaning >

Shocking report just in: the news content you consume contains an agenda.

I have a folder into which I routinely file reports on our various media channels, nationally and internationally. They're fascinating charts and graphs that rank and scale media according to how each "researcher" sees truth versus fabrication, conservative versus liberal perspectives, and other parameters involving socio-contextual determinants. Which way they lean, that is.

Today, as I slip in my commentary way past deadline for this edition, I was somewhat compelled to remark on this article I just woke up to from The Washington Post. WaPo (as we call it in the biz) is one of the media outlets often cited as more centered or in that "objective" range in that file of mine, by the way. This story, by Will E. Young (July 24, 2019), a former editor of Champion, a student-run weekly newspaper at Liberty University, is entitled "Inside Liberty University's 'culture of fear.'" (First observation: is the use of single quotation marks for culture of fear to simply designate a colloquial phrase or a callout that the phrase is used in jest or pseudo fashion?)

Assuming 99% of you won't take the time to search out and pull up this article—a remarkable nearly five-thousand word diatribe—a summary is that it exposes the college as a suppressor of journalism, resulting in a threatening environment (principally from President Jerry Falwell Jr.). Sprinkled liberally throughout the commentary are the accompanying pro-Trump ramifications that fortified the "assault."

It's a compelling description. It drew me in (of course, I'm in the same game). It instantly reminded me of my college editorial positions, and other media and communications roles over my past nearly four decades in the industry.

"Yes!" I shouted internally half the time, reading Young's account. "No!" I found myself shouting the other half.

The University, you see, was beyond concerned what was—or could be—published in its newspaper. The administration was more than ready to insert itself in the process. On the flip side, some of the newspaper staff understood its product to be student-operated. Particularly, for this editor, student-run means hands-off from the administration.

Lines that one thinks should be quite clear turn out to be blurry when it comes to institutionally-sponsored media. But that should be no surprise. Information is always controlled; we are deceived or gullible when we believe that is not the case. If bias can't be injected into the content, the dirty little secret is, you get the same effect simply by choosing what to publish. Our editor here confesses that he cried the day he realized he was being ousted by LU. He even ends his story questioning what and how much he regrets.

He got woke.

You may have heard it from your kids: I'm outta here once I'm done with school. I want to live near water, or I want to live in a big city. There's not much Roanoke, the New River Valley or Lynchburg can do about that – the City of Roanoke and Roanoke County for instance have grown at a glacial pace over the past few decades. But that hasn't stopped the Roanoke Regional Partnership and other organizations from trying to keep young people here while attempting to attract newcomers at the same time.

Recently 18 jurisdictions in the region conducted a study as part of a GO Virginia Region 2 project called Stopping the Brain Drain. Local government, higher education and business leaders were in on the project, which also employed an outside agency specializing in talent attraction. Some of the feedback? High marks for natural beauty, outdoor recreation, lower cost of living and civic engagement opportunities.

What we need to work on: cultural diversity, more retail and dining options that would appeal to young professionals, and career advancement opportunities. Create networking opportunities to keep young professionals engaged with peers after graduation, internships to help develop a talent pipeline. More emphasis on those assets we do have, like affordable housing and community engagement.

It may take a critical mass leap in economic development and population growth – or more clever ways to draw the Roanoke and New River Valleys closer together perhaps – to become the next Greenville, SC. Maybe the Virginia Tech-Carilion campus will take the next step in spinning off medical research into scale-able growth businesses.

"We are looking at this data to form new programming," says Erin Burcham, who joined the Roanoke Regional Partnership as its first director of talent solutions in 2017. Onward New River Valley and programs from the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (Seize the City, Level UP and Leading off Campus) are also endeavoring to attract and retain those coveted YP's.

One familiar bugaboo that showed up in a survey entailing 1173 regional college students and alumni: "not knowing what opportunities were really available," adds Burcham. Targeting more students on campuses, especially those studying for high demand occupations will be two action items as a result of the Stop the Brain Drain study. Here's hoping the plan moving forward is a home run.



There's something happening here

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary: Tackling what's become a reoccurring issue – attracting and retaining talent to the region.



Guest **Commentary**

By Irene **Myers-Thompson**

Executive Summary: Here are five strategies to improve your employee wellness program.

Employee wellbeing >

Workplace wellness programs continue to demonstrate their value, with one recent study finding that for every dollar invested in such programs, employers saw a threedollar reduction in company healthcare costs. Little wonder why companies in Virginia and across the country continue to invest in wellbeing programs to help improve employees' health and curb care costs. In fact, according to research from the National Business Group of Health (NBGH), employers are expected to spend an average of \$3.6 million on wellbeing programs during 2019.

And it's not just employers who are noticing the impact. Employees themselves are reporting positive outcomes from these work-based initiatives. Among people with access to employer-sponsored well-being programs, 57 percent said the initiatives had a positive effect on their health, according to the 2019 UnitedHealthcare Wellness Check Up Survey.

Employers looking to jumpstart their wellbeing programs may consider some of the following tips:

Lifestyle Changes: As many as 80 percent of premature chronic conditions, such as stroke, heart disease and diabetes, are caused by lifestyle choices –smoking and obesity, for example – as opposed to inflictions caused by genetic factors, according to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The data suggests that employers have opportunities to help encourage workers to make healthier choices, especially during the workday, where they can host walking meetings, offer onsite fitness equipment or classes, or provide the option for a stand-up desk. In the break and lunchrooms, companies should stock healthy options, offer a free or discounted salad bar or organize healthy-cooking demonstrations.

Big Data: To make the most of employee-engagement programs, employers can look to big data to help. An array of new online resources can help employers analyze and make sense of health data, taking into account aggregate medical and prescription claims, demographics, and clinical and wellbeing information. These metrics can provide an analytics-driven roadmap to help employers implement specifically tailored programs. You might, for example, identify the locations with the highest rates of diabetes and then introduce weight-management programs to improve prevention and disease management.

Incentives: NGBH has found that on average mid-sized and large employers this year will offer an average of \$762 to each employee as a wellbeing incentive. That amount

may seem like a stretch for some employers, but research has found that unless the incentive is substantial enough, only those already into fitness will participate. To prove the point, the Wellness Check Up Survey found that among people who said it would require an incentive for them to devote at least an hour each day toward health-related activities, more than half (53 percent) said it would take between \$1 and \$3 per day to motivate them to make that commitment.

Socializing: Recent research shows that meaningful relationships may be crucial for overall health. That means incorporating social components into your wellbeing program will likely motivate more people to participate. In fact, the Wellness Check Up Survey found that over half (57 percent) of respondents said they would be more likely to participate in a fitness routine if there is a social component, either in-person or virtually. And so strategies like walking groups, employee appreciation days and team-building activities such as volunteer events are becoming more and more popular.

Burnout: An overwhelming percentage of employees (88 percent) said meditation, or mindfulness, has a positive impact on a person's overall health, according to the Wellness Check Up Survey. To encourage mindfulness, some companies are creating "relaxation rooms" to help employees lower stress levels, while others are introducing online or phone-based mindfulness programs. "Mindfulness kits," which include caffeine-free tea, stress balls, journals or collateral with meditation tips, are also an option.

Two-thirds (67 percent) of companies say they plan to expand their wellbeing programs over the next few years, according to a recent NBGH study. These strategies can help employers make the most of these efforts.

Field / On Tap

from Page 40

While I can empathize with his dismay (been there, done that), I reserve my infuriating reactions for actions and events that are truly infuriating. When authorities stormed James Madison University's student-run newspaper, The Breeze, seizing computers and materials for evidence (mostly for photographs of a riot in 2010), that's infuriating, uncalled for, unexpected. When an editor gets his hand slapped for trying to share news and perspective contrary to the private institutional position, that's inconvenient, unfortunate. It's hardly unexpected.

When you're not sympatico with the people or systems around you, it's time to move on.

That's what I did.



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local treasures for business and pleasure through her company, Roanoke Revealed. When she's not enjoying nature and writing or creating marketing strategies for clients, she's growing fresh vegetables & herbs, seeing the sights in the area and occasionally hopping on a horse. [nlevin@fulcrumny.com]

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A Ferris dialogue and introspective is so natural, sounding so light and fluid, while revealing a microcosmic culture with unsuspecting gravitas as deep as

Steinbeck and Fitzgerald — Page 47

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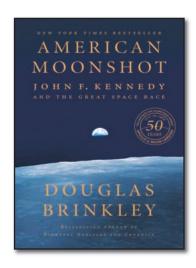
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Books (a) the FRONT >

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



Shooting for the moon

It seems only fitting with the 50th anniversary of the first Apollo moon landing this past month (July 20th) to pick up a copy of American Moonshot. John F. Kennedy and The Great Space Race (Harper Collins, 2019), which revolves around President Kennedy's challenge to land a man on the moon and return him safely to earth before the end of the 1960's, "not because it is easy, because it is hard." It may seem quaint now but politicians on both sides of the aisle came together to provide funding despite some charges that it was frivolous, and doled out contracts to companies all over the country for the rocketry, capsules, lunar landing craft and guidance systems needed to make it happen.

Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, NASA and company also used the specter of the Cold War with the Soviet Union to keep the torch lit for a moonshot – no one wanted the Communists to be first to the moon of course, despite consistent doubts that they were ever really in the game. Author Douglas Brinkley is a well-decorated writer and Moonshot – which also focuses on the early astronaut crews that were taken from the ranks of test pilots – is a worthy addition to his collection. Brinkley recognizes the work of ex-Nazi rocket scientists like Werner Von Braun in making the Atlas and Saturn V booster rockets possible – but doesn't let him off the hook for the V2 missile he developed for Germany, technology that killed thousands during World War II. Nonetheless, the term "moonshot" is often used now to describe the type of unified effort needed to cure cancer, reform health care, tackle crumbling infrastructure etc. Once upon a time in the late 50's and 60's we

actually did it, the country came together with a singular goal, a deadline, the funding and got it done.

-Gene Marrano

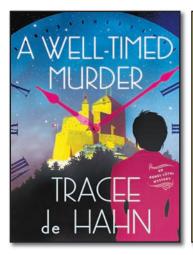
Swiss mysteries

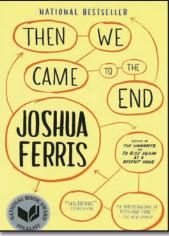
As with her first Inspector Agnes Lüthi novel, Tracee de Hahn's A Well-Timed Murder (Minotaur Books, 2018) offers amusing subplots, a counterpoint to the main action set in the magnificent Swiss countryside. Unusual buildings and structures make for a fun backdrop to murder and mayhem. The strengths in this second book carry over from the series' debut title, Swiss Vendetta.

Many of the characters are down to earth, while others are possessed of fabulous wealth, while still others read as though they'd walked off the set of Downton Abbey. Lüthi herself is one of the common-sense-filled types (albeit made more fascinating by a patina of personal tragedy and a touch of workaholism.) The histrionics of those around her are a fine contrast to the coolness of her half-Swiss, half-American persona.

A Well-Timed Murder with its masterwatchmaker victim can be read as a standalone, but readers will probably enjoy things more if they read the first book first. In both books, zany subplots surface owing to an array of all-too-human characters, some sporting opaque motivations and mysterious pasts.

An architect by training, de Hahn is well positioned to walk the reader through intriguing crime scenes, medieval or modern. It so







One of the chlorophyll portraits from War Memoranda. Photography, Walt Whitman and Memorials

happens that she is a local author (Christiansburg) and one who seems destined to make her mark in the world of mysteries, especially if she keeps readers clamoring for more of Agnes Lüthi and the man in the castle – the heartthrob-y Julien Vallotton.

—Andrea Brunais

So real

Jesus, Josh, you've been stalking me. My life experiences have been hacked. Then We Came to the End (Back Bay; 2008) is brilliant in its description of modern day office life. It's as if Joshua Ferris combined *The Office and Seinfeld* (television series) with Office Space (movie) but then paint gun splattered a big fat dose of heavy reality right in the mix of all the superfluous activities we face amongst the cubicles of our daily dredge. Simply brilliant.

For me, the added blessing was the delight of reading in collective first person dialogue (for all the sit-commy funny parts; then switching to first person for one serious sidetrack) coupled with all the allusions to specific things I actually deal with (managing staff; the SAME software I use; near identical business and profession similarities). This novel could be relegated to the classics one day, because it is so representative of life and voice in our contemporary American metropolitan white collar office environ. A Ferris dialogue and introspection is so natural, sounding so light and fluid, while revealing a microcosmic culture with unsuspecting gravitas as deep as Steinbeck and Fitzgerald. No one captured better the corporate-capital-agency-contract-world

that many of us engage in our day and age.

—Tom Field

War is Hell – as art

You may have seen Binh Danh's photographs of Civil War battlefields and the collaboration he undertook at the Taubman Museum of Art a few years back with Roanoke College professor Robert Schultz. That is, haunting sepia-tinged chlorophyll portraits of Civil War soldiers, printed on large leaves taken from "witness trees" near known Civil War battlefields. Now to celebrate in part the 200th birthday of Walt Whitman – the poet and Civil War medic who wrote vividly about the human cost of war, the Taubman has published War Memoranda: Photography, Walt Whitman and Memorials.

War Memoranda features art, poetry, essays and poetry from Whitman, best known perhaps for Leaves of Grass. The book grew out of the long and ongoing collaboration between Danh and Schultz, including their Taubman exhibit, which is now touring the country. War Memoranda is available at robertschultz.org or via the book's Facebook page of the same name. Only 500 copies will be printed.

-Gene Marrano

The reviewers: **Gene Marrano** is a news journalist and interim editor of FRONT; Andrea Brunais is an author and communications director at Virginia Tech; Tom Field is a creative director and publisher.



Fancy new digs >

Roanoke County staffers and supervisors get the nickel tour after **Metis Holdings** cut the ribbon at the former Allstate Insurance building on Electric Road that it remodeled for its own staff and for 5 other tenants. There's still room for other businesses to lease space.



Unsuspended >

Governor Ralph Northam was back in Roanoke last month, touting legislation in effect as of July 1 that can lift the driving license suspensions for more than 600,000 Virginians who have unpaid court costs (DUI-related debts are an exception). Northam said lifting the ban will enable more people to go to work – and pay off the court debts they will still owe. He also said the previous suspension policy impacted lower income and minority Virginians disproportionately.

FRONT'N ABOUT

Sensational 24 hours >

It's more of a "friend-raiser" than a fundraiser but the annual 24 hour page-to-stage collaboration between the Hollins University Playwrights Lab and Mill Mountain Theatre that dates back to 2006 brought six new, 10-minute plays to life at the annual "Overnight Sensations" event in early July. Pictured: the "actors" (some are not really actors at all), playwrights and directors meet at Center in the Square for the first time at a reception, the night before they staged those six plays.





Treetime >

Roanoke County cut the ribbon on its **Treetop Quest** aerial adventure course at **Explore Park** last month, part of the Adventure Plan for the 1100 acre park. A private vendor is running the ziplines and other aerial obstacles. County officials estimate over a full season it could attract 25,000 visitors or more to Explore.





Q up Canale >

Former Virginia Tech baseball standout and major league slugger **George Canale** and his wife **Laura** have opened up a barbecue restaurant in the old Grandin Gardens mansion on Grandin Road in Roanoke. Canale's family has Memphis roots where they were in the smoked meat business. Both he and Laura were perfecting their recipes for sauces, sides and desert cakes as the get ready for the Canele's grand opening by August.



Outdoors outfit targets indoors >

After 32 years in downtown Roanoke on Campbell Avenue, **Orvis Roanoke** cut the ribbon on its newly renovated store. Orvis has more than 80 stores in the US and UK; the one in Roanoke was the second. The outdoors-oriented retailer was founded in 1856 and was an early mail order company. An employee says the makeover lets the store feel "a little more breathable."

FRONT'N ABOUT



Capitalizing outdoors >

With Carvins Cove providing the backdrop Governor Ralph Northam announced a new state-level Office of Outdoor Recreation in mid-July. It will promote the Commonwealth's outdoor amenities and recruit outdoor businesses to Virginia. The outdoor industry is a 22 billion dollar business annually statewide and provides almost 200,000 jobs according to a Northam administration release.



Gettin' sporty >

Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge president Landon Howard announced the rollout of a new one minute promotional video that will be used to show off the region's recreational assets and NCAA championship legacy. It comes shortly after the VBR Sports division produced another video focused on mountain biking in Virginia's Blue Ridge. VVBR partners from the region joined Howard for the announcement at Haley Toyota Field in Salem.



Not that quiet >

"Shhhhh!!!" is the usual response you get if any noise or disruption happens at the library; but one glance at the bulletin board at **Roanoke County Public Libraries** (this one's at South County branch) shows quite an active lineup of sponsored activities. Colorful flyers invite people of all ages to diversified events attracting a variety of interests.





The sequel >

On July 11, Paragon Theaters and McClain's (at Blacksburg's First & Main complex), along with the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, held a ribbon cutting and reception for the community to celebrate the new theater management and restaurant provider. Each guest received a free movie and popcorn pass, and enjoyed free drinks and appetizers from McClain's. Guests also enjoyed free bowling and arcade games. Michael Whalen, the CEO for Paragon Theaters, cut the ribbon in front of a group of over 200 guests outside the theater and restaurant. Inside, Sharon Scott, Executive Director of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, James Oliver, Managing Member of McClain's, and Michael Whalen each spoke about the exciting changes that have been implemented making the complex the absolute best dining and entertainment destination in the New River Valley.

FRONT'N ABOUT



Big tent revival >

Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce held a Lunch-and-Learn at Virginia Mountain Vineyards on July 11, featuring Abrina Schnurman, program director at Batten Leadership Institute at Hollins University, who addressed organizational conflict and change.







Big reads in little boxes >

Little Free Libraries are appearing at parks in Roanoke County, including Garst Mill Park, Waldrond Park, and Green Hill Park (now) with plans to add three more at Good Park, Kessler Mill Park, and Starkey Park by the end of the year; and three more after that to provide one in every district. Local Eagle Scout Steven Butler built the boxes and students in area schools designed and painted them.

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

Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

The Bank of Botetourt welcomes Laurie
Hart as Senior Vice
President-Chief
Strategic and Retail
Officer. Hart was
most recently with
HomeTown Bank (now
American National
Bank and Trust) and
has over three decades
of experience in the
financial industry.

Jenna Sudol has been named marketing and digital media coordinator at the Roanoke branch of Farm Credit of the Virginias.

WELLNESS FRONT

Nicholas "Nick"
Watkins has joined
LewisGale Medical
Center as the Emergency
Preparedness Manager.
He previously served
as the EMS/Emergency
Preparedness
Coordinator at HCA
Virginia's John Randolph
Medical Center and

their TriCities ER, an 11,000 square-foot free standing ER in Prince George. He started as an EMT with the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad while attending Virginia Tech.



Walters

Holly Walters returned to Southwest Virginia to assume the position of Surgical Services Director at LewisGale Medical Center. Holly was with HCA's North Texas Division since 2011. After receiving her Bachelor of Nursing degree from Radford University, she attended Liberty University where she received her MBA.

Michael "Jep" Stokes has joined LewisGale Medical Center as Vice President of Behavioral Health Services. He has been involved in



Walters

the behavioral health field since 2009 and he has also served as Chief Operating Officer for UHS in Houston, Texas.



Vecera

April Vecera has been hired by LewisGale Medical Center as the Director of Interventional Cardiovascular Services. Prior to joining LewisGale, April served as the Manager for the Heart and Vascular Center at Seton Medical Center Harker Heights in Lexington, Texas.



Davis

Nichole Davis has been named Emergency Services Director at LewisGale Medical Center. Prior to joining the HCA hospital in Salem, Davis held the same position at LewisGale Hospital Pulaski for the past five years.



Carpenter

Cecilia Carpenter has been promoted to Vice President of Quality at LewisGale Medical Center in Salem. Carpenter came to LewisGale as Director of Quality and



FRONTLINES

Accreditation in May 2018 from the Greenbrier Valley Medical Center in West Virginia, where she had been Chief Quality Officer.



Tuck

President and CEO of Tuck Chiropractic Clinic, **Dr. N. Ray Tuck**, was recently elected as President of the Virginia Board of Medicine. Tuck was appointed to the Virginia Board of Medicine by Governor Terry McAuliffe for a second term in 2017. He then served as the Vice President in 2018.

LEGAL FRONT

The Roanoke Bar Association has elected Patrick Kenney, president; Daniel

Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to news@vbFRONT.com. Photos should be color, 300dpi. A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

Frankl, president-elect;
Macel Janoschka,
secretary/treasurer;
Lee Osborne, past
president; and
Christopher Dadak,
John Fishwick Jr.,
Adam McKelvey,
Jonathan Puvak, and
Devon Slovensky
directors.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

The Branch Group based in Roanoke has announced four promotions, all to Vice President positions: Jeff Floyd (finance), Danny Minnix (safety), Matt Wise (accounting and corporate controller) and Steve Zegarski (corporate real estate)

Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer announces that **Anna W. Hudson** has joined the firm as assistant portfolio manager in their Roanoke office. Hudson is a University of Mary Washington graduate, with over 12 years' experience. Prior to joining Thalhimer's Commercial Property Services Group, she was with First Citizens Bank.

Doug Pinckney has joined as a geotechnical engineer at Draper Aden Associates.

Lee-Ellen Cox has joined as settlement processor; Erika Kelliher has joined as office administrator; and Heather Hancock has joined as settlement post-closer at Virginia Title Center LLC.

EDUCATION FRONT



Taylor

G. Don Taylor has been named interim vice president for research and innovation at Virginia Tech. Taylor is the vice provost for learning systems innovation and effectiveness and the Charles O. Gordon Professor of Industrial and Systems Engineering in the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech

With the sudden departure of Pareena

FREE CHECKING



FRONTLINES

Career FRONT



Gray

Lawrence as school president on June 30, the Hollins University Board of Trustees has tapped former President Nancy Oliver Gray to serve in an interim role while they search for a permanent successor. Gray had been the Hollins president from 2005 until 2017 when she retired.

Rajesh Bagchi has been appointed head of the Department of Marketing in the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech. Bagchi ioined the faculty in 2008 and became a full professor in 2016. His research centers on the processes that underlie consumer and managerial decision making.

The Roanoke Higher **Education Center** Foundation has appointed three new board members: John Fishwick, Jr. of Fishwick & Associates, PLC: William Eddie Amos, Corporate Vice President of GE Digital; and Joseph LaScala, VP of Distribution and General Manager at Revlon/Elizabeth Arden.

Donald Hempson has been named associate vice president for international affairs at Virginia Tech.



lames

Lois James has been promoted to Director of Leadership with OpX Solutions, a Virginia leadership development and

process improvement company.

SENIOR FRONT



Nelson

Karen Nelson, associate director of development for the Warm Hearth Foundation has received the 2019 Leading Edge Advocacy Award for her efforts at Warm Heath Village in Blacksburg to champion resident life enrichment and exceptional care. Leading Edge Virginia works with nonprofit members to create better services for aging Americans. Warm Hearth has been a Leading Edge member since 1981.

MEDIA FRONT



Baum

James Baum has retired as the President and CEO of Blue Ridge PBS, after 12 years. **Executive Vice President** Will Anderson was named interim president and CEO. On Baum's watch Blue Ridge Public Television won a handful of regional Emmy awards.

Compiled by Gene Marrano



— Page 18











A Mission of Quality Service, Excellent Support and Advanced Technology

cutzens began with a vision, a need for communications in rural America. From the front steps of the Floyd County Court House evolved what would become Citizens Telephone Cooperative. From that February day in 1914 to today, the mission to provide quality service, excellent support, and advanced technology remains steadfast. Citizens began with a vision, a need for communications in rural

Today, with just over 60 employees, Citizens continues to be a leading-Today, with just over 60 employees, Citizens continues to be a leading-edge technology provider offering services that complement its core services of voice, video, and data. Citizens has grown from a local telephone company to the technology company of the future. With full-service offerings for residential, small and global businesses, Citizens brings it all together for you.

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FRONT Notes

Army built

Defense contractor
AECOM has been
awarded a \$46 million
contract with the US
Army. 6th District
Congressman Ben
Cline says the contract
awarded the Roanoke
firm is for architectural
and engineering
services.

CCS in green

The new President of the Council of Community Services is Anne Marie Green a familiar face to those who may know her from Roanoke County, where she retired recently as director of human resources. Green takes over a non-profit organization with a staff of 60 and a 6 million dollar annual budget. Dan Merenda has retired as Council president after 7 years.

Lymeaid

Virginia Tech biochemist Brandon Jutras says he has discovered a "cellular component" or molecule that triggers Lyme disease-related arthritis - a finding that could lead to a cure. This discovery - published in a recent paper - may lead to diagnostic tests and new treatment options for patients with Lyme arthritis.

Raise a pint

The Virginia Craft Brewers Guild has announced the 2019 Virginia Craft Beer Cup winners after a competition in

Richmond. Parkway Brewing Company's Triple "A" American Amber Ale was a first place winner, as was Starr Hill's "The Love" wheat beer and a coffee cream stout. Twin Creeks Brewing won a third place "IPA-Specialty" Award for its Red Leaf pale ale. Other craft brewers with a presence in the region including Three Notch'd, Reale's and Chaos Mountain were also recognized for their entries

Do the swan

Mountain Lake Lodge resort in Giles County has opened a new outdoor pool. The lodge was the set of Kellerman's Hotel in Dirty Dancing (1987), starring Jennifer Grey and Patrick Swayze.

Top choice

Comfort Inn & Suites in Lynchburg was the only hotel in Virginia to be recognized by parent company Choice Hotels with the Platinum Award during its recent annual convention. TripAdvisor also award the Comfort Inn with its #1 Award for Excellence out of 25 ranked in Lynchburg

Rocket launch

New River Community
College's Rocket Club
recently received a
sponsorship of \$10,000
from BAE Systems,
which operates the
Radford Army Ammunition
Plant. The grant will
support the club's
ongoing activities,
including preparation

for the 2020 NASA Student Launch event in Huntsville, Ala.

Study money

Virginia Tech's year-old Undergraduate Research Faculty Grant Program has awarded more than \$76,000 for student research projects in a wide variety of disciplines.

Hep E work

University Distinguished Professor of Molecular Virology X.J. Meng and his lab at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine have been awarded a new five-year almost \$2 million grant to further study the hepatitis E virus.

Road work

The Commonwealth Transportation Board adopted its fiscal year 2020-2025 Six Year Improvement Plan – a record \$22.9 billion – that includes almost \$900 million for road fixes along Interstate 81 as part of the Corridor Improvement Program.

Diamond host

The Lynchburg
Hillcats will host the
2020 Carolina League
All-Star game, the first
time the Advanced-A
mid-summer showcase
has been in the Hill
City since 2005.

Neat insides

Metis Holdings has cut the ribbon on the former 180,000 square foot Allstate building on Electric Road in Roanoke County it has now renovated and turned into a home for six tenants.

Banks branches

Bank of the James
has opened a second
Roanoke Valley location
at 2101 Electric Road.
Skyline Bank has
opened its new LewisGale branch on Keagy
Road in southwest
Roanoke County. First
Bank & Trust Company
has broken ground a
new branch it will open
in Bedford on American
Way.

Christian music

Liberty University will launch the Michael W. Smith Center for Music this fall at the Liberty University School of Music. On board to mentor Liberty students and guide them towards publishing their records is Kevin Jonas Sr. father and original manager of the Jonas Brothers, who are enjoying a recent hit song comeback after debuting in 2005.

Trip to OZ

US Secretary of
Commerce Wilbur Ross
was a recent visitor to
the Roanoke Regional
Chamber of Commerce,
where he sat in on a
business roundtable.
Ross promoted the
Opportunity Zone
concept for redevelopment
in certain areas where
tax breaks can make
that more financially
viable. He also talked
about the new trade pact

FRONTLINES

being formulated with Mexico and Canada that is touted as a replacement or upgrade for NAFTA.

Wealthy digs

Merrill Lynch Wealth Management has opened a new office at 110 Franklin Street SE in downtown Roanoke, inside the Norfolk Southern Building.

Luna takes off

Luna Innovations in Roanoke has signed an exclusive license agreement with Meggitt, an international company that specializes in high-performance components and subsystems for the aerospace industry. Luna will provide Merritt with fiber optic-based sensing equipment for use on aircraft. Luna says that will "create significant savings and safety for the aircraft."

Big bets

Wagers at Rosie's Gaming Emporium in Vinton (on Historical Racing Machines and off-track betting) topped more than 12 million dollars in its first month of operation. A company spokesperson says they 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.

are pleased with customer response to the facility, which opened May 9th and says it is helping deliver on a promise to create jobs and tax revenue.

Caliente cooling

Cancun Mexican Restaurant on Market Street in downtown Roanoke has closed. Several Mexican restaurants have tried to make a go of it there. Cancun's original location at Smith Mountain Lake is still open.

Truckin' along

The **Volvo Group** will invest nearly \$400 million to expand its Volvo Trucks North



FRONT Notes

America New River Valley plant in Pulaski County. The investment includes a new 350,000-square-foot building for house truck cab welding operations. Volvo considered sites in other states for the expansion project, which is forecasted to create 700-plus new jobs within six years.

Tea leaves lied

After announcing it with great fanfare – including remarks from then-Governor terry McAuliffe – Bend, Oregon based **Humm Kombucha** has canceled plans to bring an east coast factory

to Roanoke, saying poor market conditions and improvements to production and transportation at its home plant helped lead to the cancellation. Humm Kombucha had planned to locate the facility at the Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology.

Leader transported in

Bob Sigman is now the executive director at the Virginia Museum of Transportation in Roanoke. Sigman had most recently been with the Museum of Western History in California. Before that he spent 25 years in the entertainment industry.

We're number 1

For the fifth time since 2007 **CNBC** has named Virginia "The Top State for Business." The ranking was based on 64 metrics in 10 competitiveness categories. Governor Ralph Northam says the Commonwealth has worked to move the economy beyond its strong defense sector

First home sweet home

A new **Wallet Hub** study reveals Roanoke is the

15th best city in the entire country for first time home buyers. When the study separated cities based on size was Roanoke was ranked 6th among smaller cities

Willis talkin' about upgrades

North Cross School in Roanoke County has announced a major construction project set to begin next year. The \$16.5 million project includes major renovations to the high school building, Willis Hall, and an annex that will connect two school buildings. A \$14 million capital campaign now

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in its "quiet phase" will finance the bulk of the project.

Prescription plan

The Community Health Center of the New River Valley has become the first federally-qualified health care center in Virginia to partner with Richmond-based Rx Partnership to provide low cost generic medications through RxP's Access to

Medication program. 34 medications are currently available through the program.

Space delivery

A Virginia Tech team of aerospace engineering students has placed second in a competition to design a reusable payload transportation systems for lunar and deep space systems. The Project Luna team has been invited to present at the American

Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Propulsion and Energy Forum and Exposition in Indianapolis this month.

STEM beauty

The new Miss Virginia is Virginia Tech alumna Camille Schrier, a systems biology major. Her talent at the June pageant in Lynchburg? In a lab coat, goggles and high heels she performed a science experiment on stage.

Schrier now goes on to the Miss America competition.

Compiled by Tom Field and Gene Marrano

vourself to be a problemsolver

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Check out additional FRONT Notes from Valley Business FRONT on our Facebook site or social media links at www.vbFRONT.com.



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I love the startup energy, the fact that there wasn't a lot of inertia that prevented change -Page 32

Don't discount the pub runs... — Page 22

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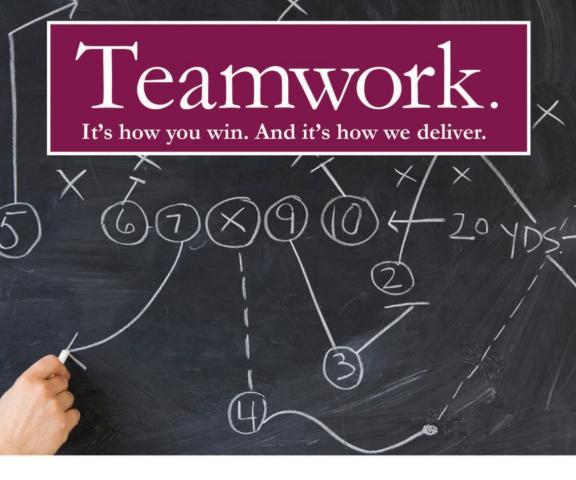
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